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WorldTeach Dispatch

WorldTeach: 79 JFK Street Cambridge MA 02138 www.worldteach.org
Volunteers currently contributing to educational development in: Costa Rica, Namibia, Ecuador, China, Baja, Guatemala, and the Marshall Islands!



Computer Training and AIDS/HIV Awareness Programs in Namibia

By Vince O'Hara, Field Director

In August WorldTeach Namibia finished its highly successful second year of the ICT Project. "ICT" stands for information and communication technology. Within that broad realm, we've naturally focused on computers and the Internet, which more and more Namibian schools are receiving, thanks largely to the efforts of SchoolNet Namibia, our initial partner in executing the ICT Project. Launched in February 2000, SchoolNet aims to have all 1,540 Namibian schools—even the two-thirds of them that lack electricity and/or phone lines—connected to the Internet by the end of 2005. Even if they come anywhere close to achieving this ambitious goal, schools all over Namibia will need some guidance as to how to use those ICTs as educational tools. Now in partnership with the National Institute of Educational Development (NIED), Namibia's education policy think tank, that's where the ICT Project comes in.

In December of last year, WorldTeach and NIED joined in partnership to "explore the

state of ICTs in Namibian schools." We agreed to place WorldTeach's new ICT Project Coordinator and technology-pedagogue extraordinaire, Heidi Soule, at NIED to facilitate that research. What emerged was a research project that had the 11 WorldTeach ICT Volunteers, who arrived in Namibia in June, at its center. The volunteers were tasked with helping schools integrate ICTs as educational tools into core coursework, as opposed to "teaching" computers as subjects themselves, and to write case studies of their experiences for NIED. The volunteers' service culminated with a presentation of those case studies to the top education policymakers in Namibia, and they loved it. So much so that NIED wants to continue this partnership in 2003 by hosting another ICT Project Coordinator and working with a new batch of WorldTeach ICT Volunteers. Moreover, they want us to replicate this model to "explore the state of HIV/AIDS education in Namibian schools." This is where the WorldTeach HIV/AIDS Project will come in.

Inside Features

- ~Journal entries from a summer in CR~
- ~Diving in Ecuador~
- ~Exploring the mountains of China~
- ~Arriving in the Marshall Islands~
- ~Reports from our Field Directors~



New Volunteers in Yantai City, by Aileen Lainez, Field Director

The new semester started quite smoothly. The new volunteers and I have found time to see other sights in China outside of Yantai. We went to Qingdao one weekend and the volunteers had their first taste of Western party in China. We recently just got back from our National Holiday vacation from Shanxi Province and Beijing. We spent a lot of time getting to know each other on our three train rides that lasted a little over 24 hours from Yantai all the way to Pingyao, an old small walled city in Shanxi. It is one of the last walled cities in China and UNESCO recently declared it as a World Heritage Site. After a few days, we headed off to the small

industrial town called Datong, located in the northern part of the province known for its coal mines, the Yungang Shiku or Yungang Buddhist caves and the Hanging monastery. The amazing sites we visited made us realize how spectacular China really is. The last leg of our trip is Beijing, the first for the volunteers, and flew back to Yantai.

Recently, Paul Hurteau and Lilia Cai, former volunteers of WorldTeach-Ecuador, visited Yantai to research the possibilities of working with the local schools in their Creative Connections Project, an exchange program between schools in the U.S.A. and in third world countries like Ecuador

Diving in Ecuador, by Lori Filippini Summer Field Director

Dear Friends,

The morning started with my alarm going off at 5:00 am. Yuck... earlier than the first wake-up call from the chickens outside my window. With the rain pounding down on my tin roof, I asked myself if I REALLY wanted to go diving today. Curled up in my fleece blanket, I decided, what the heck?! Let's go. Too little time left here to skip a day of diving. As I opened my door to this nasty day, I realized that I am crazy if I want to go sit in a dingy for the next 3 hours covered in salt water, no sun, and pouring down rain. Plus, the huge winter waves were enough to make anyone sick. As I put on my windbreaker and headed out into the rain to the muelle (dock) covered in goose bumps, I had a weird feeling that this was



going to be a good day!

