

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

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Introduction

Quito has been unseasonably wet for the last couple of months. Everyone is talking about it being the result of climate change. Locals in their 90s cannot remember it having rained in July and August within their lifetimes.

Over the last few years it has rained a couple of times in the summer, but this year we have had many days when it has rained quite heavily for a couple of hours in the late afternoon, and occasionally all night long.

But despite the unseasonable weather our spirits have not been damped and we have continued to receive a good number of students at the school and we have been kept very busy with groups of volunteers and with our work in the foundation. We hope you enjoy reading these brief reports of our progress. Please feel free to email us if you would like to learn more.

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The Spanish school has been reasonably busy for the past two months. In general tourism seems to be down on previous years in Ecuador with travel agencies and hotels reporting less business than usual, and the school has bobbed on the same tide. Each year we see ebbs and flows, although overall we have consistently done well and continued to grow, despite these factors that lay outside our control.

Our Study and Travel programs have been busy in July and August, as they are usually popular with students in the summer months who want to make the best of their time by studying Spanish and seeing the wonders of Ecuador at the same time.



Celebrating a birthday in the Spanish School!



Our Spanish school is housed in this historic building on the edge of the main tourist area.

Growing Vegetables in Bua . . . by Andy Kirby

On the 24th of August I travelled down to the Tsa'chila community of Bua to form part of a 3-person team charged with judging a competition for the best "huerto familiar" in a project sponsored by the Ferguson Charitable Trust.

For the last 7 months we have worked with a group of 21 women and 3 men of the community to teach them the totally new skill of growing tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, radishes, spinach, chard and other vegetables.

At the same time we have worked with Janed, a local woman to pass on nutritional information and prepare nutritious meals using these ingredients, to show the Tsa'chila how simple it is to eat more healthily.

For me it has been my first chance to see this project in its full scope, to talk to the women involved, and witness their success and enthusiasm to continue this newly-learned skill. It was a heart-warming day, visiting the 24 vegetable



plots, and sitting down to eat a delicious vegetable-rich meal prepared by one family. The father of the family commented that their parents never taught them to eat vegetables, and as he continued to munch on fresh lettuce leaves, he affirmed that they were delicious.

Janed has shown each family how to incorporate vegetables into common dishes, especially focusing on how to get the youngest children to acquire the taste for greens and root vegetables.

Along with the vegetables each family has been growing saplings of local tree species. Yanapuma will buy these 10,000 young trees in September to plant in the nearby parish of Puerto Limón with the help of a bunch of students from Thinking Beyond Borders.

The sale of the saplings provides important extra income for the women, and we are working to develop a reputation for the Tsa'chila as producers of native tree species for reforestation in the area.

Foundation News . . .

Estero de Plátano

Alex Brockwehl and Shelby Cutter, students at Union College, New York took up residence in the village, aided in the process by Jamie san Andrés who has been living there for the past 4 months working with the scholarship students and other youth. Alex and Shelby will continue this work, as well as helping other social groups – the women’s group, the community bank, the artisans group, the cacao growers - in their processes of development.

On 21 August we held a meeting with each of the groups in Estero de Plátano to further discuss plans for the future. It was inspiring to see the enthusiasm of members of each group to creating positive change, but as always, the challenge is to turn enthusiasm into a practical plan and then seek funding to allow it to happen.

One of the great dangers in Estero is that locals will sell their plots in the village one by one, seeking the short-term gain from the sale, to outsiders who will come in and develop their own businesses. In the end the locals will be displaced or end up cleaning rooms in other people’s hotels and hostels.

Both the women’s’ group, “Grupo de Mujeres Emprendedoras” and the community bank have expressed interest in buying plots in the village that are currently for sale. We are encouraging them to do this in order to be able to construct small locales from which people can run small enterprises that might include selling local crafts, chocolate-based products, ceviches and fresh juices, and offer tours and excursions run by local people. Even if they end up renting some of these locales to outsiders at least the income from the rental will benefit the community, providing financing for the community bank and for the group of women.

Purchasing these plots will be just a first step. Each group still has a long way to go to improve their organizational skills and develop sufficient internal trust and transparency in their workings. This will be an essential role for Yanapuma.

Another suggestion that we presented to each group was the idea that Estero de Plátano should declare itself an “Eco-pueblito,” adopting measures aimed at increasing its sustainability. In this way it can work towards attracting a different type of tourist, one who is interested in exploring the incredible marine and forest biodiversity of the region rather than just looking for a cheap day on the beach.

Tsa’chila communities

Giovanni has been busy in August preparing for the arrival of the students from Thinking Beyond Borders (TBB) who will be planting up to 10,000 trees in the parish of Puerto Limón in the province of Santo Domingo. In collaboration with the parish council the students will be reforesting sensitive areas like river banks. New intern Matthijs van Beverorde from Holland will help with GPS mapping of the

areas to be reforested.

The trees for this project are being grown in Bua as part of a project funded by the Ferguson Charitable Trust. They will be transferred to Puerto Limón during September, ready to be planted. The Ferguson project has also involved creating vegetable plots, managed by 20 Tsa’chila women, and producing vegetables for their families.

