Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 48 Nov-Dec 2015

Introduction

We wish all our current and former students, volunteers, interns and other supporters a very happy holiday season, and all the best for the coming year 2016!

As 2015 drew to a close we reflected on another year of challenges and achievements. We live in a time of change, in a globalized world facing global-level problems on economic, social and environmental levels. These shifting patterns affect our businesses, and challenge us to maintain an income stream that will permit us to continue with the project work of our foundation. We have witnessed a general belt-tightening that calls on us to redouble our efforts to maintain our projects.

At the same time the situation leads us to reflect on Yanapuma Foundation’s mission and how best to help marginalized communities to develop sustainably. While much of our work involves helping disadvantaged communities to get a foot on the economic ladder, we sometimes wonder if this is really the best choice.

With this in mind we have been particularly interested in developing the concept of the “edible forest” with the Tsa’chila culture. This project offers to reforest areas that have been deforested with trees, shrubs and plants of use to humans as well as promoting the recuperation of biodiversity.

Re-creating a forest that offers a constant supply of nutritious food to its inhabitants promotes food sovereignty that goes beyond the idea of converting the land into more agriculturally “productive” and hence a more economically productive resource. It creates a harmonious environment for both man and nature.

Education is another vital resource for any community. Both formal education and learning through going beyond one’s normal boundaries and routines are important activities that open new paths for community development.

We were particularly happy this year that two of our Tsa’chila field staff got the opportunity to travel to Iguazu, Brazil for an encounter organized by the Inter American Foundation where they were able to meet cacao growers from all over South America and learn of the similarities and differences in their endeavours.

We were also delighted to see 5 of our “becados,” - youth from Estero de Plátano receiving our scholarships to study at high school, graduate during this year. For many of these families these youth were the first family member to ever finish high school.

Of course, the end of the year also implies it is time to put together our annual report for Yanapuma Foundation. We aim to announce its publication in time for the next newsletter at the end of February and encourage you to read it when it is ready.

Donation News . . .

On 21 December we started our annual Christmas fundraiser to raise money to continue with our scholarship program for disadvantaged youth to study at high school.

At the time of sending out this newsletter we have raised over $2,000, and wish to thank the following donors:

Thomas Ferrell, Mary Ann Lee, Laure Sandoz, Stephen Mitchell, Louise McKenzie, Bruce Ames, Friederike Hoppe

100% of these donations goes directly to the fund to support the high school scholarships.

If you would like to help us provide scholarships for underprivileged youth to study at high school then please click here for more details: http://www.yanapuma.org/en/EdePScholarships.php

Each scholarship costs $350 for the year and all funds raised go directly towards this fund, along with the $25 registration fee that the Spanish schools charge our students.

For 2016 we will have three scholarships in the Tsa’chila community of Bua—two that will be funded by Collège Edouard Montpetit of Quebec, plus one new scholarship funded by The Kindred Project.

In Estero de Plátano we have 8 students this year, down from 12 students in previous years. We hope to be able to raise enough funds to be able to increase the numbers again for 2016. Your help is much appreciated!!

True Ecuador Travel Agency!

Our new travel agency continues to slowly take form as we continue to develop our database of information on tourist activities in Ecuador. We also continue to work on the website, adding new information, but this is hampered somewhat by a lack of staff dedicated to just this activity.

In the meantime we have applied for membership with the Educational Travel Community, a US organization dedicated to promoting educational travel. We had hoped to attend their conference in January to network with travel agencies from North America, but in the end felt that we are not quite ready. But next year!
Spanish Schools . . .

The last two months of the year are normally the quietest for the Spanish school and this year was no exception, although we did note an increase in the latter half of December that surprised us.

Normally people start their travels in the new year, and this past year they did not start to travel to Ecuador until the latter half of January. But this year we noted a number of students arriving to spend Christmas and New Year here.

The schools are closed only on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day, both conveniently on a Friday this year, leaving us with a 4-day week on both weeks.

On Tuesday Quito staff who were not traveling came together for a Christmas meal in a local Italian restaurant (see photo).

Volunteer and Intern News . . .

After the departure of the Leap volunteer group in November we were pleased to have group leader Alonso Alvarrez working in our offices with us on a variety of tasks, including reorganizing our social media efforts.