Three hours into the boat ride, we arrive to two large rocks jutting out of the water in the middle of nowhere. No islands in site, no nothing! Endless sea and sky meeting somewhere in the distance and two sharp rocks. GORDON ROCKS! The first time I had been. Gordon Rocks are only known to those experienced divers. These rocks have been a mystery to me for the last year and at last I was here! As I look at these rocks a wave of anxiety and nervousness overwhelmed me. The sea was so rough, the water so cold, and the rain so harsh, I was scared. My friend, Patricio, the dive guide, looked at me and immediately knew that I was scared. Patricio knows me very well from all of the diving I have done in the last year.

Strike at the Escuela Politécnica Nacional ~By Karen Green, Field Director



The Escuela Politécnica Nacional is a public university founded in 1869 in Quito. For many years it was the best institution for the areas of study of engineering and computer science, with the most advanced technology in laboratory equipment. The university has not been saved from the economic crisis that hit Ecuador after dollarization in 1999. Professors' salaries have not been raised to equal the rise in the cost of living. The university administration has not placed buying new laboratory equipment, books for libraries and fast internet service among the top priorities and the university is becoming less competitive and lacks the ability to adequately train new engineers.

This year, there were 8000 students enrolled with 300 professors. A large part of the student body come from other parts of the country to study in Quito. The Center for Community Studies, where the WorldTeach office is housed, has increased its enrollment to upwards of 2000 students.

All of these members of the university community have been locked out of the university as of July 29, 2002, due to a strike called by a group of professors who have as their main goal to make the president and vicepresident of the university resign. The professors claim to have evidence of

corruption in the university finances. The president did raise his own salary by 80 percent while only raising professors' salaries by 10 percent. This brought his monthly salary up to \$2,784. The president claims that he still earns much less than presidents of the much larger public universities of the Central University and the Technical University of Ambato, earning \$7,000 and \$6,500 respectively.

Leaders of the strike as well as the president of the university have been on the news several times in the five-week duration of the strike. One day before the strike began, I took all of the materials I would need for one week of work. (The previous strike at the Politécnica only lasted for one week in March.) This is now the longest strike in the history of the Escuela Politécnica Nacional. No one has been allowed to remove any items from any office on campus. I had been waiting patiently for the conflicts to be resolved, but two days before the September 2002 group arrived, I could hold out no longer. I dropped off an official letter stating the need to enter my office, if only for 15 minutes to get materials for a training session. I had to play the bureaucratic game and make a scene in order to be allowed in. I admit that I broke down and cried in front of gathered students and professors, a sign of

"This is the longest strike in the history of the Escuela Politecnica Nacional."

Computer Training and AIDS/HIV Awareness Programs in Namibia (cont.) By Vince O'Hara, Field Director Namibia



Brian Crow with students in Yantai

WorldTeach Namibia '99 volunteer and reproductive health specialist Christine Clark has been helping WorldTeach design its HIV/AIDS programming. Two components to the strategy are envisaged. First, our full-year volunteers, beginning with the December group, will be trained to be HIV/AIDS Resource Teachers in order to help schools focus their HIV-prevention efforts and integrate HIV/AIDS education across the curriculum. WorldTeach HIV/AIDS Resource Teachers will still have responsibilities as English, math, science, etc. subject teachers. The second component of the strategy will be a short-term HIV/AIDS project, whereby the volunteers will serve as HIV/AIDS Resource Teachers while also collecting data and testing ideas for NIED, much as the ICT Volunteers did with computers this year.

NIED and WorldTeach want to run both the ICT and HIV/AIDS Projects next year. But in order to do so, we need funding to support the transportation, insurance, and salaries of the ICT and HIV/AIDS Project Coordinators who'll be conducting research for NIED and managing the short-term WorldTeach volunteers. Other volunteer organizations like the Peace Corps and the VSO have governments providing such funds. We at WorldTeach enjoy no such luxuries. We have to fundraise. Currently we're making contacts with foundations that may be interested in supporting our efforts in Namibia around ICTs and HIV/AIDS. So far we haven't received any commitments of funds. If we don't soon the ICT and HIV/AIDS Projects aren't going to happen next year, and Namibia's education

New Volunteers in Yantai City (continued)

Namibia and China. Their three-day visit in Yantai turned out to be very fruitful clinching pledges of support from 3 schools. Paul and Lilia are hoping to come back sometime on April or May next year to start on their project.

