



Summer Newsletter 2024



USFUVG Held 2023 Fall Event in Washington, DC

USFUVG held its first in-person event since the pandemic on Thursday, October 12, 2023, at the stunning Organization of American States building in Washington, DC. The Patio Azteca, where the cocktail reception was held, was brimming with over 130 guests and dignitaries.

The focus for the event was the essential work UVG and its students are doing analyzing the effects of pollutants and climate change on Lake Atitlán. The featured speaker was UVG alum, Juan "Estuardo" Bocel. He presented his work with the Center for the Study of Lake Atitlán at UVG. (Read more about Estuardo below.)

Guests included the Guatemalan Ambassador to the US, representatives of USAID, the IADB Executive Director, Rotary District Governors, area Rotary Club Presidents, representatives of area universities, UVG's Vice Rector, USFUVG's Board President, Executive Director, and Board members, the Executive Director of FUVG, and other dignitaries.



Estuardo Bocel: UVG Success Story



When UVG graduate Estuardo Bocel took the podium to tell his story at the OAS in October 2023, he revealed it was the first speech he has delivered entirely in English.

Estuardo was raised in Sololá, a town overlooking Lake Atitlán. His family is Kakchiquel, one of the Indigenous Maya of the Guatemalan highlands. He remembers his mother telling him about the importance of education. She attended school only until the 3rd grade, which was more than his father, who never went to school. Nonetheless, he still learned how to write, read, and do basic mathematics, and started his own grocery distribution business.

As a teenager, Estuardo attended school in the morning and helped his father in the afternoon. One day, he returned to the office to find his mother crying. His father had been shot by thieves, shattering his femur. He needed surgery, and his recovery time was estimated at over a year.

Estuardo quit school and took over the business, now the sole provider for the family of six. He thought he'd never return to his education. His mother found a school he could attend on weekends. He did well, and was invited to apply to UVG Altiplano, where he did his final two years of high school. After graduation he stayed on to pursue a college degree in Agroforestry.

His grandfather told Estuardo that he should abandon his studies because education was not useful for Kakchiqueles. He wanted him to focus solely on providing for the family. Bucking tradition, Estuardo stayed the course.

In 2012, he started volunteering at UVG's Center for the Study of Lake Atitlán, which was founded in response to the algae bloom in the lake in 2009. Caused by pollution, mostly human waste and fertilizer runoff, the algae adversely impacted the more than 350,000 people who rely on the lake.

Estuardo worked at the lab for 11 years, later becoming its manager. He is now pursuing a master's degree at University of Nevada in Ecology with a focus on limnology, the study of inland waters. His goal is to put his knowledge to use helping Atitlán and the many other lakes in Guatemala.

"If it wasn't for UVG's scholarship program and all the opportunities provided to me, I wouldn't be where I am today," he says, adding, "Now my grandpa is encouraging the younger generation to go to school. I never thought I would be an example to follow, especially when I remember how hard it was to go against my culture. Nothing makes me happier than when young people have higher education as one of their goals."

UVG Launches USAID Funded Project "Inspiring Youth through Innovation and Ingenuity"



USFUVG is proud to have facilitated the funding of a 2-million-dollar grant awarded by the USAID program for American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) to UVG. The funds will be used to purchase cutting-edge equipment that will enable UVG students on all three campuses to propose and pilot innovative and ingenious solutions to various problems that Guatemala faces.

On April 12, 2024, a launch event at UVG was attended by the US ambassador to Guatemala, Tobin Bradley; UVG administrators; and USFUVG board members. USFUVG has partnered with ASHA since 1979 to raise

funds to improve higher education in Guatemala through UVG. This alliance has resulted in nearly 29 million dollars in aid for buildings and equipment.

Pictured Above:

Ambassador to Guatemala, Tobin Bradley, with USAID, UVG, and USFUVG Representatives

Rotary Clubs Fund UVG Environmental Project at Lake Atitlán



USFUVG received two \$5,000 grants for UVG's Center for Studies at Lake Atitlán from two Rotary clubs—the South Everett/Mukilteo Rotary Club and the Rotary Club of Washington, D.C. The grants fund a project to decrease pollutants in Lake Atitlán and restore the health of the lake by educating residents of San Andres Semetabaj area in micro watershed management using a multi-disciplinary approach. It is hoped that this project will serve as a pilot that is scalable to other indigenous Maya villages and other micro watersheds surrounding Lake Atitlán. (Read more about this project in our next newsletter.)

The Rotary Club of Guatemala City will be the sponsoring club in Guatemala (a requirement for international Rotary grants). They also pledged \$1,000 in support of the project.

Many members of the Rotary Club of Washington, DC were in attendance at the 2023 USFUVG Fall Event, where they learned about the challenges facing Lake Atitlán and the indigenous Maya who live around it. The Rotarians were so impressed with USFUVG and UVG, they wanted to do more. They hosted an event on November 15, 2023, at the Guatemalan Ambassador's residence to fundraise for USFUVG and scholarships for UVG students. They later presented a check for an additional \$5,000 to USFUVG.

USFUVG and UVG express our heartfelt gratitude to these Rotarians and their clubs for their generosity in taking action and investing in projects that have a tremendous environmental, humanitarian, and educational impact.

Lake Atitlán Photo Credit: USFUVG Board Member Lucia Cottone

Get Involved with USFUVG: Donate / Volunteer / Travel

Please consider donating to USFUVG at www.usfuvg.org. We also welcome stock transfers, RMD's, donor advised funds, and planned gifts such as bequests, real estate, and life insurance policies. USFUVG is a non-profit, 501(c)3. Your gift may be 100% tax deductible. Please contact our Executive Director at director.usfuvg@gmail.com for questions or assistance.

Volunteering is a great way to get involved and give to USFUVG. Please send an email highlighting your skills, experience, and interests to director.usfuvg@gmail.com and we will respond with volunteering opportunities.

Are you interested in travel with a cause? If you'd like to travel to Guatemala to visit the UVG campuses, the San Andres Semetabaj archeological site, Lake Atitlan, and indigenous Mayan villages surrounding the lake, please be in touch. We are planning our next VIP trip which includes a meaningful donation to USFUVG. For more information, please email director.usfuvg@gmail.com.

About Us

The US Foundation of the University of the Valley of Guatemala (USFUVG) was started in 1977 by a group of US citizens committed to the idea that education is essential to Guatemala's development of civil society and prosperity for all its citizens.

Mission

USFUVG's mission is to educate Guatemala's next generation of innovators, scholars, and leaders by building alliances and raising funds for the University of the Valley of Guatemala.

Vision

USFUVG will enhance the quality of life in Guatemala by making education more accessible and equitable for all.



USFUVG
[15 Roszel Road, Suite 10](http://15.Roszel.Road.Suite.10.Princeton.NJ)
[Princeton, NJ](http://Princeton.NJ)
www.usfuvg.org

USFUVG | [15 Roszel Rd Suite 10 | Princeton, NJ 08540 US](http://15.Roszel.Rd.Suite.10.Princeton.NJ.08540.US)

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!