



THE PALAPA SOCIETY  
LA SOCIEDAD DE LA PALAPA

Learn with Passion  
to Live with Purpose

Annual Report 2019/20





## Our Past Year at a Glance

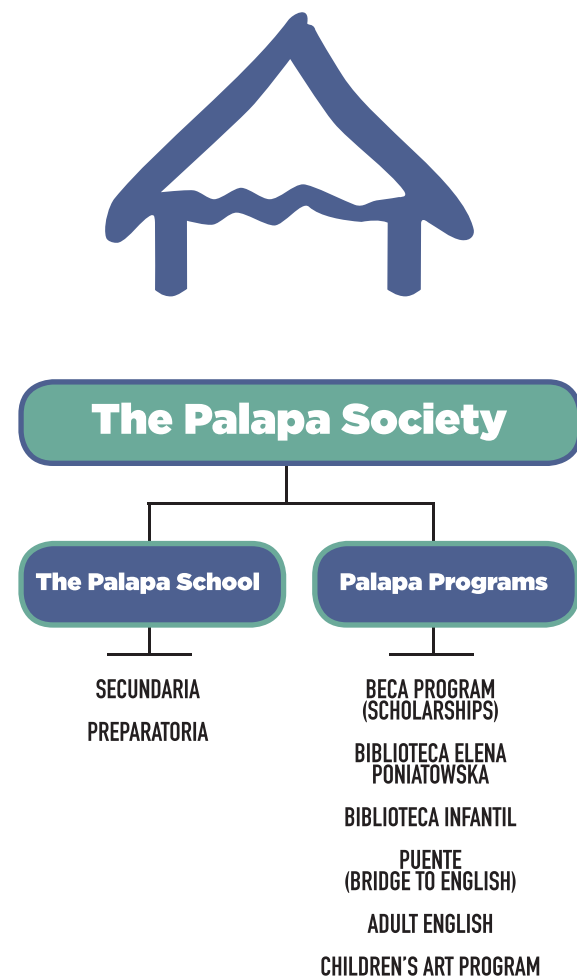
The end of 2019 and the first half of 2020 have been a time of extremes and The Palapa Society has met them all head-on. We completed SEP certification for the Preparatoria (high school) and will soon begin the process of building the 2nd floor of the school. Our Palapa Learning Center and community programs continued to flourish. One student traveled to Egypt on an American Field Services Scholarship. Our math Olympians traveled to La Paz for the annual competition and excelled at this function. Students enjoyed extra activities such as participating in a very active Leadership program and our new soccer team.

The Board of Directors also reviewed the growth of the organization over the past few years and focused on the need for updates to our organizational structure and procedure to reflect the growth. Starting with a Board retreat at the end of 2019 and a follow up retreat in February, 2020, the Board examined every aspect of its vision, mission, and operations in an effort to achieve effective communication and implementation in all its many aspects.

In March, we faced the Covid-19 pandemic and everything changed. The school continued its commitment to keep learning moving forward and quickly implemented online classes. Very little academic time was lost as every teacher stepped up and developed their curriculum to fit the “at a distance” learning mode. Palapa School Director Juan Diego González, the teaching staff, and volunteers were impressive in their ability to be flexible, creative, and adapt quickly to the new demands.

Our library and community programs continue to serve Todos Santos through the Little Free Libraries, creative on-line art and language projects, tuition support for students at the Palapa and public schools, and through partnering with other organizations to help families in need during difficult times. We will continue to meet the challenges of the year to come and look forward to our continued growth and success.

  
Erick Ochoa  
President



## A Letter from the School Director

Years ago, when the school was under construction, I descended into the hole where the foundation would lay to take soil for my house plant in order to nurture it and watch it grow along with our school. I touched big rocks before they were buried by the concrete that supports the entire building we now call with affection and pride, The Palapa School. If asked, I would say it is a solidly built school. However, this is just rock and cement, compacted soil and steel. What is under the building, on the walls, on the ceiling is a lot of heart. There is the heartbeat of all who make a contribution because they believe that quality education can change a life. Those of us who work as teachers also believe this. That's why we are here.

Sometimes people wonder, what is quality education? First, an important element in quality education is to have a group of teachers with characteristics that make them stand out from the rest. The teaching team at our school, in addition to being experts in their teaching areas, cultivate interests that make them unique. They are always learning, trying to be better, and model that to their students. Above all, they love what they do. They love being teachers. They did not come to Todos Santos by coincidence. The Palapa Society opened a door and through it entered special people who believe in education.

