



# WorldTeach Dispatch

Winter 2006

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Volunteering in: China, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Marshall Islands, Namibia Pohnpei, Poland, and South Africa.

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## Headquarters Staff Update: Welcome, Abbie!

WorldTeach welcomes Abbie Bennett to our staff in the US office. Abbie was a WorldTeach volunteer in Ambato, Ecuador, for two years and also an Orientation Coordinator. A graduate of the University of Vermont with a major in Literature and a minor in Social Anthropology, Abbie also has a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and Literature from Mills College. Abbie has also taught ESL in San Francisco and tutored professionals in business English in Rio de Janeiro. Abbie is overseeing the Marshalls and Pohnpei programs as the Program Manager as well as heading our initiative to get more articles published. All of you out there who



have magnificent stories to tell of your times as a WorldTeach volunteer can work with Abbie to get your stories placed! She can be contacted at Abbie Bennett <[abennett@worldteach.org](mailto:abennett@worldteach.org)>. We are pleased to have Abbie on our staff! Welcome, Abbie!

~ Helen Claire Sievers

## New Program in Pohnpei: WorldTeach Goes to the Garden Island of Micronesia

In a whirlwind this fall, WorldTeach put together a new pilot program in Pohnpei, one of four states in the Federated States of Micronesia. Five intrepid volunteers left for this tropical paradise in late December to teach for the second semester of their academic year. Led by field director/head teacher Margaret Richards, the "Fabulous Five," as the Director of Education of Pohnpei State refers to them, have jumped into life on this "high" island

just north of the equator. This semester the volunteers are primarily working with high school students to prepare them for their entrance exams for the local community college. A second pilot group will depart in July 2006 to teach the full academic year. These volunteers will take the place of local teachers who will be selected to attend the University of Hawaii in order to upgrade their teaching skills. Currently the DOE has requested seven teachers

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## WorldTeach in the Garden Island

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for this year-long program.

Pohnpei is a wonderful island, with high waterfalls, mangrove swamps, and the mysterious ruins of an ancient civilization at Nan Madol. Volunteers are teaching at the two public high schools on the island. Pohnpei is the governmental headquarters of the FSM, and also home to the College of Micronesia, as well as the renowned "think tank" on Micronesia, the Micronesian Seminar. WorldTeach is pleased now to have this partnership with the Department of Education of Pohnpei State. We are hoping that before too long we will expand to the other four states, Yap, Chuuk, and Kosrae.

Details of the Pohnpei program are posted on our website at <http://www.worldteach.org>

*Below: Margaret Richards enjoys Pohnpei's tropical island breeze*



## Alumni Retrospective

### As You Set Out For Ithaka: When Rolling Stones Roll Home

By Molly Beer, Ecuador '03

*As you set out for Ithaka  
hope your road is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.*  
-Constantine P. Cavafy

There is a collective respect for that bend in the road — that dark divergence in the wood — and for the daring souls who choose to travel down the rough-but-scenic route through life. In this Lone Ranger world the footloose, the fancy-free, and those who act on wanderlust garner admiration, even envy. It should not be this way. Some lives have a propensity for sprouting roots and others grow wings. It's little more than a constitutional difference, yet our mythologies teach us that true heroes quest for glory, they do not wait for it at home. One great secret tacitly shared by those who go, who charge down the road less traveled, is that leaving is the easy part of the journey, as are the battles, clashes, and bouts of homesickness. The greatest challenge is the anti-climax, the coming home and the laying down, and

then that monumental act of merging back onto the mainstream path most traveled. Setting off for far away places is an act of abject optimism. You pack your bags, quickly kiss your family and friends, and wave so long over one shoulder as you walk away. You may choke up a moment, visions of loved ones already a thorn in your memory, but all the while your eyes are looking forward. Everything else is peripheral, except the road ahead of you and the nebulous space where it blurs into horizon. Your senses and your mind stretch open: foreign tongues, Cyclops, Laistrygonians, strange cuisine—they do not scare you, not yet. You will meet each monster as it appears before you.

There are rocks in your road. Rocks and robbers, kamikaze bus drivers, days spent roaming in frenzied circles, invasions made on your intestines, tedious traveling companions, border mayhem, faux pas, bodily damage suffered, uncooperative animals, lost luggage, earth shattering natural disasters... but these are in and of the road, as quintessential to travel as the view and utterly out of your control. Although you will be

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## Alumni News: Fighting For Justice How WorldTeach Influenced My Future

By Stephanie Calondis

In my job as the Youth Programs Director at the Columbus Council on World Affairs, I am lucky to meet dignitaries and well-known officials. These powerful people are making the policy decisions that I encourage students to debate! Never have I been so thrilled about helping host one of our speakers as I was this past week, when we brought Dolores Huerta to town! She is a legendary labor movement leader and human rights activist who worked with Cesar Chavez to found the United Farm Workers union, leading the struggle to achieve unemployment insurance, collective bargaining rights, and immigration rights. She is a strong voice, advocating for women, Latinos, immigrants and the working poor. On a personal level, I found her to be no-nonsense, accessible, and

kind. My experience living in rural Costa Rica with a fishing family certainly opened the door to great discussion and created a feeling of solidarity between us. I left that evening encouraged to DO MORE to fight for justice. Viva Dolores Huerta!



