



WorldTeach Dispatch

February 2002

WorldTeach: 79 JFK Street Cambridge MA 02138 www.worldteach.org 1-800-TEACH-0
Volunteers currently in Costa Rica, Namibia, Ecuador, China, Guatemala and Honduras.
Soon to be in the Marshall Islands!



News From The Field

Windhoek, Namibia- by Field Director Vince O'Hara

Stress-free Hosea Kutako International, the Gobabis road, Sam Nujoma Drive, through Klein Windhoek, across Independence Avenue, past the Louis Botha store, and right onto Hendrik Witbooi Drive. The Khomas Hochland was still burnt-brown. I focused on an oddly

familiar smell, that of something fried; yes, it was distinctly Namibian, so distinct as to exist outside my consciousness during my first tour here. It was the smell of vinegar-laden, spice-covered, scrumptious chips—French fries. A smell to which now, almost two months after my return, I am once again immune. Not

much has changed in Namibia since 1999, my volunteer year here. Sam Nujoma is still president, though, he assures, not for much longer. The Caprivi and the Kavango are still no-go areas, though, the US embassy assures, also not for much longer. At first glance Windhoek is the same. What has changed here has been subtle.

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Yantai, China – by Field Director, Aileen Lainez

"Do I have everything? Is everything I need in my backpack?" asked Amy Zimmermann as she frantically sped off to the airport. Amy was heading to Shanghai for her first leg of travels before going back home to Boston. Amy, together with Jeff Martin and Liz Merritt, just finished their 6-month teaching stint in Yantai. She was sad to leave Yantai because

she will miss her young, beloved students, the good Chinese friends she made and the daily afternoon taichi lessons. Her experience in China taught her the simple things in life, things that she will never forget like eating noodles with friends and having dinner with a Chinese family. There were many frustrations, but instead of harboring on them, she just found

ways to amuse herself. "Everything about China is funny," she always quips when crossing the street hoping to get to the other side alive or when the taxi driver forgets to pull the breaks while parked on a slope and she's in it or when the school dorm where she lives shuts off water and electricity during the weekend.

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Announcements

Quito, Ecuador

Greetings from the country of Eternal Spring and abundant tropical fruit. When I arrived at the end of July 2001, I was excited about what Ecuador would be like this time around. I was here as a volunteer in 1996-1997, and I have seen that one of the main changes in the country is the rise in prices since dollarization. Also, the influence of the United

States, especially in Quito, has expanded. There is a Tony Roma's restaurant, Pizza Hut, McDonalds, Burger King, Baskin Robbins, Taco Bell, Cinnabon. When I was asked at the Kentucky Fried Chicken if I wanted regular or "krispi", I certainly requested crispy. My friend told me that was the first time he had heard anyone say that. He thought crispy was some other kind of

chicken. English is all around us here. At times I have a desperate feeling that we need to all help to make a difference here. There are people who live in very rural areas who earn \$80 or less per month and have families to feed. I meet people on buses who are glad to have the chance to talk to an "extranjera" to see what we are like and why we like to visit their country. [\(more on pg. 7\)](#)



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Program Update

With a total of 90 WorldTeach volunteers currently in the field, the programs are in a strong position. Our largest contingent is in Ecuador, where the April group is near completion of their service, while the large September group has just enjoyed their mid-

service conference. In December a group of six volunteers began the Nature Guide Training Program in Guatemala, where they will teach English and guiding skills to adults in the Tikal National Park. January was a busy month of departures, with 10 volunteers traveling to Namibia and 25 to Costa Rica.

We congratulate the China volunteers on completion of their fall semester in Yantai and share the excitement of the new volunteers preparing to travel to Yantai later this month. Groups are forming for Ecuador in April and another Nature Guide Training Program in Honduras in May. [\(more on pg. 5\)](#)

Alumni Network

Have you ever caught yourself saying, “I wish I had kept in touch with the other volunteers in my group.”? Or “I wish I could get back in touch with WorldTeach.” GIVE ME A CALL!! 1-800-483-2240.

I am looking for a volunteer from every WorldTeach crew in our 15 year history to represent their group in the alumni network. This **group liaison** would be the link between their group and the office, they would disperse current news of WorldTeach programs and would be responsible for keeping track of the volunteers from their year. It’s actually a very exciting responsibility. You can make this happen for all the members of your group!