Palapa School is a fully SEP certified Secundaria and Preparatoria (Middle and High School). This summer/fall the second floor will be built. We are growing because the foundation is strong. We are growing because every time a donor gives support, it is a heartbeat full of hope that resonates through the walls, the ceilings, on the glass windows and enters each student who walks through the classrooms. Every day I wake up, I know it's a great day because I work to change the world.



Juan Diego González  
Todos Santos / 12 June, 2020



# Mission Statement

The Palapa Society of Todos Santos, A.C. exists to make a positive difference in people's lives through inspirational, quality education and timely support through community service and programs.

# Our Values

## Inspired Learning:

Raises the standard of education in B.C.S., Mexico.

Fosters responsible, thoughtful citizens through our educational and community programs.

## Spirit of Generosity:

This is achieved by:

Offering a variety of financially accessible educational program services and support.

Responding with our time, talent, and resources to community challenges as they arise.

## Stewardship:

We strive to:

Demonstrate integrity and responsibility, while safeguarding donor intent and ethically manage funds and resources.

Instill in local youth the principles and practices of stewardship.



# Our Impact by the Numbers

### THE PALAPA SCHOOL



**89**  
Students Enrolled

**100%**  
SEP Compliant



**20:1**  
Student to Teacher ratio

**\$2,400 US/yr**  
Palapa School Tuition

**\$4,500 US/yr**  
Actual cost per Student

**100%**  
Palapa School students receive a tuition stipend based on actual costs

**80%**  
Palapa School students receive a scholarship based on requested tuition

**1,200+**  
Palapa School, public school, and university scholarships distributed since 2003

### CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS



**150 Children**  
study English in the Puente program each year

**216 Children**  
studied Art after school since 2007



**350 Children**  
have library cards

### COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

**9,000+**  
English and Spanish books in the Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska

**60 Volunteers**  
contributing in-kind services and expertise to all programs

**75+ Adults/year**  
enroll in the Adult English program



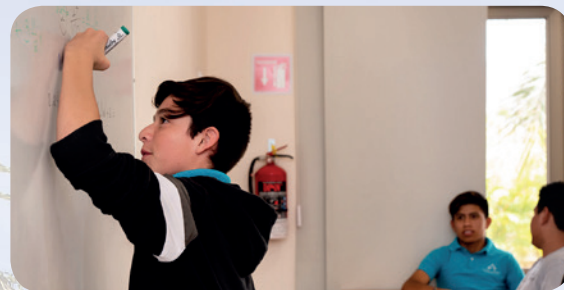
# The Palapa School

Opened in 2017, The Palapa Secundaria (Middle School) and the Preparatoria (High School) that opened in 2019 are the fulfillment of a dream to create an innovative educational, SEP-certified Middle and High School available to the youth of Todos Santos.

Since its inception, The Palapa School has attracted highly qualified and experienced teachers who provide high-energy learning environments for students to master traditional academic skills and knowledge. With core classes focused on Language, Science, History, and Math, students receive intensive reading and writing instruction in Spanish and in English and have access to computers and a well-equipped science lab. The Palapa students are currently participating in national and statewide competitions and conferences.

Yet, it is more than academics. The Palapa Society's vision is to give students the skills and confidence to live successful lives of fulfillment and contribution. Through progressive teaching techniques and innovative after school clubs and programs, The Palapa School fosters students' curiosity and imagination while igniting their creative spirits. The culture of The Palapa School promotes caring and kindness and lays the foundation for students to become thoughtful, accountable stewards of their families, the community, and the world. More than just classrooms, The Palapa School is a place where learning flourishes and students receive the support, encouragement, and tools they need to blossom into their best selves empowering them to live choice-filled lives and follow their dreams.

The capable and highly motivated students are the Todos Santos community leaders of tomorrow, potentially becoming our future teachers, doctors, accountants, entrepreneurs, artists and more. This success is possible because of the ongoing support and encouragement of the local Todos Santos community and the international supporters and fans who share our vision for a brighter future.



## Leadership Club

Students from the Leadership Club mastered the skills and built the confidence to speak to over 350 people at the John Paul Jones fundraiser concert in February 2020. They inspired the audience as they shared their personal stories and dreams for the future.