No. 2 Middle School is also grateful for the books and magazines that WorldTeach China recently donated to their library. The school dedicated two shelves of their library solely for the English books and magazines I donated. The Harry Potter series is yet the most popular among the students. The books are mostly leftovers of former volunteers and visitors. They'd rather leave the books to the library of WorldTeach China than burden themselves with heavier luggage. But the library can only hold so many books and only very few get the chance to read them. I decided to donate many of the books to the library of Er Zhong where I think would be more useful, especially to those eager to improve their English proficiency.

Diving in Ecuador, (Continued)

He assured me that everything was going to be alright. As we spent the next half-hour suiting up in our 7 mm wetsuits, shorties, booties and hoodies, I was sure that I was crazy. Along with me were two dive master/instructors from Utila, Honduras another hotspot for diving. Obviously, I was diving with the best of the best. As I look at their faces, I could tell that they were overwhelmed as well.

"Uno, dos, tres vamos!" we all did our rollback off the boat and sank 90 feet underwater, equalizing along the way. Clinging onto the pinnacle, I had realized that I have never in my 11 years of diving seen anything as fascinating as this... and we hadn't even seen any animals yet! Going down 19 more feet, I took a look at Patricio my dive buddy who was making the motion for Octopus... As I glanced into the "deep blue" as we call it, I saw about 15 enormous Octopi closing in on us. It is pretty difficult to explain the motion in which Octopi move underwater, but it is incredibly peaceful and intriguing. After watching these beautiful deep purple and bright green Octopi for a few minutes, we began to be pulled out rapidly due to the strong currents. We proceeded by holding onto the pinnacle and letting the current take us when it was moving in the right direction. As we rounded the first pinnacle, approaching the second, I turned around to check on the divers behind. Thank God I did this... As I turned around I came face-to-face with an incredible sized Hammerhead shark. To this day, I have seen many Hammerheads, but never so close and never so big. It's head shaped like a long rectangle board, I stared into its eyes that are on opposite sides of the rectangular shaped head. At first of course I was scared. But I froze for a second so that he wouldn't move. This Hammerhead was so mysterious in the dark waters. As I glanced behind him, I noticed that there were at least 45 in the distance. Never have I seen such a school of anything. It was like an army getting ready for a battle. Incredible. As the four of us clung onto the rock letting our bodies sway rapidly from side to side as the harsh current passed by, we just let loose and watched as this enormous school of Hammerheads pleasantly surrounded us. (continued on page 4)

Diving in Ecuador (continued)

It was the most incredible thing I have ever seen. The Hammerheads were even mixed in with a school of 10 ft by 7ft Manta Rays that look like flapping carpets underwater. After about minutes of watching this and as our tanks were getting low on air, we had to make our first safety stop at about 105 ft under. I never wanted this to end.

Coming up we were delightfully surprised to have Sea Lions curiously playing in our bubbles and sea turtles shooting through the caves. This was definitely one of the best days of my life. Although I really wanted to see a Whale Shark, and that was my original intention for going, I was more than happy to be faced with all of those Hammerheads.

As I approach my last weeks that conclude my year here on

Galapagos, I realize that I have learned about the value of life. From people and culture to nature and wildlife, I am so lucky. It is going to be hard to leave such an enchanted environment but also exciting to carry this experience with me for the rest of my life. It is amazing to me that I have met some of my best friends and seen such incredible things in the middle of the ocean on a tiny island where life is not exactly wealthy. I have learned that life is rich with an abundance of lessons of which I still have many to learn. I have learned how to live like a local in the last year with close to no money. This taught me that it is what you make of your life and your experiences and not how much you need to make your life exciting and exhilarating. Although this year has been more than difficult in many ways, I have definitely pulled out as a better person. I will cherish this year for the rest of my life.

Journal Entries from Costa Rica Summer 2002, by Megan Coles

As I think back upon my summer spent teaching English to high school students in Costa Rica, in a rural village called Cedral, I find it nearly impossible to sum things up in a concise paragraph or two. Thus, I include a few excerpts from my journal to provide a small window into my experience.

June 26, 2002

I find it a little hard to believe that I've completed two weeks of official classes here in Cedral. My time in front of the class flies by and any moments of frustration are balanced by the joy of the students' energy and progress. I'll be very curious to see how their Friday English exam goes. With 63 students, ranging in age from 12 to 22, I've realized that the spectrum of English abilities is vast – some students can confidently read a paragraph about themselves in front of the class, while others respond with "Fine, thank you," to my question of "Where do you live?" I'm beginning to grasp the challenge of being an excellent teacher.

