

June 2002

WorldTeach Dispatch

WorldTeach: 79 JFK Street Cambridge MA 02138 www.worldteach.org

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Volunteers currently contributing to educational development in Costa Rica, Namibia, Ecuador, China, Guatemala and Honduras.

Soon to be in the Marshall Islands!

Special Interest Articles:

- Piloting the program in Marshall Islands
- Seven years in Poland
- Volunteers' memories and impressions

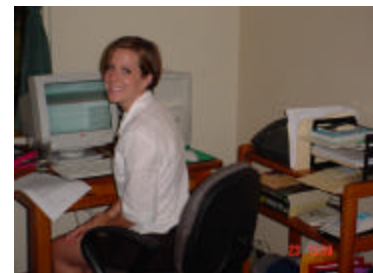
News from Costa Rica –From Field Director, Kate Miller

The Summer Program Coordinator and I are busy preparing for the arrival of 13 motivated volunteers who want to spend two months working in rural Costa Rica. Orientation will last 6 days and then the volunteers will head off to their sites for what promises to be quite a dynamic summer. The majority of the volunteers will be placed in Telesecundaria high schools around the country, where they will provide English classes to students who otherwise learn by video. The Telesecundaria program is quite successful, as it allows students in extremely rural areas to complete their high school studies, even though there are no facilities or professors available. Classes are set up in the town salon, local church or elementary school, and locals hired as “professors” guide the students through video lessons and corresponding assignments. At the end of three years, most students are able to complete the exams required for graduation and receive their diploma. The English requirement can be a challenge because the professors often don’t know English and can’t provide the students with answers to their questions or conversational practice. WorldTeach volunteers will fill in the gap, planning and teaching lessons geared to the level of the students. Many will also teach extracurricular classes and provide adult

classes, and all are encouraged to develop a project in their town based on assessment of the community’s needs.

Two of the summer volunteers will be working in an orphanage in the Limon region. This is the first year that WorldTeach has been involved with volunteer work in Costa Rican orphanages and its potential is exciting. Volunteers will live at the Salvation Army Orphanage in Limon, and will plan and provide English and computation classes. They will work closely with the orphanage staff to plan extracurricular activities for the kids, sharing “family” time and participating in their daily.

All volunteers will meet in July for an in-service meeting, and Ashley and I can only imagine the adventures that will be told! We’re looking forward to being part of each volunteers’ unique experience.



Individual Highlights:

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- Hear from our volunteers 3-6

Take a look at the new book “How to Live you Dream of Volunteering Overseas” and their new Internet bulletin board to discuss volunteering overseas.

<http://www.volunteeroverseas.org/discus/index.html>

Piloting the program in the Marshall Islands

June 2, 2002 -- Helen Claire Sievers and the new Field Director for the Marshall Islands, Alexis Miesen (returned volunteer from Namibia) set out for Majuro, via Hawaii. Helen Claire will be there for 10 days to help introduce Alexis to the culture, the people and the local delicacy “breadfruit” (something none of us can really imagine). Their mission is to secure teaching positions and accommodations. The ministry of education has invited 30 volunteer to take part in the program this year, which will officially start on July 21. We anticipate an excellent group and we are waiting for final confirmations. We will be taking a wait list of people who are interested in case any of the accepted candidates do not confirm. (cont. page 4)



THE END OF AN ERA

--By Field Director, Karen Green



Another departure group has made it to the Ecuador End of Service conference, which is my landmark for them being almost finished with their year. They came with perspectives from many different sides of Ecuador: the rainforest with its utter lack of teaching resources and even a lack of electricity, the mountain region with many teaching higher class, conservative Ecuadorians, the coast with community classes and up to 150 students for each WorldTeach volunteer, and finally Galapagos with placements from a Montessori school, to community classes to classes for the employees of a tour company. Every single volunteer had different experiences to share, but they all had some of the same experiences, pitfalls and periods of growth. The End of Service conference is a time when everyone can really enjoy himself or herself after getting through many of the rough times of the year. We spent an Ecuadorian holiday weekend in Atacames, a small beach town in the northwestern province of Esmeraldas. Fun and sun were had by all. One thing that many value most about the WorldTeach experience is the camaraderie that they establish and continue even when they return to their homelands. One this year will most likely be going back to her home of Shanghai, China. A married couple that came to Ecuador looking for new experiences will be heading off to Japan at the end of the summer to participate in the JET program. Some will be following the career path they had before they came; some are in for the challenge of discovering where their niche is back home, whether that be graduate school or the job market. To top off the conference, some of us went on an adventure in search of a Cuban salsa band that was rumored to be playing Esmeraldas, about 45 minutes from where we were staying. A couple of us decided to go early to the site where they were suspected to be playing later that night. Esmeraldas is said to be the province with the largest percentage of Afroecuadorians, complete with Afro Ecuadorian folk music played with marimbas and traditional percussion. It is also a