### Paola P

During the summer of 2019, Paola participated in a study trip to Cairo, Egypt, winning an AFS (American Field Services) scholarship. She was the only 9th grade student to be accepted that year. The scholarship application was thanks to a history class project. Later, when entering tenth grade, motivated by teacher Ana Castillo, her group tutor, she applied to a Teach for All program called SLAC (Student Leader Advisory Council) for 2020. In February, Wendy Kopp, CEO and Founder of Teach for All, notified Paola of her acceptance. Among 135 countries that applied, Paola is the only student selected this year from Mexico. Her participation in this council is active until March 2021 and made up of just 8 students.

### Francisco C, Jennyfer L and Aliya F

As 10th grade students, and part of the collaboration agreement between The Palapa Society and Enseña por México, these students have access to the network of competitions of this association. All three students applied to participate in a leadership camp to be held in April 2020. Our students were chosen from more than 45 schools submitting applications. Get Inspired is a camp bringing together students who have demonstrated leadership in their schools and communities to continue developing those social leadership skills to positively influence their environment.

### Sebastián C, Sarah L and Valeria C

In May 2019 they participated in the State Science Fair, as eighth graders. Their project focused on electromagnetic waves; the subject of the physics class taught by teacher Xavier Quiroz. The students designed an apparatus that generated this type of wave. In addition to the demonstration, they explained the applications in technological advances for the development within our society. Their presentation was delivered in English and Spanish. This team won first place in its category.



## Palapa School Student Success Stories

# La Escuela de La Palapa



# Community Programs

## Beca Program: Public School and University Scholarships

This original Palapa Society program is aimed at providing scholarships for local youth to assist with financial requirements of the public schools. For 17 years we have ensured the longevity of this program by continuing to provide tuitions to students of merit and need attending public schools and universities. The program began in 2003 with just 3 scholarships and has grown to 167 annual recipients.



## The Puente (Bridge to English) Program

This program, geared towards school-aged youth, currently has 145 students enrolled. Registration for this program is held annually in October and is eagerly received by our local community. Each year, there is an overwhelming response from parents seeking open spots in the program. Puente has four lead teachers and thrives with the help of local volunteers. During the 2019/20 year, Puente added a special class on sea turtles with Susan Farrar. There were many other visitors throughout the year including REI, Root Adventures, The Link School, and many more.



## The Palapa Adult English Program

Our Adult English classes follow a similar structure and curriculum. It is geared to older students who have completed the Puente program and adults who wish to enhance their English and increase their employment qualifications. Classes are made up of parents of children who are learning English, plus business owners and employees who interact with the English-speaking community on a regular basis.



## Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska (Bilingual Community Library)

In November 2017, the library was formally dedicated in the name of world renowned, award-winning author Elena Poniatowska, the “Grande Dame” of Mexican literature. Our library is known as the largest bilingual library in the state of BCS, which includes more than 9,000 books, magazines, and DVD’s and serves the entire community.



## Biblioteca Infantil Elena Poniatowska (Children’s Bilingual Community Library)

The Biblioteca Infantil has a growing collection of books in Spanish and English and includes special programs to help local children develop a lifelong love of reading. This includes the Saturday Reading Circle and Craft Hour where kids create an art project inspired by the story that was read. Since opening in October 2016 over 350 children have signed up for library cards and regularly check out books.



## Children’s After School Art Program

This creative program has 16 students ages 8-14 with 2 teachers and 2 assistant volunteers. This year we had great success with the ceramic part of the program! The kiln was up and running and students each produced some wonderful first pieces.

The focus of the program is to inspire students’ imaginations and allow them to experience different mediums of art.



## Water Safety Program

The Water Safety Program, hosted by Mario Surf School, celebrated its 8th year teaching local children proper water safety skills. Each year Mario Becerril and his team teach 15-20 kids for 5 weeks the basics of swimming.

In the first two weeks, the students start at the pool at Hotel Serendipity, donated by the owner and Palapa Board member Sharon Morris. They then graduate to Playa Punta Lobos to apply their skills. Swimming in the Pacific Ocean can be intimidating, but it is critical to learn water safety here, since we live in a beach community.