These have slipped into a fairly deplorable and disorganized state due to the fact that we have never developed a clear and precise strategy. Instead, various staff and interns have set up accounts and pages on various social media, the passwords to some of which have then been lost, while others have remained undeveloped and forgotten.

Developing social media is complex and time-consuming, and has been in a constant state of evolution over the last few years, making it difficult to maintain a strategy, especially as we do not have a person dedicated to that.

We were also pleased to receive a group from Pacific Discovery in November that volunteered in the Andean community of Agato on community development projects.

At the start of November the group from the Leap that arrived in September finished their 10 weeks in Ecuador, returning from their last project in the Galapagos Islands where they were working on eradicating invasive species and conservation (below).

Timmy Global Health . . .

For our students in 2016 we have a special opportunity to put their Spanish practice to good use by volunteering as translators for medical personnel from Timmy Global Health on 1-week mobile clinics around Ecuador.

Students with a high-intermediate or better level of Spanish can be considered, and some medical knowledge is preferred but not necessary.

Transportation, food and lodging is covered for the week. The trip details are listed below. Interested students should contact us to learn more, or visit the website of Timmy Global Health: http://timmyglobalhealth.org/

**Quito Trips:**
- January 2-10, 2016
- March 12-20, 2016
- May 21-29, 2016
- July 23- August 3, 2016
- October 15-23, 2016

**Tena Trips:**
- January 2-10, 2016 (Misahualli)
- January 10-24, 2016 (Chontapunta)
- March 5-13, 2016 (Misahualli)
- March 11-20, 2016 (Chontapunta)
- May 21-30, 2016 (Chontapunta)
- May 29-June 11, 2016 (Misahualli)
- July 27-August 7, 2016 (Chontapunta)

**Santo Domingo Trips:**
- January 9-17, 2016
- March 5-14, 2016
The last two months of the year found us planning the remaining months of the project co-funded by the Inter American Foundation. Originally planned to terminate the field work in December, through the changes to the project's structure over the past three years we have ended up with funds that can be redirected towards continuing the field work until April or May of 2016.

Thus we will be able to continue with the “edible forest” project, sowing 14 plots with a variety of fruiting and other usable trees and shrubs that will begin to produce a regular supply of nutritious foods and other products within a few years. In addition, the mixed forest will become home again to some of the biodiversity that once characterized this rainforest region.

In addition, with the cacao project we will be able to develop the first experiments in post-production as our two cacaoteros, Wilson and Rafael, set up a small fermenting and drying system to begin working with the cacao from the 70 hectares that we have sown and that is now coming into full production.

During November and December, Cristina and Janeth, in charge of the vegetable plots, nutrition education and the edible forest, have completed a series of workshops at Rio Muchacho organic farm on the Pacific coast. These workshops have covered the topics of seed and soil management, permaculture, apiculture and classification of plants.

In Estero de Plátano, Lacey and Gerardo, two fellows from Union College in New York, continued to work with the scholarship recipients, encouraging them to keep up their grades and helping them with their studies. They also visited the colleges they attend to talk with their teachers and make sure that everything is fine.

They also came to Quito to try and persuade one of the telecommunication companies to consider extending cell phone or land-line coverage in the area. This would have a major effect on the development of tourism in Estero de Plátano as currently there is virtually no way to contact people there to make reservations or organize visits. We delivered letters to several companies as they plan their future development.

Another task for them is to negotiate with the community regarding the cost for them of living in the community. Currently they rotate between families over the 9 months they spend there, paying them for food and board. But due to funding cuts it has become more difficult to maintain the rent. They are currently there is virtually no way to contact people there to make reservations or organize visits. We delivered letters to several companies as they plan their future development.

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Another task for them is to negotiate with the community regarding the cost for them of living in the community. Currently they rotate between families over the 9 months they spend there, paying them for food and board. But due to funding cuts it has become more difficult to maintain the program. In 2015 Yanapuma will contribute $4,000 to keeping them in the community, but due to receiving fewer students this year it will be hard for us to repeat this in 2016.

One of the things we had hoped to get around to doing before the end of this year was to approach the Ministerio de Cultura or Ministerio de Educación to see if we can get the book of the lifestory of Tsa’chila leader Alfonso Aguavil published and promoted. But pressure from other activities made this impossible. So this will have to wait until the start of 2016—that is just one of our New Year’s resolutions!!!