July 9, 2002

Between our successful community projects and a memorable hike I am feeling very connected to my students and town. Their enthusiasm for repainting the town benches and creating a garden in front of the church was tremendous. The town center really is more beautiful because of what they've done. And today's hike was absolutely memorable... we headed off early, 12 students, one American English teacher, and a large pot of arroz con pollo ("rice with chicken"), the classic Costa Rican dish. We followed the dirt road out of town and into the mountains, through the dense mud, and then onto the waterfalls. They were

spectacular and the second one provided a perfect spot for lunch surrounding a small pool. Surrounded by my enthusiastic and affectionate students, I couldn't help but sit back and think what a life experience this is.

July 29, 2002

I still cannot quite imagine how in just four days I'll be saying goodbye to my family and students and leaving Cedral. Classes have been terrific as the students have been working to master verb conjugations – with verb conjugation relay races being their favorite activity! Dialogues have proved to be terrific learning tools as well. The students enjoy working in pairs and knowing that they must present the dialogue in front of the class provides extra incentive to focus and practice the material. If only I could manage to keep the other 28 students silent when each pair is presenting!

August 5, 2002

I enjoyed our end-of-service conference even more than I'd expected to. It provided a great chance to reflect on accomplishments, consider our return to the U.S., think about keeping up with Costa Rica, Spanish, and each other, and to sum it all up – or at least try to – in one word, one moment... for me it was "simplicity," of life, pace, and relationships... and of my students walking hand-in-hand as we hiked along a trail, smiling, and appreciating the beauty of the place as much as I did. The generosity and warmth of the people – my family and students especially – is a beautiful thing. The country has given me an incredible second home.



A message from WorldTeach's Executive Director, Helen Claire Sievers

The Board of WorldTeach has recently approved a pilot program for WorldTeach to partner with Indicorps (see www.Indicorps.org) to place a limited number of volunteers in schools in Bombay this coming year. We are excited to partner with this well-run organization that will oversee our volunteers this first year. Board member and Harvard University professor Devesh Kapur is exploring other potential programs for WorldTeach in this fascinating country. Watch the website for updates on these programs.

Tim Hawthorne, an alumnus of Project Africa, the Harvard forerunner of WorldTeach, reports that the video he and his wife Laya Schaetzel Hawthorne did for us, "WorldTeach:

An Extraordinary Journey" continues to win numerous film awards, including the Silver Screen Award in the category of Documentary from the International Film and Video Festival, and the 2002 Telly Award. We are proud to display these trophies at our Cambridge office. Copies of this video are still available for a \$5 shipping and handling fee from our office.

One of the more mundane aspects of running a non-profit organization is the annual audit, which WorldTeach has recently completed. To keep our 501 (c) 3 non-profit tax-exempt status we need to keep our audits current. The field staff has done an outstanding job this year of keeping excellent records and documenting expenditures. Kudos to them!

On behalf of WorldTeach I spoke at a 'brown bag' lunch in October at Cultural Survival, an NGO that spun off Harvard's anthropology department. Among other things they do research in developing countries. Check out their new website that may have information you're interested in www.culturalsurvival.org.

WorldTeach is looking for photos for our website and to use for publicity. If any of you have action photos of a single volunteer (you!) interacting with either students, or your host family, or others in your community would you send us a copy? We will acknowledge you as the photographer! as well as the subject. Thanks!



" We spent 10 weeks with these incredible people who taught us teachers just as much if not more than we taught them. We lived in some of the most amazing natural and cultural sites in the world. Overall the course was an incredible experience. I have no regrets and the memories of the challenges I faced are just as precious as those that were of the good times full of laughter. My coworkers and I were a tight family and together we produced one awesome NGTP program. We came to make a difference and I believe now that we truly did. This experience strengthened me as a teacher, opened my mind, and increased my capacity for patience and compassion. I encourage any person with a will to teach and a big heart to go for it."

**NGTP Course, Guatemala, 2002
Christiane Hinterman**

WorldTeach Nature Guide Training Program in Yucatan, coming soon!

