

## Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 31: Sept-Oct 2012

### Introduction

September of each year marks another anniversary for Yanapuma, this time we celebrated on the 6th of September our 6th year of operation!!!

On all fronts – the Spanish school, the foundation and the volunteer department – we were extremely busy during all of September and most of October.

The Spanish school remained absolutely full all through September and well into October. We are used to receiving a good number in September as a new batch of traveler's sets off on their South American Journey with Spanish classes in Quito as the first stop! But usually things quieten down in October, but not this year. It was most frustrating for our academic director Edison Rendón, as we had to draught him in to giving classes full time in September rather than being able to focus on the development of our academic programs as we had planned!

As always there were plenty of activities for our students during these

C o n t e n t s	Page 1	Intro & News
	2	Project and School News
	3	Student, Intern, & other news
	4	Photo Gallery

two months, culminating at the end of October in the "Día de los Difuntos," the Day of the Dead (*see photos right!*)

We were also busy with volunteer groups, interns and individual volunteers. Our two volunteer coordinators, Angela and Victoria, were kept on their toes, traveling around the country visiting projects, dropping off volunteers, accompanying groups, as well as trying to maintain order in the office.

In the foundation, things were also hectic as we continue to launch our latest project with the Inter American Foundation which you can read about on page X, and continued our work in Estero de Plátano on the Pacific coast in the province of Esmeraldas.

We look forward to a quieter period for the last two months of the year giving us a chance to catch our breath and prepare for 2013!



The Day of the Dead is a traditional Latin American festival when families pray for and remember their dead relatives. "Guagas de pan" - anthropomorphic bread figures and "Colada Morada" - a hot drink made of fruits and spices (above), are traditional foods prepared at this time of the year.



Our 6th Birthday!



### Our Sixth Birthday!

**On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September** we took a few moments to toast to our 6<sup>th</sup> birthday (*see photos right!*). It was on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September of 2006 that we officially moved in to our offices and opened the doors to receive Spanish students, interns and volunteers. The celebration was shared with staff and students. To chart our sustained growth since then, please click here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/financial.php>.



We were also pleased to welcome **Emily Branan** to our team Emily has a BA in Culture and Gender Studies and worked previously at the Center for the Advancement and Study of International Education in Atlanta, Georgia. She will be working in administration, helping to coordinate day-to-day, as well as working with the students and with our volunteers and interns, and organizing excursions and other events.

## Project News . . .

**The primary focus of the work of the foundation** remains our three-year project with the Inter American Foundation. We have been extremely occupied setting up the project, which involves the creation of 78 vegetable plots in 4 Tsa'chila communities as well as planting 52 hectares with 26000 cacao plants. In addition we will be offering nutritional and culinary help to the families involved on an ongoing basis throughout the project, as well as looking to develop markets for local produce and products.

### Meet our team:

**Janeth Llanos:** Janet is in charge of constructing the vegetable plots and teaching participants how to grow vegetables. Last year she helped us on a related project, showing the women how to cook the vegetables that they were producing. This time around she is focusing on the growing, an area in which she has many years of experience.



**Guadalupe Peralta:** Guadalupe is a community organizer, helping with the logistics of managing the projects various aspects, preparing the families and timing everything so that things run as smoothly as possible. Previously she was involved in more of a social work capacity, but in this project there is slightly less emphasis on this aspect, although it is still important to us to work on self-esteem and organizational abilities.



**Giovanny Toapanta:** Giovanny is an agricultural engineer, and is charged with the planting and maintenance of the 52 hectares of cacao. We are sowing an improved local variety that is aromatic and much sought after. It is hard though to convince the Tsa'chila that this is the best option when a variety called CCN51 is very high yielding, although it is of low quality. The market is not yet sufficiently segmented to definitely demonstrate the advantage of the local varieties, but national policy is now to head in this direction and improve Ecuador's reputation as an exporter of quality cacao and chocolate paste.



**Cecilia Vallejo:** Cecilia is coordinating all the activities of the project, active both in the office and in the field, gathering information on all the activities that we carry out so that we can maintain our records, and planning for the work to be carried out by the rest of the staff and with the help of various volunteers and groups.



**Victoria Allende:** Victoria has been working with us as a volunteer coordinator, but her heart is more on the

project work side of the organization. For that reason she will be helping us until Christmas with the construction and development of the vegetable plots alongside Janet.



**Christina Aguavil:** Christina is Tsa'chila from the community of Bua, and is qualified as a health promoter. For that reason we are delighted to invite her to be part of our team, cooking with Tsa'chila women in their households and integrating the new vegetable production into their regular diets. The Tsa'chila may currently at the most eat a little tomato and washed onion in a salad that is more of a relish on the side. We hope that Christina can help us in expanding their use of nutritious vegetables.



**Wilson Calazacón and Rafael Machín** are two Tsa'chila farmers who have worked with Giovanny on improved cacao production for the last 3 years. Now they are working part-time as promoters, helping Giovanny to keep the participating farmers organized and advancing with their hectare plots of improved cacao. This is a three-year process to begin to see results, so we know from experience the challenges that are involved in keeping their enthusiasm going until the results begin to appear!