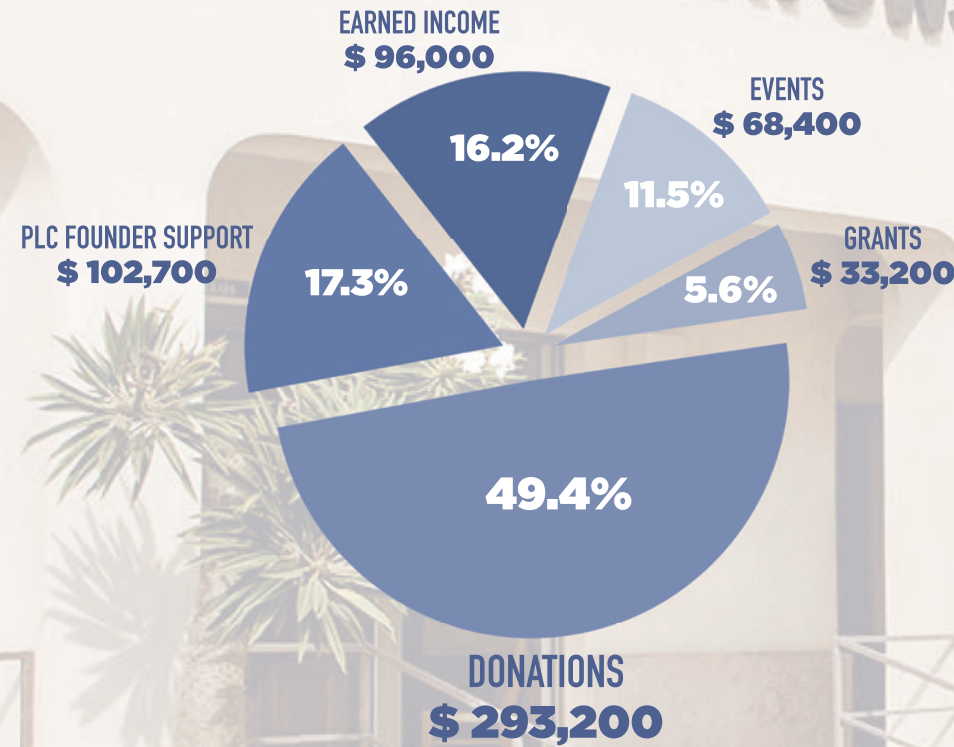
The programs ends at Playa Los Cerritos with surf lessons.





# Financial Overview

## Total Revenues: \$593,500



**DONATIONS:** Contributions from individual donors.

**PLC FOUNDERS SUPPORT:** The Palapa School Founders support funding for organizational stability. In FY2018 the PLC Founder Support was \$200K. In FY2020 the PLC Founders Support was able to be cut in half as we had an Excess of Revenue over Operating Expense of \$89K in Calendar Year 2019 and a cumulative FY2020 (18 Months ending on June 30, 2020) surplus of \$95,828 exhibiting excellent Expense management and a growing Donor base.

**EARNED INCOME:** Includes The Palapa School Tuition and fees from the Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska and English programs.

**FUNDRAISING EVENTS** including the Tianguis (community flea market), the Carrera de Todos Santos 5k Run, Todos Santos Open Studio Tour, Library Dinner, Calendar Sales and the Historic Home Tour.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the Palapa Society transitioned from a Calendar Fiscal Year to a Fiscal Year that mirrors The Palapa Learning Center Academic Year (July 1 - June 30)

For purposes of this FY2020 Annual Report, an 18-month period (1/1/19 - 6/30/20) of Revenues and Expenses are reflected, enabling us to kick off Fiscal Year 2021 on July 1, 2020.