Thank you in advance!
Ellen Whitman, Admissions and Alumni Coordinator

From the Volunteers

Ecuadorians have the most amazing way of having fun. They love creating chaos and being wild. Today is the perfect example. I decided to catch the bus to town rather than walk because I had so many things to do, plus get to the post office before 12. After my first few stops I was walking down the one way street and heard all these cops on bikes honking their horns and they started driving down the street the wrong way! Then there was all this noise like a parade, (which happen all the time. There's a parade for everything!) Then all the busses in the entire city, maybe 200 of them, came flying down the street all going the wrong way!!! They blocked both main arteries of traffic and the entire city is essentially paralyzed because they take up both streets from one end to the other of the city (which one can walk in about 20 minutes!) Its crazy . . . organized chaos! Carnival is another example. It still ISN'T for two more weeks and people have already started throwing water. And it can't just be a fun thing, it's and all out WAR! You're sitting on the bus and someone will run up and pour an entire bucket of water through the window! Or, you're walking down the street and all of a sudden are drenched from head to toe because someone three stories above threw an entire bucket of water on you without you even knowing where it came from!! And the yucky part about Machala, is that they don't always use clean water!!! I got a whole bucket of really gross water dumped on me and after washing my clothes, they STILL smell of whateverhell that was! The kids with squirt guns can be fun. But it is a little carried away when you have to be afraid of walking down the street or going to work. I got bombed on my way to class by these little kids and I spun around, walked up to one holding a water balloon and asked him for it. He handed it over and I blasted his buddy! You gotta get a little involved. Suzanne has gotten soaked a couple times and we still have three weeks to go!!! AH! But there are some really wonderful things to do, too. Like swim in rivers. Yesterday my friend and I went to his little hometown and I got to get soaked by a dam offspray. It felt like going under Niagara Falls! It was awesome. Plus it was with his parents who are totally cool, fun, young souls. Then we went and swam in a river and I played with all these little kids! I miss having fun with children. I taught them how to stand on their hands and turn around like a seal. They were all clamoring "Como se dice "agua" en ingles??" or dog, or rock or I love you? It was a lot of fun. So if you ever come to Ecuador, watch out for water, but definitely go swim in a river.

Leah Pearson is currently living and teaching in Ecuador

Comfortable Living

By Christopher Canniff Ecuador 1998

The almost three years since volunteering for WorldTeach Ecuador have given me sufficient time to reflect upon my experience there. During my stay, I made several lifelong friends, read over fifty classics of world literature, and wrote a substantial amount which someday will turn into a career in writing which may consume or complement

my passion for engineering, science and physics. I went days without speaking English. I now consider myself fluent in Spanish due to lengthy conversations with my Ecuadorian friends. I have since had two jobs requiring fluency in the Spanish language that I could never have otherwise obtained. While in Ecuador, I kayaked for the first

time, went white-water rafting (and swam) in the Amazon River, hiked through miles of rainforest and watched flocks of green parrots fly over treetops, swung on a tree vine with our guide's help as to what constitutes a live and therefore adequate vine to support one's weight, visited an animal refuge (Amazoonica), an island with the world's largest rodent, spider monkeys and
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"Before volunteering, I had only envisioned myself stepping beyond the boundaries of comfortable living."



