

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

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 37 Nov-Dec 2013

### Introduction

**Happy New Year to all our former students, volunteers, interns and supporters!**

Another year has passed, the 7<sup>th</sup> for Yanapuma Foundation and Spanish School. Our mission to promote sustainable development in indigenous and marginalized populations, supported by our "social enterprise" model, continues to be our priority as we enter our 8<sup>th</sup> year of operation.

For the Spanish school 2013 was a challenging year, with notable changes in the Spanish course market, mostly due to ebbs and flows in tourism to Ecuador and the efforts of other Spanish-speaking nations to increase their share of the travel market. But we have been preparing for these kinds of changes for a while now and plans are well under way to diversify our customer base, freeing ourselves to a great extent from the ups and downs of the regular tourism and Spanish student market. In addition we are finalizing the process of installing the most professional and pedagogically sound system of Spanish tuition available, placing ourselves in a position to collaborate with universities and institutes of higher education world-wide. Our new school in Cuenca will form an important part of our plans for the future.

For the volunteer department 2013 was a good year, with good numbers of

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individual volunteers and groups of volunteers. Volunteer activities dovetail very nicely with both the Spanish school, where volunteers can take classes before or while they volunteer, and the foundation, where our projects often need extra hands to plant trees, and other similar activities. All the indications are that 2014 will continue the same trend as 2013, and we are looking forward to a busy year in the volunteer department.

The foundation is now roughly half way through its 3-year project with the Inter American Foundation, working with the Tsa'chila culture to promote sustainable cacao production, family vegetable plots and nutritional awareness. The first year was the hardest, planting 26,000 cacao trees and creating 84 vegetable plots, as well as cooking classes and self-esteem and organizational workshops. By now things have settled into a good routine and we are especially happy to see how the three Tsa'chila members of our team have taken on their responsibilities and have grown into successful trainers.

**So all in all, we are looking forward with anticipation to the unfolding events of 2014!**

### Our Christmas Fundraiser!

Each year around the holidays we launch an annual fundraiser to raise funds to offer scholarships to deserving students of the coastal village of Estero de Plátano to study at high school.

In 2013 we have sponsored 13 children through one year of high school, and look forward to continuing our support with your help in 2014!

To read about the program click here: <http://www.yanapuma.org/en/EdePScholarships.php>



Two of this year's scholarship students at a regular meeting to evaluate progress

Each scholarship costs \$350.00 for the academic year which begins in April and ends in January.

To make a donation of any amount please click on the following link and click on the "Donate" button:

[http://www.yanapuma.org/en/donate\\_home.php](http://www.yanapuma.org/en/donate_home.php)



The view (above) from our school of the historic center of Quito in the evening. During the holiday season there are many cultural and religious events taking place for our students to enjoy.

### Check out our latest video!!!!

**Megan Tan**, a semester student at Universidad San Francisco offered her professional services to create a video featuring our work with volunteers. Megan followed one volunteer from Thinking Beyond Borders as they embarked on a month-long stay in a Tsa'chila household and volunteer work planting 8000 saplings.



The result can be viewed here:

<https://vimeo.com/82425658>

We are extremely grateful to Megan and her team for all their hard work and the very professional and inspiring results!

## Spanish School News . . .

Normally, in the run up to Christmas things quieten down considerably for the Spanish school, with few students wishing to travel and study over the Christmas period. This has been true in our Quito school, but in contrast the school in Cuenca has been very busy, and we have had to draft in teachers from Quito to cover the number of students there! Reservations for the first couple of months of January are good for both schools and we expect more last-minute bookings to come in for both.

In December we met several times with our teachers in Quito to finalize our plans to launch our new system of classes in January. In reality it is not a new system, but the point that we have been working towards for the last couple of years. We will be focusing more on offering group classes at different levels with a 4-week running period. Individual classes will still be an important offering, but in both cases we have aligned our materials and methods with our methodology to create what we believe is a superior method of teaching Spanish.

It has been hard work getting the teachers to adapt to this new system. In general it has to be said that the style and form of teaching Spanish in Ecuador, and probably in all of Latin America is fairly “flojo” or loose. Schools have tended to call a teacher when a student appears, charge the student, pay the teacher and pocket the rest, without much care for what the teacher actually does. We at Yanapuma are determined to compete with the best Spanish schools in Spain, for which we need teachers who are 100% behind us, and interested in their own professional development.



It has been especially difficult finding teachers in Cuenca, with nearly all of those who expressed interest in working with us being either very inexperienced or very “old school.” We have trained up

two teachers there from scratch who are now working very well, although they still lack great experience. But bit by bit they advance to working with more proficient students, gaining in experience and confidence.