Another aspect of the project has been to work on organizational skills among the women to help them prepare for commercializing

the sale of saplings in the province, so that in the following years this may become a regular commercial activity. This year the



parish of Puerto Limón and a donation from the student group Thinking Beyond Borders is buying the trees from the Tsa’chila women.

The Ferguson project officially wound up at the end of August with a celebration and closing, and a prize for the best vegetable plot.

In the Tsa’chila communities of **El Poste** and **Los Naranjos** we have been meeting with community members to create project proposals based on their needs. In addition we are planning to continue offering computer proficiency classes in these communities and in **Peripa**. In **El Poste** we already have 57 adults and children signed up for the classes which will start in September.

Donation News . . .

Former student **Paul Lepine** donated \$80 to the work of the foundation.

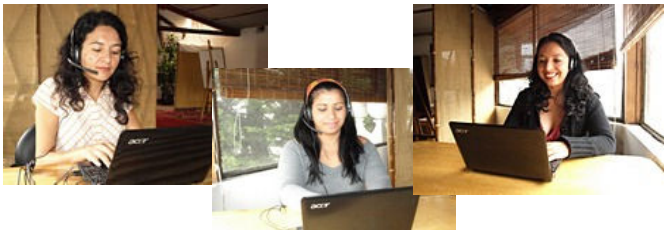
We were also delighted to find the sum of £1960 unexpectedly deposited in the UK account of Yanapuma Scotland. Unable to tie that sum into any expected payment or outstanding invoice, we will put the money to good use, initially using a part of the fund to finance intern Jamie san Andrés to work with the Tsa’chila and to accompany members of Estero de Plátano to Bahia de Caraquez to learn more about being an “Eco-Pueblo.”

Former Volunteer Ecuador volunteer **Steven Laffelaar** from Canada made a donation to **El Arca Animal Rescue Center** of \$200.00. The money will be used to refurbish and extend enclosures for some of the animals. Steven fundraised in Canada for El Arca.

Online Spanish classes . . .

Yanapuma's online Spanish classes program continues to grow, with an average of 25 students at any one time. We have a dedicated website for these classes: <http://www.spanishonlineclass.com>.

The classes are particularly popular with former students who want to continue practicing Spanish once they have returned home. In addition we also offer our Professional Medical Spanish program as an online option.



Yanapuma turns 5 years old!!!

On 1 September Yanapuma celebrates its 5th birthday. It is 5 years to the day since we put down a deposit and the first month's rent on the school and foundation offices in the beautiful historic building that we still proudly show to our students on their first day of classes.

It is hard to believe, the time has flown past so quickly. In that time we have built up a professional Spanish school that is acquiring a great reputation, a dedicated volunteer department that last year placed 121 volunteers in different projects around Quito as well as dealing with numerous groups of volunteers, and of course, the foundation itself which has been the focal point of all our work from the start.

We have seen the funding for the foundation increase continually, supported by profits from the Spanish school and volunteering activities, as well as from individual donors and organizations. We are grateful for the support we have received and the confidence that everyone has shown in us.

We are also extremely grateful for the constant support of our staff, teachers and interns, without whom none of what we have achieved would have been possible. We have all worked hard, at times with little or no reward more than the satisfaction of having begun to realize our mission of helping indigenous and marginalized communities to adapt successfully and sustainably to the challenges of living in a more globalized context. And we hope to continue building on this success in the years to come!

We say a big THANK YOU to all our supporters!



An afternoon of drama (in Spanish!) in the school

Students, Interns & Volunteers . . .

Alex Brockwehl and **Shelby Cutter** – two new students from Union College arrived in Late July. They are spending 8 months in the community of Estero de Plátano on a Minerva scholarship (*see foundation news*).

Brenna Hull and **Ariel Climer** left us to return to the US after spending several months leading volunteer groups and helping out with Volunteer Ecuador programs. We are grateful for their help and support and wish them well in the future.

Jemma Swan from Australia joined Yanapuma as an intern, working in Volunteer Ecuador along with coordinator **Kelly Schussler**. The two have been busy in the last two months reviewing our agreements with each of the programs we work with and preparing for 2012.

Matthijs van Beverforde from Holland joined us to help with mapping work in the parish of Puerto Limón. After taking Spanish classes for a month he began his work at the end of August, living in the Tsa'chila community of Los Naranjos while he travels daily around the parish plotting existing forest and river banks and other sensitive areas that require reforestation.



Staff and interns of Yanapuma Foundation

Volunteer Groups

In July we welcomed a group from the **Leap UK**. The volunteers spent 3 weeks working in the sierra community of Chilcapamba where they repaired the playground in the school and also took part in various agricultural activities. After that they spent 3 weeks in the Tsa'chila community of Los Naranjos where they started to build a new classroom for the school and worked with the cacao growers.

Yanapuma also hosted 5 groups from **Outlook Expeditions** of Wales. The groups travelled at different times to the Amazon where they worked with the **Sinchi Aqua Center**, a women's crafts group that is developing a museum and visitor center with the aim of improving their income through tourism and the sale of crafts. The groups worked on construction of cabañas and the creation of a forest path.

July and August Photo Gallery

