

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 27: Jan-Feb 2012

Introduction

The year 2012 started with a bang for the whole organization: the Spanish school was the busiest it has ever been during January and into the first week of February with up to 35 students taking classes each day.

January also saw the biggest volunteer group we have managed so far arriving from the UK. Twenty-six volunteers from the Leap began a 10 week program that takes them from volunteer placements in Quito to a stint working with the Tsa'chila in Los Naranjos, and on to the Galapagos Islands to volunteer in Hacienda Tranquila.

The combined numbers meant that the school was constantly bustling with energy, and our extra activities and excursions were well supported.

By the end of February things had quietened down to a normal level and we were able to catch our breath.

Meanwhile, our online Spanish classes continue to grow too, with a current average of around 50 students signed up for classes. Students connect each week from as diverse locations as Canada, Germany, Australia, Italy, the Cayman Islands and the US.

Students helping cacao growers in Bua . . .

For the third year in succession, a group of students from the Colège Edouard Montpetit of Quebec, Canada, arrived in Bua to spend two weeks working alongside cacao farmers. They stayed with Tsa'chila host families, which provided a great opportunity for them to experience directly the lifestyle of the Tsa'chila. Their assistance is invaluable in animating the Tsa'chila growers who have a hard time maintaining their focus on improving their cacao.

As a culture that is not accustomed to aiming for long-term goals, it has been difficult for them, and for us as a foundation, to keep the momentum going. The association that we helped them form and legalize with financing from the Inter American Foundation has faltered and became inactive for a while in 2011. But the announcement of the potential arrival of the group from Canada once more to help them along in their project was enough to breathe new life into the group.

The students helped to plant more new hybrid cacao plants, as well as papaya plants between the cacao, and helped with fertilization of the trial hectares on each farm as well.

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The foundation has begun a project to create vegetable gardens for a group of 10 families in the Tsa'chila community of Los Naranjos, with the help of the Leap volunteers who went from farm to farm creating the vegetable plots. Once the winter rains subside we will begin to sow the seeds.

We also received confirmation in January that we have been awarded funding of nearly \$10,000 for a project with the women and youth of Los Naranjos from the **United Nations Trust Fund for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples**.

In addition we have been searching for new scholarship students in Estero de Plátano and in the neighboring community of Quingue where we will be starting work with the community for the first time. The school year starts in April so we hope to have everything set up for the new students by then, as well as continuing with the existing students. You can read more on page 2.

Spanish in the Galapagos!!

We are happy to announce that we now have put the finishing touches to our new offering for studying Spanish in the Galapagos Islands.

We now offer a land-based program in combination with 20 hours of online classes. Students can take some of these in the evenings after a day of activities exploring various Galapagos islands, or they may choose to leave them all until later on and take them from home.

Click here for a program description:

<http://www.yanapumaspanish.org/galapagosspanish.htm>



Galapagos seals

Measuring Student Progress . .

At the end of February we initiated a new system in the Spanish school for ongoing evaluation of our students. The aim is to be able to chart with precision the advances made by each student, from their initial evaluation to their final level when they finish classes.

We became aware that although the teachers currently do plan classes, as this was done electronically, very often students did not get a clear idea of what work was being done by us "behind the scenes." So the new system is more collaborative, involving the student more directly, and will lead to us being able to offer more accurate evaluations of students for transcripts and official use by universities and colleges.

Foundation News . . .

In the foundation we kicked off 2012 planning and initiating a project to create 10 vegetable plots for families in Los Naranjos. The project replicates the project we successfully carried out last year in Bua with funding from the Ferguson Trust. We began funding this project from our own finances in the hope that it can serve as a "pre-project" for a larger undertaking later in the year.



We would like to extend this project to the other Tsa'chila communities too at some point in the future as it presents a great opportunity to improve their nutritional intake as well as offering the chance to make extra money by selling excess production.

Another important part of the project is to grow saplings of local species that we can plant out in the parish of Puerto Limón, as well as in the community of Los Naranjos itself to help protect the local water courses.

In the Cabo San Francisco region we began the task of searching for new scholarship students to fund for the 2012 academic year. We will be replacing one student in Estero de Plátano, Erika who has gone off to live with her boyfriend, and are hoping to add two more in the village of Quingue, financed by Colège Edouard Montpetit and Yanapuma. This will bring the total number of scholarships that we are offering to 12 or 13, depending on the quality of the candidates that present themselves.

While we were dismayed that Erika chose to withdraw for personal reasons, we wrote a letter to her, pointing out the continuing importance of education as part of a life plan, and expressing that the door remains open to her to continue her studies should she have a change of heart or circumstances in the future. Youth do not always make the smartest decisions (we speak from personal experience!!!!) but we have to respect their decisions and hope that everything turns out well.

We also sat down to define our aims and make plans for the rest of the year's work in Estero de Plátano. What we have come to realize is that the community has become mal-accustomed to receiving projects from outside organizations, and that although the supposed aims of these projects have been to improve their ability to organize and develop for themselves, they have only succeeded in creating a dependency culture among members of the various social groups.