### Our Mission and Vision . . .

Six years ago we began with a huge amount of enthusiasm but Little actual experience of what it means to promote sustainable development. Since then we have learned an immense amount, and continue to learn today, about the complexities of being engaged with very different and marginalized cultures and communities.

Helping them to achieve equity and well-being and economic sustainability, and valuing their cultural heritage in a globalized context, is a long process that requires of all us patience, stamina, flexibility, and a sense of humor when the going gets especially tough!

**During the months of September and October** we worked primarily with two volunteer groups, from Thinking Beyond Borders (US) and the Leap (UK). The TBB group planted cacao and native species in the community of El Poste, while the Leap group planted cacao saplings in Los Naranjos as well as working on the construction of some of the vegetable plots. In all we planted 7,000 cacao plants and 3,700 native species, and constructed 28 vegetable gardens.

One persistent worry has been the prolonged drought which has meant that the soil is very dry, threatening the success of the planting. We worked with the recipients to water as many plants as possible during the last two weeks of October. We will have to wait to see how many of the saplings that we sowed during September and October will survive and how many need to be resown at a later date.

## More Project News . . .

**Our three interns from Union College, Aaron Glosser, Alagra Bass and Sarah Gagnon,** spent their first month settling in to being in Estero de Plátano. It takes time to get to know the community and begin to figure out how things work. This makes an important prelude to be able to do effective work. Once relationships are formed and locals feel comfortable with newcomers, the work is much easier.

They began working with the 13 scholarship recipients, helping them with their homework and tutoring them when necessary in any subject they were falling behind in. They also began offering English classes in the local school.

During August we delivered 5 reconditioned computers to the school, bought with a grant from UK organization La Vida. After discussions with the community it was decided to renovate a room in the village for the PCs rather than house them in the school. They will be used to give classes to the members of the community bank, the women's group, the community council, and to the local children. At the end of the project a PC will be donated to each group for use in writing official letters and keeping accounts, etc.

The 3 interns are working with great energy and enthusiasm and have plenty of ideas for how to help the community's development before they have to leave in April next year.



## Donation News . . .

**Joy Brandt** on a return visit to Yanapuma gave us \$50 on our birthday!

**Michael Refshauge** donated \$39.25 to the work of the foundation, which was the change from his invoice for Spanish classes.

**Simon Kirby** made a donation of £230.00 (\$368.00 approx.) through our Yanapuma UK bank account.

**Amanda Vaughan** left us a donation of \$20 upon finishing her classes here in Quito.

**We are always happy to receive small donations,** committing 100% of these funds to direct project costs. They are often useful for acquiring extra materials or supplying tools that will have a direct and lasting impact.

## Volunteers and Interns . . .

**Leap:** At the start of September a group of 17 enthusiastic volunteers and interns came from the UK for 10 weeks of project work and internships. The 13 volunteers spent the first two weeks in Otavalo, volunteering in the community of Chilcapamba in the morning and taking Spanish classes in the afternoons. Following this they spent 3 weeks in the Tsa'chila community of Los Naranjos where they planted cacao trees and helped in the construction of enclosed vegetable plots.

As a reward for all their hard work the group then spent a week travelling through the Andes from Riobamba to Baños and Quilotoa, climbing above the snowline on Chimborazo volcano, white water rafting and cycling in Baños, and kayaking on the spectacular crater lake of Quilotoa.

Following that week, the volunteers headed off to the Galapagos Islands, to San Cristóbal where they spent 3 weeks working on the Hacienda Tranquila, helping to eradicate invasive species, organic farming, and working with local children.

Meanwhile, 5 of the group worked in Quito as interns in a variety of project sites related to medicine and education. This is a new programme designed to give interns valuable experience working in career-related positions abroad.

The very last few days of their 10 weeks will be spent in the surf and party town of Montañita, where they can relax and enjoy beach life Ecuadorian style.

**Thinking Beyond Borders:** In mid-September a group of 18 students from Thinking Beyond Borders arrived to carry out a month-long project in the Tsa'chila community of El Poste. They planted over 5000 trees and cacao plants as part of a reforestation project for the Tsa'chila comunas and surrounding areas designed to protect the water courses and preserve the remaining biodiversity.

The volunteers stayed with local host families, and for these families it was the first time that they had received guests in this way. The experience was a memorable "cultural exchange" for all involved as the volunteers got to experience at first hand the day-to-day reality of life as a marginalized indigenous person in Ecuador.

The volunteer department has been extremely busy for the last two months, almost overwhelmed at times. Aside from the groups and the individual volunteers coming through, it has been time to evaluate the projects that we are working with and compile our list for next year, as well as to renew our accords and update the prices for each project. Fortunately, by the end of October this work was well under control, and we are nearly all set for 2013!



## September and October Photo Gallery