If you are looking for a meaningful and rewarding volunteer experience; are interested in natural history, conservation, ecotourism, or teaching; or would like the opportunity to immerse yourself in the local culture and traditions of southeastern Mexico, then you should consider the next Nature Guide Training Program. On March 5, 2003, a group of volunteers will depart for the Yucatan Peninsula as participants in the 16th Nature Guide Training Program (NGTP). This program will be the fifth to take place on the Yucatan Peninsula and the ninth in Mexico. The primary role of the WorldTeach volunteers is to assist in teaching 16-20 local people in conversational English, local natural history, and environmental interpretation techniques so that they can educate visitors on the importance of preserving the **SIAN KA'AN BIOSPHERE RESERVE**.

Located along the eastern coast of the state of Quintana Roo (south of Cancun and Tulum, and north of Chetumal and Belize), the reserve is noted for its richness in flora and fauna. Inhabiting the Reserve are more than 100 species of mammals and 340 bird species. Sian Ka'an provides a necessary habitat for many endangered and endemic species, including jaguars, pumas, ocelot, tapirs, sea turtles, manatees, toucans, parrots, and ocellated turkeys. Over the course of the six-month program, volunteers will have opportunities to observe many of these species in their natural habitats. The Reserve also includes of a variety of ecosystems, such as tropical and flooded forests, mangroves, marshes, coastal dunes, and a barrier reef. The region has significant cultural importance as well. A hub of the Mayan civilization hundreds of years ago, Sian Ka'an is an area populated with Mayan ruins and architecture.

Look on our website for more information!

Adventures in China, by Jon Logan

Yesterday, Emma (my fellow volunteer) and I went for a hike in the mountains that surround Yantai from the south. We set off to see a tall pagoda that lives on one of the high mountain ridges, and is visible from most of the city. On the way up we found a temple hidden in one of the mountain crags, which turned out to be a three-faith monastery, with portions devoted to Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. An ancient Taoist monk with dirty fingernails read my palm. After two hours of circuitous hiking, we made it up to the pagoda. It was over six stories tall and commanded an amazing view of Yantai, the mountains, and the Pacific Ocean falling off into the horizon, beyond which Korea lies. On the way down, we found an outcropping of rock with a 4' plastic ant's

head bursting out. Figuring that was strange enough to warrant a closer look, we saw a plaque mentioning something about an Ant King and much more Chinese writing that we could not understand. We found a low, man-made opening in the stone. It turned out to be a tunnel. Curiosity has a strange tendency to overpower both fear and sensibility, and we walked in. The tunnel went deep into the mountainside, bending right or left every 30 feet or so. We kept claiming we'd only walk to the next bend, but of course, beyond that was another bend, and the new bend was so much more interesting than the last that we had to press forward. With only my flashlight as illumination, we kept walking. Soon there was no sound or light from the outside world.



*China volunteers at
the Great Wall*

Strike at the Escuela Politécnica Nacional (continued)

I admit that I broke down and cried in front of gathered students and professors, a sign of desperation and feeling of a lack of power to fix or help the situation.

Although no one is clear as to when the strike will end, everyone understands the losses the university as well as the students will face if the school does not open in time for next semester to begin. This could be a study of how things work in Ecuador, or rather how things don't work here.



Adventures in China, by Jon Logan (continued)

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Just a low stone tunnel that led forward and backward into complete darkness. After a few hundred feet the tunnel changed from relatively smooth concrete to completely rough, craggy rock. Water dripped from the ceiling. We went further. There was no sound except our stumbling footsteps. Then, in the distance, we saw door. It was a small, 4" thick steel block that was open and hanging off its hinges. We peered in. up to this point, the tunnel had not forked, so we knew the way back. Behind the door was a room, and on either side of that, the tunnel split off into four new directions. The room smelled of charcoal, like a fire had been lit there recently. There was a little garbage on the floor. Still no sound, and absolutely no light except for my dimming flashlight. At this point we decided it would be best to turn back, because with one light source and five possible directions, it

would be easy for extreme badness to occur. Both reluctantly and happily we headed back. When we emerged into the glorious sunlit world, we started laughing uncontrollably to shake out the extreme terror and wonder we had felt.

I couldn't help but think about how difficult it would be to have that kind of experience in America, because everything there has been so thoroughly locked away, closed off, cleaned up, and litigiously licensed for wholesome family consumption. Whereas in China, there are terrifying and inviting Ant-King's dungeons waiting for you on the side of the road. I view that tunnel as a metaphor for China; harrowing, inexplicable, completely absurd, and totally amazing.

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PAST, PRESENT AND
FUTURE VOLUNTEERS