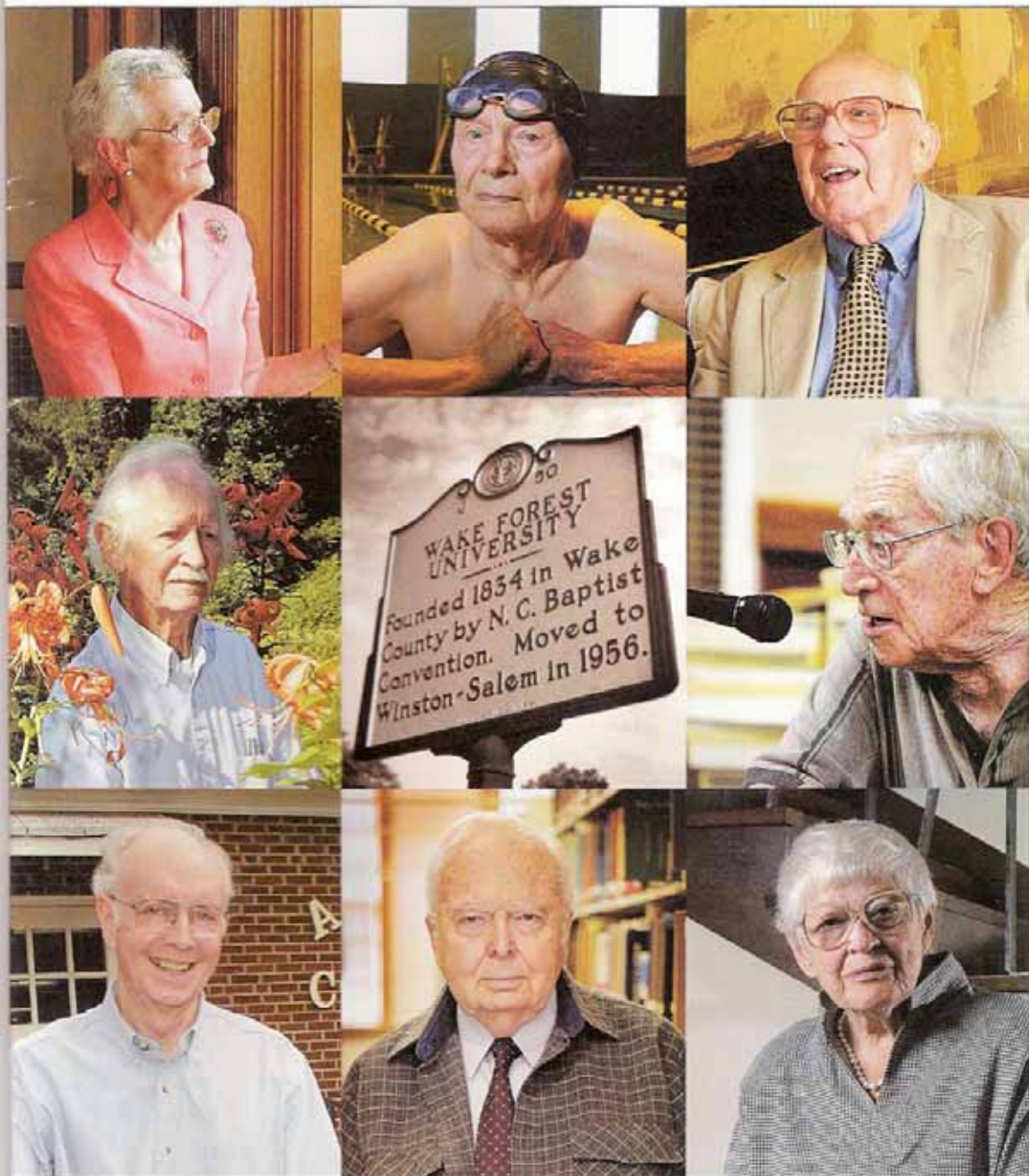


Bill Starling Terisio Pignatti The art collections

Wake Forest

M A G A Z I N E



Retired? Reenergized!