Jeff Miller Costa Rica 02 Top Ten Things That Make Me Laugh

- 1) **Emergency Medical Care** - Today, an ambulance with his siren going pulled over to let our city bus pass - note to self: do not use local ambulances, take a taxi instead
- 2) **Dogs**- if NZ was know for its sheep, I think that 3rd world countries must be know for their dogs. There are at least 3 dogs per household it seems and an equal amount without owners. They are known to keep you up at all hours of the night with noises only God can decipher.
- 3) **Fashion** - Ghetto Fabulous is definitely en vogue for the ladies here. The tighter the better, the more rhinestones the better. The amount of gel you can afford to put in your hair everyday is a status symbol I swear. J'Lo and Mariah Carey would be very proud. And for men - I am glad to see that the mullet has international appeal. I dont care what country you are in, the mullet should always make you laugh. (there have also been some occasional sightings of the she-mullet)
- 4) **Hot Showers** - Shower water is heated by an electrical system ATTACHED TO THE SHOWERHEAD. Some have affectionately dubbed this the Frankenstein Shower. Can anyone say "Bad Idea"
- 5) **My Address** - my address for the year is "la casa de negrito, 20 metros suroeste de la plaza"....this roughly translates to "house of the little black man, 20 meters southwest of the plaza" My dad is not black, or particularly small, just the smallest dark skinned man in the village. PC is not big here.
- 6) **Chicken Tree** - Many families here own their own chickens so they can have eggs in the morning. My family however has a little twist. The chickens live in a tree 10 feet above the ground and they never descend. Every morning the dad climbs the tree to feed the chicks and retrieve breakfast
- 7) **Toilet Seats** - At times I wonder if priorities are a little strange here. The family I stayed with during training was relatively well off by Costa Rican standards. They had a computer, a nice stereo, fridge, etc. One thing was noticeably lacking - and is lacking all over this entire country- a toilet seat. This seemingly cheep necessity only seems to be present in people's homes who are financially destitute. It would almost seem that to not have a toilet seat is a status symbol...go figure.
- 8) **Fishing for TP**- Staying in the bathroom....plumbing in this country is not capable of handling toilet paper. Instead, there is a garbage can by the toilet to toss it. However, having been raised for the bast 23 years with the ability to flush tp, it is not instinctual to throw it in the garbage. For the first weeks here, most of us gringos spent time fishing for tp so as not to cause any large scale plumbing disasters
- 9) **Hitch Hiking** - I have done a fair amount of hitch hiking here in CR. Locals are extremely friendly and love picking you up. One morning a couple picked me up. They stopped the car, threw it in reverse and I hopped in. Shortly thereafter, I realized the wife was in labor and they were on the way to the hospital....yet they still picked me up? Crazy
- 10) **Beans and Rice** - I eat beans and rice all day every day here. I never knew there were so many ways to prepare it. you can put the beans by the rice, the beans on the rice, the rice on the beans, or you can get really fancy and mix it all together. For special occasions they will mix in chicken or some other unidentified meat product.

News from Yantai, China (continued from page 1)



Things that one would think will give you a heart attack, Amy would consider a good email story to her friends back home. Jeff and Liz also share the same sense of humor. Meals together were sharing funny stories of the day and they never seem to run out. They consider their time in China the most fruitful and

fulfilling experience in their lives knowing that they brought joy and difference to their students if only for six months. "I really enjoyed this group of volunteers because they are very adventurous and accepting of just about everything that China has to offer," Field Director

Aileen Lainez said. The next batch of volunteers will be different but Aileen hopes that they're easy going and open to the idiosyncrasies of China. Aileen is currently preparing for the spring semester 2002 orientation. Amy, Liz and Jeff are now traveling to other places in China and Southeast Asia.

Comfortable Living (continued from page 3)

jungle cats where the injured animals are nursed to health before being released back into the wild, soaked with friends in natural hot springs not smelling of sulfur, went horseback riding with a horse that refused to but was eventually coaxed into crossing a river, climbed several mountains with beautiful panoramas uncapturable on film, went snorkeling in Isla Rosario off Columbia's coast, visited the ancient

capital of the Incan Empire, and transcended the peak of Macchu Picchu, South America's Incan holy city untouched for hundreds of years after the Spanish Invasion, and virtually untouched by the ravages of time.

The time since Ecuador has been a time of contemplation, a time of reflection upon my life. It has led me to where I am today, content with the knowledge that I embarked on an

adventure where I regretted not one minute of the time granted me there. Before volunteering, I had only envisioned myself stepping beyond the boundaries of comfortable living. By going to Ecuador, I allowed myself to realize that vision and step beyond the limitations I had imposed upon myself. This has since become a trademark of my personality, and it has helped to define who I am today.

[The complete version of Comfortable Living is featured on our website.](#)



Program news (continued from page 2)

The number of volunteers participating in WorldTeach's long-term programs has risen compared with last year. This is especially encouraging given the international situation, and fears at home, since September 11th. It is testament to the dedication of WorldTeach volunteers and their determination to travel across borders

and reach out across cultural differences. Indeed, since September 11th many applicants have expressed an increased sense of responsibility to engage and learn with people in developing countries. By forging personal connections with students, friends, and a new community they want to do their part toward increasing understanding between

cultures. When asked by a local news reporter whether the events of September would affect her plans to Costa Rica, WorldTeach volunteer Marisa Davenport was quoted as saying, "No, I'm still going. Those kids in Costa Rica still need to learn English."



Change of Field Directors in Namibia

We say a fond farewell to **Seth Bundy**, after 18 months' of stellar service as Field Director in Namibia. Seth was a WorldTeach volunteer in Namibia in 1997-8 and returned in June 2000 to direct the program.