### Alumni Spotlight:

Anmarie Cholankeril, Namibia '02 graces the cover of *Alternatives to the Peace Corps*, while Molly Moran (no known relation to yours truly), Namibia '00-'02 has a highlighted quotation in the book.

WorldTeach is a private, nonprofit organization based at the Center for International Development at Harvard University. Founded in 1986, WorldTeach provides opportunities for individuals to make a difference in the lives of people in developing countries.

Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds are needed in all areas. Volunteers must be fluent in English and have previous language experience.

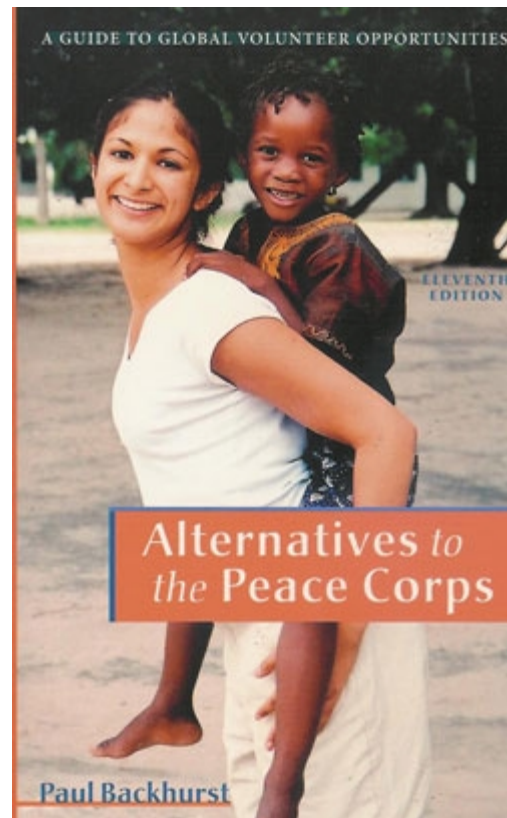
Room and board are provided for all volunteers. Some countries require a small fee. WorldTeach provides placement, training, and support. Some countries require a small fee. WorldTeach provides placement, training, and support.

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#### Molly Moran, Volunteer, WorldTeach

My experience in Namibia has been one that I will never forget. Nothing is ever routine. The only constant is that every day offers new surprises and challenges.

I believe I have learned more about life from the children I teach than they have learned from me. Our cultures are so different and yet the basics are the same. You smile when you are happy, cry when you are sad, and eat when you are hungry. The smiles that we exchange numerous times a day mean more to them than a brand new pair of Nikes! I have made wonderful friends here, whom I will never forget, and hope to continue to learn from them and carry on our friendships wherever we may be. As long as you have an open mind and an open heart, everything else falls into place.





### *Featured Volunteer Project*

In the small town of Marbella, Costa Rica, the schoolchildren only had one place to play during recess: a washed-out soccer field only usable in the short dry season. Craig Daniel Hurvitz, a Costa Rica 2005 volunteer, recognized that his students needed a safe space for recreation and decided to do something about it. First, he launched a fundraising campaign through contacts back in the States. In his original plea to donors, he writes, "I am asking for your help

with a fundraiser to build a playground (swings, slides, monkeybars... the whole works), to keep these adorable children entertained, active, and safe from not-too-distant pressures such as drugs or violence." Two months later, the funds were in and the building materials en route. Craig then organized members of the community and school to help put together the playground set. The following is a series of photos documenting the progress of the project. All captions are written by Craig.