city that loves salsa musica. We began our search at about 6:30 pm, thinking that there would be a long line for tickets for the 9:00 pm show (based on the fact that the same show in Quito several days before had a turnout of 10,000). Well, after finding the concert site (the courtyard of a high school near downtown), we were the ONLY people there. At 9:00 pm, there was a short line. We got in the gate, rented plastic seats for \$.50 and got our place in the front row. Hmmm, I'm thirsty; I think I'll go look for the drink vendors. I thought this would be an easy task based on the trend I had experienced of drink, food and candy vendors yelling their way through crowds of every concert I had attended so far. This was not the case at this concert. There was one person selling 2 liter bottles of soda water or coke for \$2 each to go along with bottles of rum and buckets of ice. That was it! I decided to hold out, and hold out, and hold out. An hour or so later, there was a decent crowd and the first band went on which was quite good, but it didn't get anyone off their plastic stools. Then, the headliners were announced, "Los Van Van de Cuba!" Right away, plastic seats were forgotten, dance partners pushed to the side and all eyes and ears were on this charismatic group of excellent musicians. I don't think I have been a part of an audience who were also great dancers. At about 12:30 a.m. we were getting tired. The taxi ride back to Atacames was going to cost \$12 no matter how we tried to bargain. We met some very honest taxi drivers who refused to take us either because their taxis were too old or they admitted they had had too much to drink. We finally made it back to the hotel around 1:30 a.m. to find the town of Atacames just getting their party started. Such is life here in Ecuador. Good friends and time to enjoy life is of the utmost importance. That is one cultural viewpoint I think all the volunteers will hold on to.



"Every single volunteer had different experiences to share, but they all had some of the same experiences, pitfalls and periods of growth."



News from China – by Field Director Aileen Lainez

Whew! Time indeed flew so fast. Another semester will soon end and China volunteers are currently either preparing to travel to other beautiful places in the country or to go home. Although they will be sad to leave Yantai and their students, they're looking forward to seeing the other parts of China and going back to where they've left off. Jon Logan and Frances Hart will be exploring other places in China when the semester ends while Christine Villavaso will fly straight home to New Orleans. Like all the other past volunteers in China, the biggest obstacle they had to hurdle was the cultural shock that led to several misunderstandings. Fortunately, communication and open-mindedness solved each one of them and prevented the volunteers from packing their bags and leave. In the end, they all agreed that their experience here was personally rewarding and incomparable.

Summer crept in slower than last year's. But

as soon as the temperature rose, the Yantai local government wasted no time beautifying the city. The roads were re-built and sidewalks adorned with flowerpots. Old restaurants and establishments were remodeled to look newer and more modern. Businesses were re-decorated their establishments with more color and lights to become more attractive. It seems that there's always something new to see everyday in Yantai.

As small as the city of Yantai may seem, it is definitely trying to keep up with the times. Investing on modern infrastructure are some of their innovations towards economic development and be comparatively progressive as its neighboring cities, Dalian and Qingdao. Volunteers will leave different Yantai as when they first came in a few months ago. Nevertheless, it is the people and the experience that they've grown to love and will never forget when they leave.



Jonathan Logan with his class in Yantai

Seven Years in Poland—by Jon Surface

I arrived in Poland as a WorldTeach volunteer in January 1995. I am still in Poland 7 years later. Every year has been wonderful and never have I lacked for new opportunities and challenges.

After a year and a half in Nowy Dwor Gdanski, working in a technical high school for WorldTeach, I found employment for two years as a lecturer at the University of Gdansk Teacher Training College. This position gave me the opportunity to take a position at the British Council Studium at the University as well.

