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Quick Update Overview-

Since I last reported on my work with Mujeres Activas de Potrero (MAP), we have had many exciting advancements in programming, fundraising initiatives, storefront remodeling, and overall group growth!

New Programming:

We have begun three new programs, and are in the midst of revitalizing our existing sewing group. The first of the new programs is the *Grupo de Repostería*, or baking group. Since the end of October, we have held two classes. One focused on the basic science behind baking, as we made a “sandwich cake” and cupcakes, while the other gave an overview of baking techniques with an end treat of brownie making. The second took place in the kitchen of a local restaurant and, per group interest, we will be changing it up a bit with a dish plating class led by the restaurant chef in the coming months. Next on the docket is sweet bread making with the intention of throwing vegetables into the mix to add some healthy sweet alternatives. They will be preparing pumpkin bread, but learning how to do the same with zucchini and carrots.

After *repostería* we began the *Grupo de Manualidades*, which is very similar to a Do-it-yourself up-cycling group. Thus far, we have made bags and headbands out of old t-shirts, as well as baskets out of plastic grocery bags. I am certainly not crafty, so these projects were found online and instructed by another volunteer, but I am continually encouraging the women to use their creativity to come up with ideas of their own to test together. I have a few projects in my back pocket, but am hopeful that participants will propose some ideas before our next get together.

Third came our *Grupo de Salud*, or health club. There is a great interest in Zumba within the community, and teacher who gives classes locally, but it is not affordable for all who would like to attend. Starting in December, we will be subsidizing the classes twice a week for group members, who will also be encouraged to participate in health *charlas* that we will organize each month. The *charlas* are gatherings where a speaker comes to talk to the group about the health topic of their specialty, be it nutrition, diabetes, body

image, etc. To kick-off the group's December start, we will be holding a Zumba-thon fundraiser, which I will explain below.

Sewing Group Re-vamp:

As you may know, MAP has been largely focus on the sewing group and accompanying social enterprise. I have begun other programming to involve community members who are not interested in sewing, but we are still working to create a more robust sewing group geared at income generation. In my last report I presented the many problems that led the group to crumble over the last year, but we have put new measures in place, which have community members very excited. There are five new members, who are qualified with the basic sewing knowledge, signed-up to participate in the group. Unfortunately, Gladys, the sewing leader, has been with an ill family member and unable to teach our new participants the basics of each product we produce. This next week, however, she will be back in action and the group should start to churn!

I am also working to get a comprehensive course aligned for those interested in sewing that do not have previous experience. At this time Gladys does not have the capacity to teach a course. Nonetheless, I am hopeful that we will procure a teacher from ENA, their free government trade school training program, who would come to Potrero for classes.

Fundraisers:

With all of this new programming, and the investment in wages as inventory is built before the high season, we are in need of some seed money. Luckily, I have a background in fundraising, a community of people who want to give back, and when I put my mind to something I will get it done. I am in the midst of wrapping up a "discount card" fundraiser with a local ex-pat who brought the idea from her son's little league back in North Carolina. It is very similar to the coupon books we all know, and don't love so much, because everyone seems to forget the coupon when they go out. The catch is that ours is about the size of a credit card, and laminated so that you can keep it in your wallet and have it on hand wherever you go. It cost restaurants \$10 to be on the card, and they must provide offers that are valid for one year. In turn, locals purchase the card for \$10 and they have discounts at the ready, which are valid for one year. It may seem like very little to charge a mere \$10, but cards are only valid for the singular cardholder, so if a family of four goes to dinner, only one person can take advantage of the card discount. Our hope is that, because it is relatively inexpensive, parents will be able to buy cards for the whole family. With this no brainer deal, we project to sell between 150 and 200 cards within the community. Each year we will be able to sell a new card, and this sales number will only grow as the word spreads.

My ex-pat partner and I have just signed 26 businesses and restaurants onto the card, and it is in the design process with our graphic design volunteer. The card should be printed and ready to sell by the beginning of December, and I look forward to reporting on our success in my December report!

A second fundraiser we are putting on is the Zumba-thon mentioned above that will take place on November 29th. In order to fund the class subsidy, we will be hosting a three-hour Zumba class in the local community building. The instructor has agreed to help out for free as long as we cover her transportation costs of \$20, we will charge for admission, and have food sales made by the women as well. Depending on the success of the event, it is likely that this will become a bi-annual if not quarterly event.

The Shop Re-model:

Our storefront, The Shop, is getting a facelift! I was able to find someone to both donate the paint and do the painting, which took place on Thursday and Friday of this week. I have also hired a local artisan, who has made woodcarvings for sale in The Shop in the past, to put together some wooden shelving and display cases. By the beginning of December, this too should be finished up. I will be sure to provide photos in the final report!

Overall Growth:

There are 15 women who have participated in repostería, manualidades, sewing, or a combination of the three, with about 15 more interested in the health club and comprehensive sewing classes. According to my director, Lindsay, many of these women have not been very involved with Abriendo Mentes in the past, and we are very excited to be tapping into a new part of the Potrero community!

I am aware that thus far, much of my reporting has focused on the initiative taking that has occurred over the four months since I have been here. Slowly but surely, I am hoping that this reporting will be turning more onto what the women have accomplished as programs grow and they gain the confidence to take initiative on their own.

Thank you very much for supporting me in this journey. In order to finish what I have started, I will be coming back in January to renew my contract for another 3-6 months. Although babysitting gigs for local ex-pats are helping, without your support I would have exhausted all of my life savings and would not be able to return. I cannot tell you how grateful I am.