*Above: Marbella school before the arrival of the playground.*

*Below: The finished product.*



*Above: The playground survived the long trip from San Jose, across deeply-rutted dirt roads, and through rivers on the back of this small flat-bed truck. With recent rains and the doubts of the truck's drivers of making it through the swollen rivers, it was quite a relief when the truck slowly clattered into town. The kids immediately reacted with frantic excitement, begging to help in any way they could.*





## Featured Volunteer Project

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*Left: He made it there AND back.*

*Middle: A first-grader's first experience with a swing and he's already pulling out the dare-devil tricks.*

*Right: How many kids can you fit on a slide?*

*Below: Teacher and students after a long, hot afternoon wearing in the playground.*



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## Upcoming Reunion Announcement:

July 2006 is just around the corner, which means it's time for the 2003 Costa Rica Year-Long Volunteers and Field Director to reunite for a fun-filled weekend in Chicago. Mark your calendars for July 1 - July 4th or 5th. More information coming soon to a mailbox (or inbox) near you. Pura Vida - Shelli





## Photos from Recent WorldTeach Reunions



*Left: The lovely ladies of the Costa Rica 2001 group reunite in DC. Meghan Pineda, Kate Minkiewicz, Joanne Bittenbender, Kirsten Galisson, Shannon Slattery, Melanie Eltz.*

*Below: The Chile 2004 group attempts a pilgrimage to Pomaire in New York City. Sadly, it was closed. However, they did not go hungry. Sarah Gearen, Amy Moran, Dana Brown, Jessica Jones, Harvest Ficker.*

***Has your group had a reunion lately? Would you like to be in touch with fellow WorldTeach alumni? Your Group Liaison can help! Look for their names at [http://www.worldteach.org/alumni/staying\\_involved.html](http://www.worldteach.org/alumni/staying_involved.html)***

***Don't have a Group Liaison? If you would like to volunteer, please contact [alumni@worldteach.org](mailto:alumni@worldteach.org) to get started.***





## *Alumni Retrospective* **When Rolling Stones Roll Home**

By Molly Beer, Ecuador '03  
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changed by this, you are a witness where the outside world is concerned. You are watching, wondering, wandering, tasting the air around you, making contact, then moving on. Anything can happen. Anything is expected. Everything is accepted once you understand; you do not quest for comfort or for common knowledge.

While you are away you wish for things. You dream of a sandwich made just-so, of a meal without rice, of basic routines made basic once more, of being inconspicuous in a crowd, and of the familiar in all its senses. Most of the time, however, you concentrate on moving from here to there, of living your journey day by day.

“To muse, to creep, to halt at will, to gaze-- / such sweet wayfaring,” Wordsworth exclaims from his carriage along the Rhine, because it is a delicious way to live: vibrant and vivid. The longer your journey is, the longer you’ll wish it to be. You live in the midst of discovery; you see the whole world fresh and new each day with the vigor of the traveler who does not know or expect to know for long the land and landscapes, the faces and face-scapes. Odysseus took twenty years to make his way to the end of his journey, and the delay was not all happenstance.

The world of the road is perpetually shifting and morphing as you come to know it better, just as you are shifting and morphing as you come to know yourself better. You are the equivalent of a fully conscious infant immersed in new stimuli: language tastes new to your unwieldy tongue, yet is often as surprisingly delicious as the food you reject at first; your body, graceless in the beginning, learns to bow, to measure the appropriate distance between it and another body,

to sleep in a hammock or on a hard floor; and your eyes, propped open wide with wonder, are awash with new colors, faces, and strange shapes. Every aspect of life is so poignant and important, even when it is difficult. Nothing is easy, per se, but every facet of life on the road is rife with intensity. The grocery store, crossing the street, posting a letter, riding in taxis—the most mundane elements of your day are prime for epiphany and wondrous discovery. You exist on the steepest slope of the learning curve, and when that novelty wanes, you move on into fresh virginity. You begin again.

So how does one come home?

One expects a climax in the end, a great culminating crescendo, but coming home is never what you expect nor what you hope for. There are the passionate embraces and celebrations, but soon everyone begins to speak at once and the sound is as foreign as the street noise of some bustling port city that you once elbowed through. You try to tell that story. Everyone listens politely. Then they change the subject. That part of your life, your travels, are over. Your world welcomes you back into its fold — but like lovers to whom you have been unfaithful, those you left when you left home do not want to know the details of your digressions. You sit there bursting with stories and associations, observing links to far off lands in your very living room, but these are dirty secrets that only certain ears can hear. No, a circle has no peak, no zenith; the journey does not end with one great summit rush.

Arriving home, you are amputated from your travels with such abrupt finality that even the things you carried, those essential objects that you load with meaning on the road, become trite, useless, and decidedly old. Those boots you wore every day for two years across swamps and up mountains, the camera you clutched as you slept, the marsupial pocket-belt beneath your clothes that has born your worn out passport... you take





# Alumni Retrospective When Rolling Stones Roll Home

By Molly Beer, Ecuador '03  
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each off, you lay it aside. You discover your traveling objects next by accident, shoved in a drawer, and realize they have died of neglect:

*The knife there on the shelf—  
it reeked of meaning like a crucifix.  
It lived. How many years did I  
beg it, implore it, not to break?  
I know each nick and scratch by heart,  
the bluish blade, the broken tip,  
the lines of wood-grain on the handle...  
Now it won't look at me at all.  
The living soul has dribbled away.*  
(Elizabeth Bishop)

Tokens of your odyssey are reduced to souvenirs, to mere mementos of a great trip you once took, a vacation away from your real life. The people who you left behind, meanwhile, find other things important—things you cast off when you left, but things they've infused with meaning — the treasures of their roads through life: a new car, an entertainment system, or a new baby, a whole universe in diapers.