## Total Expenses: \$497,700

**INFRASTRUCTURE & PROPERTY MAINTENANCE:** SEP-certification requirements, Insurance, Security, Repairs and Maintenance

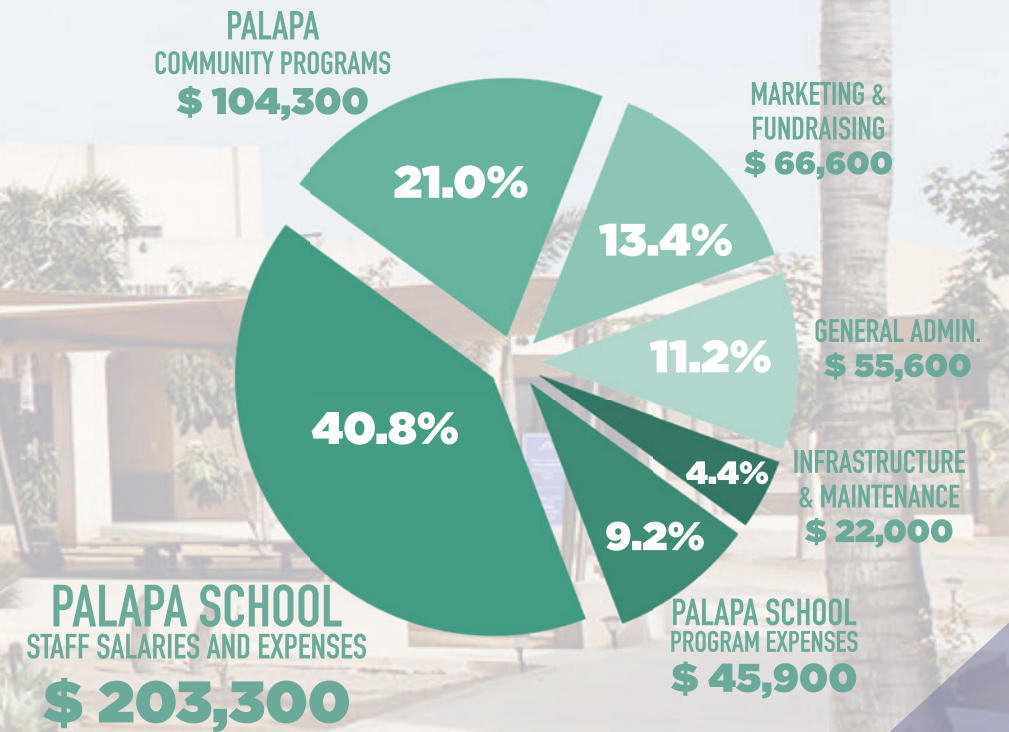
**PALAPA SCHOOL PROGRAM EXPENSE:** Equipment, Computers, Furniture, Books, Supplies and Materials

**PALAPA SCHOOL STAFF SALARY & EXPENSE:** Salaries, Employment Taxes, Training and Education Seminars

**PALAPA COMMUNITY PROGRAMS:** Beca, Puente, Adult English, Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska and After School Programs

**MARKETING & FUND RAISING:** Marketing and Communications, Social Media, Grant Writing and Fundraising Events

**GENERAL ADMINISTRATION:** Accountant, Taxes, Insurance, Security, Custodial Services, Grounds Maintenance, Supplies, Equipment, Utilities and Technology Expenses



FY 2020 REVENUES	<b>\$593,500</b>
FY2020 EXPENSES	<b>\$497,700</b>
<b>EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<b>\$ 95,800*</b>

\* - FY2020 (18 Months ending on June 30, 2020) surplus of \$95,800 exhibits excellent Expense management and a growing Donor base.





# Our Donors

## 2019-20 Donor Honor Roll

David and Cindy Higgins  
 Peter Buck  
 Peter and Pam McIlroy  
 Jim and Patricia Cardillo  
 Saltzman Family Foundation  
 Jene Buckner  
 Cheryl Myers  
 Don & Joan Wurster  
 David & Nancy Lacey  
 Jim & Kristen Bender  
 Bill & Chris Durboraw  
 Margaret Lawson  
 Ann Hazard  
 Cathryn Williams



We wish to remember longtime resident Barbara Fleming who passed away in August of 2019. This special and much-loved lady was the owner of Mangos Gallery and an avid participant in the bridge club. Before her passing she was inspired to make a legacy gift due to her excitement about the start of the first high school class.

Jeanne R. Cordova, who passed away in 2016, is fondly remembered by the Palapa Family. Jeanne, along with her partner Lynn Ballen, were the founding women of The Palapa Society, beginning with a library in a box and a high school scholarship for two local girls. They believed in the importance of education for all, and in 2020 her trust gave a generous donation to The Palapa Society.



## In Memoriam 2019 Donors

Tom Parrish, who passed away in May of 2019, is also a fondly remembered contributor. When he first came to Todos Santos in 2004 and learned about The Palapa Society, it was a perfect fit for him and he was always ready to help out with fundraising and other activities to support the work of the organization to benefit the community. To see the dream of The Palapa School come to fruition during his stay in Todos Santos was very meaningful to him in that it provides a local pathway to higher education for children who would not otherwise have had such opportunities. Throughout his life, and until his passing, Tom was a dedicated educator and policy analyst and his work continues to improve the lives of many thousands of children and families in educational and social service programs across the US and around the world.