I thought two years in higher education would be more than enough and planned to return to the States to begin graduate school. However, the position of Director of the American School of Gdynia from the fall of 1998 came my way, an offer too good to refuse. This is my fourth year as Director,

my first as Chairman of the Board for the non-profit organization I registered to take over ownership the school. On the way, I contributed articles to the local English-language press, started a Gdansk city travel guide, organized an expatriate social club, helped charter an English-language Rotary club and was selected to contribute my services as Warden for the US Embassy in Warsaw.

You never know what will come your way when you make the first leap. What an adventure.

I leave this June after 7 1/2 years to finally return to graduate school. My experiences have made for a well-rounded and professional resume.

Best to everyone in the office. Special salutations to my coordinator in 1995, Dorota Nowak. See you in the States this fall.





Summer in Costa Rica—by Caitlin Daly



June 20, 2001...my World Teach experience begins. As I board the plane I think about all of the adventure that lies ahead and cannot help worrying a bit. Will I have electricity, hot water, running water, food? I spent my time in Samara, a beach town on the Pacific Coast, and truly learned to love the Pura Vida lifestyle. In my two months in Costa Rica, I really enjoyed living, people for who they are, and nature. It ended up I did have electricity and water and plenty of food, but the lack of technology was what made life there beautiful for me. People were not on the go all of the time. They would take two hours out of their day to teach me how to prepare my favorite dessert, made out of fresh coconuts from the beach, sugar, and chocolate. One man sat down with my friends and I to show us all of the different types of Costa Rican music on his guitar for three hours. The teachers and students in the

schools love to just sit around and chat (which makes teaching a little slower than in the US). One of my favorite daily activities in Costa Rica was playing soccer on the beach with my students. The girls do not play a lot down there, so it was just the boys and I. We would play at sunset, and I can still picture the rainbow on one end of the sky, gleaming yellow on the other, and the ocean waves crashing against the beach. Throughout the summer, I shied away from technology and North American materialism. I lived it up naturally, enjoying people and nature for what they are. I shared my English skills with the students in my high school, and in exchange they gave me the ability to enjoy the Pura Vida.



Piloting the Program in the Marshall Islands (continued from page 1)

The enthusiasm for this program is overwhelming! Since scholarships make this opportunity open to a wide range of very interesting people, the applicant pool is diverse and highly qualified. In our next newsletter we hope to be able to share the stories and words of these pioneers with you.

Cocktails and not-so-modern medicine —by Jeff Miller CR 2002

I have four mango trees, a mandarin tree, and a cuadrado tree (wicked step cousin of the banana) in my back yard. Across the street, the neighbors have papaya, oranges, and pineapple. To get the fruit, the women stand out back in their yard and throw rocks to knock down the ripe fruit.

Consequently, the insult 'you throw like a girl' doesn't hold water in CR as the female population throws better than the males who grew up with soccer ball at their feet instead of a baseball in their hands. Lemons are a little harder to find.

One day my dad asked me if I wanted to go to the river to get lemons. The river being a mere 100 yards away I quickly agreed and threw on my flip-flops. After two hours of following the river up this mountain gorge we arrived to the lemon tree. After filling out backpacks to the brim we returned to the house and counted all 88 lemons. At five colones per lemon we saved a whole \$1.20 by taking a four hour journey to the infamous lemon tree of Marbella.



Cocktails and not-so-modern medicine (Continued)

There is one particular thing that stands out as the worst thing I have consumed here in Costa Rica...I don't know whether to classify it as a food or a beverage. I went to a local beach town to stay with my brother because all the sea turtles were making their nest and depositing eggs. Because it is too hot for the turtles to be born, the locals go and collect the eggs and sell them to turtle egg distributors. My brother explained to me that turtle eggs are a delicacy of sorts that are popular in bars. To set the record straight my brother decided to show me what he meant and quickly whipped up a "heuvos en salsa" cocktail for me. This consisted of five raw turtle eggs, resembling soft ping-pong balls, stirred together with ketchup, lemon juice and salt. Being the happy guest I choked down the popular cocktail to the best of my ability. While it didn't make me puke right away, my stomach was upset for about three days.