There is still a lack of commitment and drive among adults that thwarts attempts to help them follow through and set up micro-enterprises. In the majority of the groups, financial accounting is still almost non-existent, which leads to distrust that further thwarts their ability to move forward. While we cannot stop other organizations from awarding projects to Estero de Plátano, we are aware of the negative effects that these can end up having when there is insufficient follow through and control on the part of the funders,

and we are determined not to fall into the same errors.

So we will focus on making the leaders of each social group accountable to the rest of their members and getting each group to function as an organization with defined goals. We don't expect to win any popularity contests with this work, but we see it as a vital step if there is any progress to be made in the future.

We note that while Estero de Plátano begins to attract more and more tourists, local people may not be profiting from this resource because of this mix of factors. In the next couple of months we will investigate this phenomenon more closely with the help of interns, with the aim of presenting these findings to the community as a spur to action.

Donation News . . .

Colège Edouard Montpetit from Quebec, Canada, donated \$600 for 2 new scholarships in the villages of Quingue and/or Caimito. These villages are close to Estero de Plátano and we are happy to begin expanding our scholarship program beyond this one village to offer the chance to study at high-school for other children of the Cabo San Francisco area.

Former intern from France, **Emilien Amblat** donated \$300 to our scholarship fund for Estero de Plátano in January.

Former student **Mark Hill** also made a donation of \$300 for the students of Estero de Plátano when he passed by our offices in January.

Nancy Cutter donated \$50 to our scholarship fund for Estero de Plátano at the start of January.

Jerry McKenna donated \$60 to the foundation, 's work

Thank you to all who have donated to the ongoing scholarship fund, for helping us to provide education for these poor communities on the Pacific coast of Ecuador!



Shelby Cutter, Union College intern, in Estero de Plátano with two of the scholarship students

Students and Interns . . .

A group of 14 students from **Colège Edouard Montpetit** in Quebec, Canada, came down in January to continue working with the cacaoteros of Bua (*see front page*).

A group of 26 volunteers from the **Leap UK** arrived in January to spend 10 weeks working on various projects. In Quito they volunteered with the Parque Itchimbia for environmental work and with the INEPE schools for teaching and reforestation work. In Los Naranjos they built the infrastructure for the vegetable plots for our new project with the Tsa'chila, finally spending 3 weeks in the Galapagos working in Hacienda Tranquila. In between they also found time to spend a few days relaxing in Montañita, and will wind up with a week at the start of March traveling down the spine of the Andes visiting volcanos and other adventure pursuits.

In addition, under our "Volunteer Ecuador" program we placed 21 individual volunteers with projects in Quito and all around Ecuador.



Lara Cygan joined fellow intern **Nick Haitel** in January, working in the Spanish school on a variety of projects related to tourism, marketing and publicity. Their first completed project was a publicity map that we have produced along with 8 other businesses in the Mariscal area of Quito. Our idea is to place the maps in each of our locations to hand out to our customers, students, volunteers, etc in order to publicize each other. Rather than paying marketing firms hundreds of dollars to print and circulate maps featuring 30 or 40 businesses, like we all have done in the past, we are taking the process into our own hands, printing 3000 maps to hand out between us.

They have also worked on producing a catalogue for local travel agents that will allow them to publicize and sell our "Study and Travel" programs on commission. In March they will be visiting each agency to present the catalogue and set up a relationship with each agency.

Robbie Andrus came down from the US in January to begin working on GPS mapping in the parish of Puerto Limón. He spent a month tramping along river banks and through woodland to map areas for reforestation in conjunction with the parish authorities. The work was a valuable contribution to our reforestation efforts although we understand that Robbie was frustrated at times by the lackadaisical approach to work and time that characterizes the area. However, with a bit of pressure we were able to move things along enough to produce a good result that will guide our reforestation efforts in September and October.

Robbie was also joined by **David Diaz** on the mapping project, although we quickly co-opted David to work with a volunteer group in Los Naranjos due to difficulties we were having with another group leader. David did a great job organizing them in Los Naranjos and subsequently during a

few days relaxing in Montañita.

We were also joined at the end of January by **Laura Zuiderma** from Holland. She is working in the volunteer department with coordinator Kelly Schussler, helping in the administration, day to day running and escorting volunteers to their projects.

Other interns who arrived in February are **Alina Glückstadt** and **Solveig Schroeder**. They will be working in Cabo San Francisco, helping us to prepare a plan for the development of tourism in the area, from Estero de Plátano, Quingue, Caimito and communities down to San Francisco further south. We are currently seeking funding to expand our work in the area to help local populations to develop sustainable economic activities in order to preserve the important biological diversity of this unique area.

Yenny Gomez (*far right in photo*) joined us as a group leader for the Leap group in January. She is from the US/Colombia and has worked as a teacher in Colombia as well as previously volunteering in Tena, Ecuador prior to working with this group.



Two events in February . . .

There were two fun events in Ecuador during February that the Spanish school took advantage of - Valentine's Day and Carnaval.

On February 14 we handed out red roses to all the students and teachers in the school and used the moment to increase our students' romantic vocabulary!

(*see page 4 for more photos*)



And on 19th of February a group of 16 students went to Guaranda, the Carnaval capital of Ecuador to enjoy the fun, parades and general Mayhem!



January and February Photo Gallery