He has been a tremendous support to volunteers during their time in Namibia, and provided excellent teacher training and orientation to Namibian culture. By giving volunteers a strong start and responsive support Seth has helped volunteers to adjust and accomplish great things in their schools. Seth also put an enormous amount of work into developing the new WorldTeach summer program in Namibia. Working with SchoolNet Namibia - an NGO that equips and wires schools to the Internet - Seth shaped a

Proposal and made an agreement for WorldTeach and SchoolNet to partner in providing ICT (information and communication technologies) education to targeted Namibian schools. In June 2001, sixteen volunteers arrived in Namibia and taught computer skills to learners and teachers in 24 schools, as well as to 40 teachers in a special one-week workshop. We are extremely grateful for Seth's hard work, creativity, and dedication to developing this new opportunity for WorldTeach volunteers to respond to a need in Namibia. After assisting with orientation for the 2002 volunteers, Seth

will return home to Seattle in February to ponder his next great adventure in life-long learning. We wish him every success.

In December we were delighted to appoint **Vince O'Hara** as the new director of the Namibia program. A former volunteer (1999), Vince was familiar with the WorldTeach program and applied for the position out of a desire to return to Namibia to shape the program's development. While a volunteer he had made connections in the education community and had identified the need for computer education. He is excited to continue development of the ICT

teaching program for summer volunteers, to build it into an ever stronger program. Vince has a degree in government, experience in teaching and writing/editing, and brings his strong leadership and negotiation skills to the job. With Seth's help he has already led an intensive and successful orientation program for the newly arrived volunteers, and we appreciate his willingness to hit the ground running! We welcome Vince to the WorldTeach staff team and look forward to working with him as he leads the Namibia program to new heights.

[Harriet Wong is the Program Manager in Cambridge, MA](#)

Second Chances: A Travel Narrative of South Africa

by
Martha B. Hopkins

Martha was a WorldTeach volunteer in 1992. She went to southern Africa and Namibia in 1995-1996 and compiled her adventures in this travel book.

From the Back Cover

"These days, the farther away from home we travelers go in search of 'the other', the more we learn about ourselves. When Martha B. Hopkins traveled to post-apartheid South Africa, she has the good fortune to bear witness not only to the rich contributions and sluggishness of social change, but also to relearn how her own childhood and American life had been shaped by the difficulties of race and class. Second Chances is a beautifully attentive account of that journey. By focusing on the stories of daily existence in her travels, Hopkins opens a window onto this remarkable moment of history, and find in that view a parable of hope for all human societies."

-Alison Hawthorne Deming, author of The Edges of the Civilized World

News from Ecuador (continued from page 2)



“Many Ecuadorians were against the anti-terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, but anti-Americanism has not been a problem here..”

At least I helped to break some stereotypes by just having a chat with them. I feel bad sometimes that I can not help every person that calls me requesting an English teacher. I think about all of the people who have gone to Spain, Italy, the U.S. from here and wonder why there is no way to organize them so that they can help their own country by sending educational materials or used clothes that are in abundance and so much cheaper in Europe and the States. Why don't they have an orientation upon arriving to a new country? Why can't they take English classes and learn a new skill they could teach when they get back to Ecuador? After September 11, sentiments toward North Americans were of solidarity and angst. Out of about 12 million Ecuadorians, at least 30 died in New York on that day.

Many Ecuadorians were against the anti-terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, but anti-Americanism has not been a problem here. We certainly get a unique view of the United States by being outside. Many volunteers feel that being in Ecuador during that time means that they will never understand what it was like to actually be in the States when it happened. In a way, it is somewhat the same feeling as when relatives ask, "well, what is Ecuador like?" It is hard to describe when the frame of reference is not the same for everyone. Many things have not changed. The government still gets accused of corruption every chance that the press can get a tidbit of information. This is a small country, but problems abound. There are so many natural resources, but many people do not know how to conserve

them. I believe that WorldTeach is making a difference here in Ecuador, though. In a way, the volunteers provide a glimpse of hope for their students by giving them a new perspective. We are goodwill representatives of places where their relatives run to in order to find a better life but often find despair. Every little thing that each volunteer does to teach, give, share and just observe is a way to make things better. We are all more awake and aware from this sharing of cultures and ideas. I wish all returned volunteers the best in their searches and journeys.

