**Donna, Denis and Maya Girls**

Inspired by Carlos’ dream of creating an organic garden high in the Andes Mountains to produce nourishing food for the school children in his community, a few like minded friends from Canada gathered together and decided that we could help make his dream a reality.  Carlos had the ability to determine the needs of the community and to facilitate the creation of the gardens.  He also had the help of workers and farmers growing crops in the Incan tradition and willing to do the hard work necessary.  The only thing left was to raise some money to get the project started.

No one in our group had professional fundraising experience and everyone had obligations and busy lives.  We wanted to be in for the long haul.  So we decided to abide by some simple rules.  Everyone would contribute in the way they could, we would be open and flexible in our efforts and it would be an enjoyable, stress free experience.

To that end, we needed to keep things simple, so we started by collecting donations to sell at flea markets, garage sales, auctions, bake sales, book sales, clothing sales and online.  No outlays of cash were needed, only our efforts to get the donations and sell them.  As time went on, other opportunities to make money arose and we took on the jobs as long as our rules were in place.  But overall, it has been the recycling that has provided most of the funds for the projects.

Along the way, we were also inspired to help three schools in the area.  Getting healthy food to the school lunch table has always been our number one goal, but there were other needs as well.  Some of the classrooms were unsafe and in need of repair before the children could return to them.  Funds were raised to bring three classrooms to a livable condition and in one school, a kitchen/dining room was created as well as a small library and a much needed store room.

Some of our group have visited the Sacred Valley and have been to the organic gardens with Carlos to meet the workers and to see the progress.  While visiting each of the three schools, they shared a delicious lunch made from ingredients grown in the gardens.

The Maya Girls has expanded greatly from the first few founding members.  There are many, many honorary Maya Girls and guys who help in all ways big and small.

In 2012, the Maya Girls set out on a journey.  We jumped in with our hearts, used love, trust and faith in each other as our currency and became part of a beautiful process.  Without Carlos and all the other villagers who participated and worked hard, our money would have accomplished very little.  Our efforts, to use a gardening metaphor, fell on fertile ground and together with our Peruvian family; we all did our part to make the dream of the organic garden an ongoing and sustainable reality.