I have spent a fair amount of time with "mal

The End of the Year By Lilia Cai

During the end-service we all received our certificates of completing one year of volunteering in Ecuador and Karen Green, the field director, has thought of awards for everybody. I won the award of 360 degree (the most dramatic?), if not too boring it is entirely true to my Ecu experience. (although afterwards we agreed that I should have won the most American award!) Looking back at my 10 months in Ecuador, from the first four months when I didn't speak any Spanish, hating the food, hating the fact that I was a volunteer but teaching the rich brats in Ecuador who didn't convince me that they wanted to learn English at all, and always cold and dry, to my changing down to the hot and humid jungle and being the only WorldTeach Ecuador volunteer that teaches at the grassroots level this year, and learned to communicate and joke in Spanish, getting to know and falling in love with my students and people there that won my total

del estomago" (Mr. Montezuma) here in Costa Rica and I have learned that the Costa Rican treatment method differs a bit from our American "take two and call me in the morning" mentality. Last time I was sick my mom sent me over to the local neighbor who is know for having "good hands" Not knowing what to expect, I was a bit surprised that upon arrival she told me to lay down and take my shirt off. She then proceed to use a hard paste and started massaging different pressure points on my back, arms, neck, and stomach, that left me crying like a baby. When she finally finished I asked her what sort of cream she was using.....it was the same processed animal lard that my mom uses to cook everything I eat. That made me feel a whole lot better, when was the last time you had a lard massage? As if that wasn't bad enough, I was then informed I couldn't shower for two days. ! Of course not, I wouldn't want to prevent the medicinal values of animal lard from soaking into my skin entirely. I surprisingly felt quite better the next day....so I recommend you try it at home next time you are feeling ill.

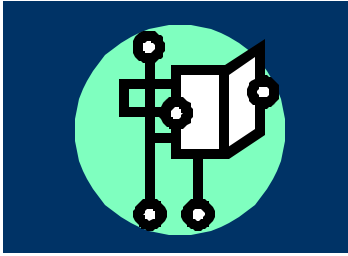
"This consisted of five raw turtle eggs, resembling soft ping-pong balls, stirred together with ketchup, lemon juice and salt."



respect for surviving their hard lives and forever having a ball! I am proud of myself and glad that things worked out for me in Ecuador, that I learned to adapt, tolerate, accept and respect an entirely different culture. A culture that slowed me down, from being a totally serious person that worships the value of hardworking and just want to go go, to being able to understand that a high quality of life doesn't necessarily need a high level of material background, to understand that there is really no need to get stressed, frustrated, mad, although I still do, big time, at least I started to see a different side of life, and know that its not a bad thing they are forever poking fun at everything and that they are not too keen on education is possibly not a bad thing either since their lives teach them so much! I learned to appreciate birds and butterflies, (but never cock roaches), I know it when I hear the monkeys and can spot right away where they are on the tree

"I won the award of 360 degree (the most dramatic?)... if not too boring it is entirely true to my Ecu experience"

Word Photos – Jessica Gillota Ecuador '01



We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.worldteach.org

Often I don't have my camera with me when I see moments that fascinate and inspire. I made a deal with myself that I could at least write these moments out in word photos. So, here are a few: Men, with guns, everywhere. Lazily leaning against those edifices they protect, or strolling down the sidewalk looking at women's legs, whistling and hissing for attention—anything to break the monotony of the day standing. The palm tree in the middle of the sidewalk. You squeeze to the right or step in the street. It's an elephant foot, planted firmly, but its toes rest on the edge of the concrete wanting to move one step forward. I crossed the street and saw him sitting under a tree holding a long, thin stick. People passed by constantly. He was the color of a chimney, the dust of days built up as a second skin. I passed and went about my day's cosas. I returned to the corner and didn't notice him as I stood at the edge of the street waiting for the flow of cars to pause.

He came up behind me and as I stood with my hands at my side, he took my left palm as if to escort me across the road safely. Shocked and confused, I jolted to the side and crossed the street sola, only to realize a few seconds later it was a blessing. Near midnight the trucks are out in swarms, like pilot ants guiding the rest of the colony. They block traffic and late night taxis honk eager to get their passengers to the port. Vegetables peek through the tented roofs and herbs, long on their stalks, hang down the backs of the wheeled barges. A woman nurses a baby, only a tiny foot outside the folds of its mother's robes. The night people move deftly through the work ahead, gliding silently until morning. When we come out of our houses they are gone and all that is left are the worm-eaten outer leaves of lettuce and bad potatoes.