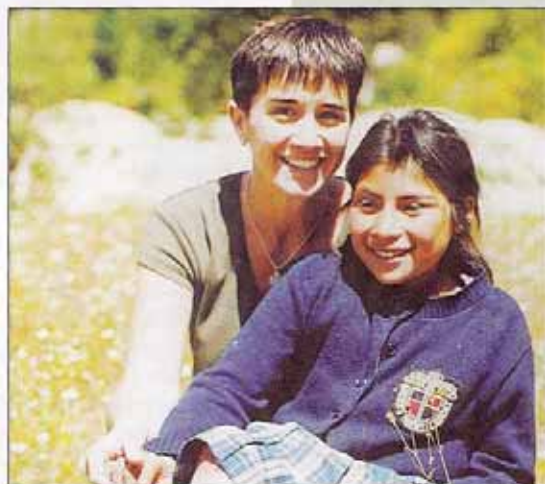
Emeriti faculty
staying active.
Page 18

Alumni Profile

Julie Coyne ('89)

Julie's kids

DON'T LET Julie Coyne's pixie look fool you. The thirty-four-year-old has founded and administers a charitable educational service in the



"It is a tremendous experience to realize that you can make a difference in another person's life."

poverty-stricken western highlands of Guatemala. She recently bought land in the area and dreams of raising \$100,000 to build a community educational center, and of increasing her annual budget (which she personally solicits, dollar by dollar) to \$85,000.

For seven years, Coyne ('89) has lived and volunteered in a country where 65 percent of the population is illiterate and more than 13 percent of children

between seven and fourteen years old work forty-hour weeks. After a year of helping with community service projects through a local Spanish language school, she developed a charitable education project that now provides scholarships to eighty-five children, a hot lunch (schools there do not offer meals) and after-school classes to several dozen children.

"They're doing everything they can to improve their lives, but there is a limit to their resources," she said. "In the beginning it was just me making scrambled eggs for four to five kids and helping them with their homework, because I saw that they couldn't do it on their own and usually no one at home could help, either."

Public schools are overcrowded, poorly staffed, and underfunded; some children never receive a textbook and teachers don't always show up to teach. Most Guatemalans cannot afford public school fees for registration, books, and supplies. Only one in eight Mayan girls makes it to the sixth grade. Coyne provides scholarships in La Esperanza, Quetzaltenango, and Uano de Pinal for moderately priced private school, which can cost as little as

eight dollars a month but is unaffordable to people who live on a dollar or two a day. The nonprofit program has grown from an annual budget of \$20,000 ("I really needed more, but I didn't know how to ask for it," she said) to \$75,000.

Coyne, who majored in religion and women's studies at Wake Forest, founded the organization in the belief that education is a basic human right. This is the first year in seven that she will pay herself a small stipend. She pays an assistant, four teachers, and a housekeeper who cooks lunch for the children. She has a dedicated, local board of directors.

Since overhead costs are low, the majority of the budget goes straight to the kids. Coyne provides bus fare, school supplies, and minimal clothing needs so that the child's school attendance is not a financial burden.

"I have such a trusting relationship with these families," she said. "I don't worry that they might ask for things they don't need; I worry that they need things they don't ask for."

Each child is promised educational assistance for as long as he or she remains successfully in school. Almost every child improves his or her

grades, some dramatically, and many are awarded outstanding student in their class.

Despite working seven days a week for seven unpaid years, living in a tiny, uninsulated concrete block house where the freezing mountain air rushes in under a two-inch crack in the door at night, her greatest difficulty is fundraising, which is accomplished by periodic trips home to her hometown of Norwalk, Connecticut. Talking to churches here and there, she manages to raise each year's budget.

"I completely understand how much this work gives to me," she said. "Even if I'm not being financially reimbursed, I am getting something more valuable than money. It is a tremendous experience to realize that you can make a difference in another person's life. It affects everything—how I think, how I see the world—and I'm so grateful for that."

Inquiries can be e-mailed to esperanza@xela.net.gt or mailed to Education and Hope, P.O. Box 486, Norwalk, CT 06856.
—SHERIDAN HILL