# Faculty and Staff

## The Palapa School

**Director** Juan Diego González Castro  
**Educators** Ana Castillo  
 Armando Vazquez Garcia  
 Francisco Xavier Quiroz González  
 Melissa Chen  
 Valeria Canizales  
  
**Student Teachers** Surisadday Eslava Marquez  
 Martin Oswaldo Osorio Ramirez  
  
**Staff** Cruz Torres Cadena  
 Alondra Monserrat León Valenzuela  
  
**Kitchen Staff** Gregoria del Carmen Villalobos Perez  
 Areli Castillo Zaisa  
 Marta Elva Villalobos Villalobos  
 Lucia Villalobos Villalobos  
  
**Cleaning Staff** Maria Monserrath Sanchez Marquez

## Palapa Learning Center Program Directors

Jayna Schweitzer Palapa Society Programs  
 Executive Director  
  
 Kate Lewis Adult English Program Director  
  
 Donna Schultz Biblioteca Elena Poniatowska  
 Director  
  
 Joy O'Brien Biblioteca Infantil Director  
  
 Jill Mollenhauer Children's Art Program Directors  
 & Doug West

## Parents Association

**President** Salvador Gómez Pelayo  
**Vice President** Zoe Abraham Ochoa Solís  
**Secretary** Dulce María Orozco Avilés  
**Treasurer** Luis Alberto Abarca Urías  
**Members** Hilda Maribel Rochín Salgado  
 Ivonne Castro Villalobos  
 Karla Guadalupe Torres Martínez  
 Verónica de Jesús Domínguez Talamantes  
 Adela Salgado Salgado  
 Erick Josué Morales Díaz  
 Bernardina Cadena Polo  
 Ariadna Guadalupe Pérez Espinoza



As a multi-cultural, non-profit Mexican Civil Association (A.C.), the Mexican equivalent of a U.S. nonprofit organization, The Palapa Society partners with the International Community Foundation (ICF) as our US fiscal agent. ICF accepts and processes donations on behalf of The Palapa Society and conducts ongoing mentoring, monitoring, and due-diligence of our activities.

## Our Event Sponsors

(Sponsorship gifts of \$3,000 USD or more)



HOTEL CASA TOTA

Todos Santos  
PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION



## Our Grantors

## Our Volunteers

The Palapa Society is fueled by the passion of over 60 volunteers. We depend upon and are grateful for each volunteer who generously give their precious time and talent.



# Board of Directors

PRESIDENT	Erick Ochoa
VICE PRESIDENT	Sharon Morris
TREASURER	Hal Butler
SECRETARY	Laurel D'Angelo
EDUCATION / ADVISORY CHAIR	Ardice Farrow
FUND DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING CHAIR	Cindy Higgins
BOARD MEMBERS	Pam Bumann Scott Bosch Bill Nation Gaby Trujillo
SPECIAL MENTION TO PAST BOARD MEMBERS	Tim Doyle Arlene Eige Tori Sepulveda
EDUCATION / ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Hal Butler Cindy Higgins Jayna Schweitzer Serena Saltzman
LEGAL ADVISOR	Felipe Lara
DIRECTOR OF FUND DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING	Jamie Sechrist
TREASURER ASSISTANT	Anita Harris

## Testimonials From Prior Board Members



The Palapa Society has been an integral part of the positive development of the Todos Santos Community since its inception 17 years ago, and every action and every step of growth has been with the good of the community in mind. To have been a part of the Palapa Board is one of my proudest accomplishments as a teacher and as a human being concerned with individual education and self-growth. As the Palapa family, we are aware of each individual and every step is monitored with care, whether it be the Elena Poniatowska Library, the Puente Bridge to English program, or the masterful program of The Palapa School. Every individual connected with The Palapa Society is personally committed to excellence, and like our students, we all work hard to achieve the best.



**- Tori Sepulveda**



As a former educator, I understand firsthand the power of an excellent education. As a member of the community, I felt a desire to support the place that embraced me as a guest in this Magical Town. What I didn't expect was how personally involved I would become in the whole community and how truly satisfying it was to see the positive impact of The Palapa Society. It is humbling to see how hard students and adults work to make education a priority. It is gratifying to know we can each play a small part in helping them achieve their educational and life goals. I feel deeply honored to have served on the Board and work with the community for a common purpose.



**- Kathy Warnert**

It is the vision of  
The Palapa Society of Todos Santos, A.C.  
to be a sustainable, accessible community-focused  
organization in which quality educational programs  
empower choice-filled lives and create positive,  
transformational change.

# VISION