Meanwhile other teachers from Quito have relocated to Cuenca to teach full time there.

*Seeing out the old year in style in our offices in Quito on the 31st of December!*

*Seriously, would you trust these people with your Spanish education??*



## Volunteer News . . .

At the start of November a group of 9 volunteers from the **Leap** were finishing up their stint of volunteering at Hacienda Tranquila on the Galapagos Islands. They carried out projects related to clearing invasive species, as well as working with local children from the school near the hacienda, under the expert leadership of group leader **Fenner Hoell**.

We also had 7 individual volunteers during the past two months, working in diverse projects in Quito, Cuenca and all around Ecuador.

On 17 of December volunteer coordinator **Emily Brannan** left us to take up a post in Guayaquil. We are grateful to her for all her hard work during her time working with us.

And at the end of December our other volunteer coordinator **Angela Winston** also left us. During her 18 months working with us she has been instrumental in reshaping the department and bringing order to our projects and placements.

She is replaced by **Cristina Lopez** (right). We are delighted to have found an Ecuadorian to fill this post. Cristina has previously worked for a number of years as a volunteer coordinator and came to us originally as a teacher.



**Looking forward to January** we will be extremely busy with volunteer groups, with 4 large groups coming in January alone for various projects, so Cristina will be launched in at the deep end! We will be hiring another person to work alongside Cristina during the coming month or two.

In addition there will be individual volunteers to escort to their projects in Quito and all around Ecuador. This service is included in our registration fee. Each project is pre-arranged with the receiving organization and we accompany each volunteer to their project to ensure that they arrive safely and that everything is as it should be.

## Donation News . . .

In November we were pleased to receive a general donation from former student, **Rober Pogue** of \$200.

In December we received two donations from former volunteer, **Annie Steward** for the women of the Sinchi Warmi Project of \$100 each.

We also received a donation from former volunteer, **Cliff Jones**, of \$100 for our reforestation projects with the Tsá'chila.

**Many thanks to contributors to our Christmas fundraiser** so far: Friederike Hoppe, Pat Patterson, Chantal Dussault, Natalie Emmons, Brenda Friedman, and those whose donations are arriving as we send out this final newsletter of the year!

## Events in Cuenca . . .

Yanapuma Spanish School in Cuenca is located in a historic building in the center of the city. Regular events, both in class and outside class, help students to learn about the history, culture, and practices of Cuenca and Ecuador.



We are grateful to our student and volunteer coordinator, **Joy Brandt**, for all her hard work and dedication during these last few months of 2013 to making the school in Cuenca a success, and to administrator **Carina Nicolalde** for her dedication since founding the school in March 2013!

## Project News . . .

In December we were pleased to welcome a delegation from the **Inter American Foundation** to pay a visit to the Tsa'chila to view progress on the project that we are carrying out with them. We held a meeting in the comuna **Los Naranjos**, attended by representatives of the 4 comunas with which we are working. It was an ideal opportunity for an exchange of ideas and information. Comuna members had the opportunity to hear from the IAF about the other projects that they are involved with here in Ecuador, and the very similar challenges and obstacles that arise in the course of the project.

The cacao trees that we planted last year are establishing themselves very well, and even beginning to produce fruit! It is at this stage of beginning to produce that the Tsa'chila farmers begin to see the potential results and become more committed to the project. Being unused to such a long time lag between sowing and seeing a result, we have found it hard at times to maintain the Tsa'chila farmers enthusiasm.

With the vegetable plots the time it takes to see results is much shorter, and so it has been easier to establish these. The climate of Santo Domingo, with plenty of sun, warmth, rain, and good soil, makes it relatively easy to grow vegetables, although pests and plagues also thrive in that climate! But local knowledge of insect-repelling plants has led to the development of cost-free methods of maintaining the health of their vegetable crops.

In **Estero de Plátano**, our intrepid Union College interns, Andrew and Jacqui, continue to work with the scholarship students, the local school, and the various social groups of the community, working towards organizational competence as a pre-requisite to being able to manage their community and resources more effectively in the face of the challenges from outside as the coastline continues to develop. The academic year finishes in January and we will begin the process of evaluating students' progress during the year prior to deciding how to use the scholarship fund money for 2014.



Traditional "monigotes" of famous figures are sold all over Quito on the 31st of December to be burned at midnight. The burning represents a purification and expulsion of bad energies accumulated over the previous year in preparation for a Brand new year!

November and December Photo Gallery