This opens yet another door. Home does not stay static and patiently waiting to change until you decide to reclaim it. Your friends — though they remain faithful Penelopes awaiting your return — live on in the interim while you are away. They have their own stories, equal to yours for they are also the tales of adventure, their adventure. The one that you walked out on. The one that you forsook when you took that damned divergent path.

You start to miss rice, and even that sandwich, just-so, isn't quite what you are hoping for...

They say — the psychologists, the researchers — that a prevalent symptom of reverse culture shock is the urge to reverse one's homebound tracks and walkabout all over. Doesn't it make sense to stay away? Isn't it better to keep home pure and perfect and muck around in other places that you can leave without a backwards glance the moment you dislike them? There is a traveler's proverb that claims "travel is practice for death" because the goodbyes you say as you pass through are so permanent, so final. This is even true for the goodbyes you say as you first set out to dream your dream and have it too. The experience of travel not only changes the self, it changes the very definition of home: The wayfarer is at home in the world. All of the world. And this change cannot be reversed.

Then why double back at all? Why come full circle? The world is vast — why would you walk in your own footsteps twice (if it weren't for that tone in your mother's voice, the guilt of missing one too many weddings or funerals, or that pesky, shriveling savings account)? Or are these the wrong questions? Are you even going home as you do so? Or is there even such a thing as home anymore?

For myself, the urge to return to my homeland — albeit the side opposite that I once called home — is simple. After a bit of Asia and most of the Americas, after many years and three new languages, I want, like Voltaire's Candide, "to cultivate my garden." For that, I need family.

Now that I have landed, I rarely look at the pictures on the wall — a series of photographs of doorways in Guatemala, Bolivia, Mexico, and Tibet. The marketplace watercolor hangs neatly in a black frame in the living room, and the thin, pottery bowl with the fish painted on it which crossed three countries in a backpack without breaking, sits on the mantle, a plain brown,





## *Alumni Retrospective* When Rolling Stones Roll Home

By Molly Beer, Ecuador '03  
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misshapen thing. I have been in this place a year, but I still read overseas job listings and the travel section first. Still, I dream of the road, of early morning markets, of long treks between villages, of hoisting my slim belongings onto my shoulders and walking onwards. Still, I imagine lands I haven't seen, but I dig my hands into the earth of my garden, and I imagine I am sprouting roots.

What can't be diminished or curtailed are the rocks of the roads that you carry within yourself. For example, if you learn one thing as a traveler, it is a tolerance for the nonsensical. Thus, you can follow this conclusive logic:

*There is a concatenation of events in this best of all possible worlds: for if you had not been kicked out of a magnificent castle for love of Miss Cunegonde: if you had not been put into the Inquisition: if you had not walked over America: if you had not stabbed the Baron: if you had not lost all your sheep from the fine country of El Dorado: you would not be here eating preserved citrons and pistachio-nuts. (Voltaire)*

You could only get to where you are because of how you came — pure Panglossian obviousness, but relevant all the same. Your travels make and shape you, they determine your future paths, but it is in the return that you ultimately measure the distance you have traveled.

*Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.  
Without her you wouldn't have set out.*

...

*And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.*

*Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean. (Cavafy)*

This article was previously published online by Far Flung Magazine. [www.farflungmagazine.com](http://www.farflungmagazine.com)

### Get Published!

It's a rare volunteer that doesn't feel he or she has a story to share after a WorldTeach experience abroad. We've had the pleasure of seeing some of those experiences published online and in print, and we know there are more great stories out there.

Time brings returned volunteers a perspective essential to writing, but also diminishes the urgency of communicating their unique experiences beyond circles of family and friends. If you've ever mused about writing on teaching, culture shock and discovery, self-discovery, geographical and language exploration, travel or travel advice ... now's the time!

**WorldTeach can help.** Contact Abbie Bennett, [abennett@worldteach.org](mailto:abennett@worldteach.org), with essays, ideas or questions, and keep an eye on the alumni portion of the website for an upcoming list of publications where you might submit your work. Let us know about other publications that might be interested in WT volunteers' photos and articles, and be sure to keep us updated on any publication by or about you!



*Sitting in a folder marked "Current Photos," we found the following gems of WorldTeach yore.*



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*Contributing to  
education in developing  
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