The End of the Year (continued)--By Lilia Cai

I have eaten all kinds of weird animals including monkey, mayon (a kind of big fat worm that people love there!) and armadillo and other things that I can't name. I have learned to cook rice without a rice cooker. I have managed to eat only rice, yuca, plantains, and fish everyday. I have witnessed and been a part of their Quirchua life. I even learned to play basketball!

Teaching wise, I have never been such a creative teacher in my entire teaching career! Compared with the challenges of teaching in the high school in Limoncocha, my past experience of teaching in international private institutes like EnglishFirst is like a joke. Here I am not only an English teacher, I am a high school teacher, and I teach without any guidelines or resource books. While I have the absolute freedom to teach whatever I want, I don't have the freedom to make no matter how many copies I want, or just resort to a game book when I am out of ideas. I often think about when I did my practice teaching at EF when I was being trained, I had to teach the five vowels. It was so hard for me because I always taught high or intermediate level of English and I thought no way I would be teaching this in my life! I was wrong. Teaching letter! s is a constant challenge here since my students still can't get the difference of "I" and "E", "V" and "B" or "T" and "D". I realized that I couldn't take it for granted that anything is easy for them because they had no previous exposure to the English language. In shanghai, we at least grow up with "Say you say me" and the Carpenters. For my students, English is just as foreign as Quichua is to me. (the rest of Ecuador is not like this. I am staying at a friend's luxurious house last night and the children speak perfect English since they have studied abroad and the parents can most or less understand some.) So for me as a teacher, I have learned to be more patient than ever and more resourceful. When they cut down lots of trees for putting up electricity wires (they finally worked their ass off to get electricity so that they c an watch the world cup during the day.) my students and I cut and saw into pieces of wood cubes that we drew letters onto them and made our own "boggle" game.. I do lots of drawings with my younger classes too. But at the end, I know that being a "chinita" in their community is a lot more important to them than the fact that I teach English there. Providing an exposure to the outside world is more like my accomplished mission than teaching them to speak English, which 99% of my students won't be using for the rest of their lives. They are forever more interested in Chinese, interested in chop sticks and martial arts than learning English. And they like me, more than the English I teach.

News from the most recent group to be home! Ecuador April 2001
has returned and here are the words of their fearless Group Liaison, Jon
Prentice, as he gives the update for the future.

Kelly didn't have the best of luck
Mind was strong but body started to (...)
Went home early for the medicine she needed
But her teaching now is not impeded

Lynda is now trying to grapple
With new jobs in the Big Apple
Freelancing journalist this time
It's clear to us this star will shine

Josh is going to Spain and Germany
But when there will not earn money
Instead he'll have big fun and travel
And then his life plan will unravel

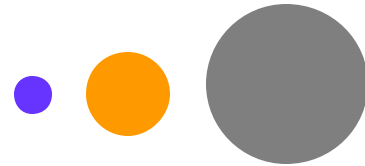
Annie's good folks see her daily
Many ideas but she thinks maybe
She'll arrange to go abroad
To play the cello and be adored

Rebecca's just got back to town
On her face there is no frown
She knows her coffee, muffins and art
Will give that Starbucks quite a start

And Lucas is our favorite boy
Loveable, charming, such a joy
Speaking Spanish with all in school
Playing football, disregarding the rules

And me, how could I omit?
Back in Sydney dealing with life's hassles (shouldn't that rhyme?)
But not for long as Stella's calling
To Uruguay my star is falling

So finally about the group
Stronger, more open, what a troop
There's strength in one, but more in all
I adore the lot – let's walk tall"



Possible Resources for returned volunteers in NYC

...

YNPN, the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network has just launched in NYC. Find out about events in the community, free stuff, volunteer opportunities, jobs, apartments, etc.

Here's some info for you:

<http://www.ynpn.org/enewsletter/0201v3/0201national.asp>

If you like hearing stories from WorldTeach alumni, please help us all keep in touch by becoming a group liaison for the WorldTeach alumni network!

We would like to thank the liaisons from the following groups:

Andy Wanning CR 1995
Rebecca Rhodes CR 1997
Chris Canniff April EC '98
Heather Tonkin Ecuador '99
Todd Jackson CR summer '01
Neil Brown Namibia summer '01
Jason Butler China summer '01
Kristie Fahrback EC summer '01
Molly Moran Namibia '01
Stacy Phillips CR '01
Amy Zimmerman China August '01
Jon Prentice EC April '01
Leah Pearson Ecuador '01

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