Sincerely,
 Karen Green
 Field Director--Ecuador
 "Si Se Puede" (Yes, We Can)
 National chant during the final qualifying game for the World Cup.

News from Namibia (continued from page 1)

The hole across from Dros on the Post Street Mall has only gotten bigger, so much so as to consume a good chunk of the walkway and threaten the Gibeon meteorites. The Puccini Hostel is now the heavily fortified Puccini Guest House. A restaurant is rising within the courtyard of the Cardboard Box. And, most heartening, there has been a perceptible improvement in Namibia's standard of English. Banter in the national language is now more natural and easy, more attuned to subtleties.

Now more than ever I am convinced of the impact WorldTeach has had on this country. It has been almost twelve years since independence, and almost twelve years since WorldTeach first arrived to aid Namibia's drive to unify a nation around a language neutral, at least relatively, to its ethno-linguistic patchwork. Considering that shortly after independence less than 1% of Namibians claimed English as their mother tongue, the progress made during this time is astounding. It is a testimony to Namibia's massive investment in education and the will and

drive of its people and partners, of which we proudly stand tall as one.

Yet there remains much work to be done. This year we have placed fourteen volunteers at sites all over the country. The Namibian Catholic Bishops Conference is sponsoring Elizabeth Robinson in Aminuis, Kara Roop at Johannes Döhren near Gobabis, Christina Keseru in Tses, Gaëlle Simon at Waldfrieden, and, for the second year, Molly Moran at St. Michael's near Outjo. The Ministry is sponsoring David Ferguson at Mweshipandeka and Lauren Dahlman at Oshigambo. Three volunteers, Ann Marie Jackson, Karson Kiesinger, and Mimi Badenhorst, are working with the Rössing Foundation in Swakopmund, Arandis, and Windhoek, respectively. Two volunteers, Viktoria Paulick and Amy Smego, have stayed on at AfriCat for their fourth (!) and second years, respectively. Amelia Ryan, who volunteered last year at

Okatana, is presently awaiting reassignment by the Ministry to another school in the north. And Heidi Soule, the WorldTeach ICT project coordinator, is based at NIED in Okahandja, where she is researching the state of computer education in Namibia and coordinating our summer program.

It has been an honor for me to assume the reigns as the Namibia field director. I believe strongly in what we have achieved and will achieve in this country, and I am enthralled to be back in my soothingly familiar home away from home. A mountain of thanks must go out to my predecessor, Seth Bundy, for his almost four years of able and committed service to WorldTeach, and for his invaluable help in getting me started.

Finally, we in Namibia send our condolences to the family of Matt Sims on his passing. His impressive contributions to the children of Okatana and to our organization will not be forgotten.

Vince O'Hara
Field Director, Namibia



*“At first glance
Windhoek is the same.
What has changed
here has been subtle.”*

A Message of Gratitude

WorldTeach Scholarships and Fundraising

Thanks to the generosity of returned WorldTeach volunteers and other supporters, who have responded to recent fundraising campaigns, we have been able to offer scholarships to 18 volunteers since September 2001. WorldTeach scholarships are designed to assist those who are in financial need to meet the program fee for the long-term programs, and to augment their own fundraising efforts. Thank you for helping us to maintain the scholarship program.

The "15th Anniversary" campaign in fall 2001 has raised almost \$5,000 so far (some for scholarships, some as unrestricted donations) and it's not too late to donate! Please help us top the \$5,000 mark, and help another WorldTeach volunteer toward their goal of teaching abroad.

We would also like to recognize the creativity and energy that volunteers have put into their own fundraising efforts. They have held theme events, washed cars, run marathons, held bake sales, given presentations and classes, appealed to companies and communities -- in order to get others involved in supporting and sharing their international service experience. Many volunteers in the Namibia and Costa Rica groups raised an impressive portion of their program fee this way. Top of the charts was Elizabeth Robinson, Namibia 2002, who raised an extra \$5000 *over* the program fee! Elizabeth has decided to use these additional donations to provide for pressing needs at her placement school in Namibia.

WorldTeach Field Director needed For our new program in the Marshall Islands!!

Scope of Responsibility: The Field Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the WorldTeach program in the assigned country, as well as the ongoing support and oversight of its volunteer participants and host institutions.

Field Directors are responsible for adhering to all WorldTeach policies, standards and procedures as outlined in the most current personnel and field staff manuals, mindful that our highest priority is the safety and well being of WorldTeach volunteers during the course of their service.

For a full job description, please consult our web page under "jobs"