

A co-operatively run NGO driven by the enthusiasm of its staff and volunteers to promote sustainable development in marginalized communities throughout Ecuador and to promote Cultural Exchange for mutual benefit in our increasingly globalized world

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

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 36 Sep-Oct 2013

#### Introduction

*At the start of September Yanapuma celebrated its 7th birthday!*

How time has flown in these 6 years since we first rented our office and school space here in Quito and set to work to develop the Spanish school and the foundation, paying ourselves the princely sum of \$175 per month for the first year and a half as we struggled to get ourselves off the ground.

Since then we have continued to grow year on year, developing our “social Enterprise” model— a professional Spanish school and a range of volunteering options and activities that provide core funding for Yanapuma Foundation and its project work.

*We are grateful to all those students, volunteers and interns who have supported us over the past 7 years and whose contributions, efforts and dedication have helped us to survive and*

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#### *flourish in that time.*

Now, our big news is that at the very end of October we will be moving to offices in the historic center of Quito, giving up the space that has been our home for these past 7 years.

Our new space is in a very traditional colonial building with a central courtyard around which an entire floor with a suite of 9 spacious offices will house classrooms, offices, an audiovisual suite, kitchen and spaces for relaxation.

Although we are a bit sentimental about leaving our old offices, we are excited to be moving to the new space in the historic centre of Quito, just two blocks from the Plaza del Teatro, one of Quito's notable plazas (see photos below).



*The Plaza del Teatro is one of Quito's landmark plazas, close to our new school.*

#### Our 7th Birthday!

Staff, interns, students and volunteers gathered on 06 September to celebrate 7 years of Yanapuma Foundation and Spanish School with a cake for the occasion.



Our 7 years have been marked by constant overall growth from the beginning. The volunteer department dipped during 2009 and 2011 with the fall of sterling and other factors, and the school has shown more sluggish growth during 2012 and 2013.

But in general we have been able to continue providing base funding for the work of our foundation, following our “social enterprise” model, supplemented by grants from a variety of international organizations.

To find out more you can view the statistics presented on the financial and accountability page of our website:

<http://www.yanapuma.org/en/financial.php>

#### Our New School and Offices . . .

Our new location features a suite of offices set around a traditional colonial-style courtyard. Nine separate rooms offer us space for an audio-visual and multi-media salon, a kitchen/café, separate offices for the foundation, volunteer department and Spanish school, and separate class rooms for classes at different levels. Plus there is a wealth of



space to sit outside around the courtyard to take classes or relax with a coffee while using our wifi, or work on Spanish homework and additional exercises.

## School News . . .

After the busiest July on record we had the quietest August on record, a trend followed by all the other schools in Quito that we were in contact with. Fortunately, things picked up in September and October, with a good number of students during these two months. We expect things to get progressively quieter until the end of the year as fewer people travel over the Christmas period.

October saw us extremely busy arranging our new programs for 2014 and working on pricing for all the services that we will offer next year. This is always a big task, made harder by the fact that many Ecuadorian businesses such as hotels and agencies don't tend to start thinking about next year until it is upon us, making it difficult to get the new prices from them in time.

We were happy to welcome **Joy Brandt**, a former student recently retired, to begin working with us as a volunteer at our school in Cuenca. Her task is to help us develop the school, filling the classes and orienting volunteers to their projects. Joy jumped in to her tasks with great vigor at the end of September, networking, sending out publicity, and shaking things up to increase student numbers during October.

There is a delicate balance to be maintained between having a certain number of students and enough competent teachers to teach them, and we plan to continue growing the school in Cuenca gradually with Joy's enthusiastic support.



## Volunteer and Intern News . . .

**Thinking Beyond Borders!** - We were excited to receive another group from Thinking Beyond Borders (TBB) at the end of September. The group spent a month in the Tsa'chila community of Bua where they planted 8000 trees that the Tsa'chila had grown themselves. In previous years our agricultural expert had taken charge of the sowing of the seeds and production of the saplings, but this year we were happy to be able to hand this project directly to the Tsa'chila themselves to manage, in the form of the cultural group of Shinopi Bolón Cultural Center in Bua.

The group of 16 TBB students stayed with host families, which is a great cultural exchange experience for both

and there were tears when their guests left at the end of the month!

Back in Quito the group presented multimedia projects that they had created as a result of their experiences in Bua, throwing up many interesting questions that resulted from their experiences with the Tsa'chila, about the value and place of culture and its relationship to the environment within a globalized context.

**The Leap!** - At the start of September we welcomed a group of volunteers from The Leap. After orientations in Quito the group went up to Chilcapamba where they helped the community with ongoing projects. After that they spent 3 weeks in the Tsa'chila community of Los Naranjos working with the community on repairs to the cultural center and conservation work. The following week was spent exploring the Ruta de los Volcanes in the Andes, before flying off to the Galapagos to work on a conservation project for 3 weeks. Finally they returned back to the mainland for a few days rest and recreation in the surf town of Montañita on the Pacific coast.

### Interns and Volunteers

We were happy to welcome back **Sam Schlesinger** to work as leader and coordinator for the TBB group while they were working in Bua.

Photojournalist **Megan Tan** who is spending a semester studying abroad and learning Spanish in Ecuador is working on creating a video about the experiences of members of the TBB group while they were volunteering in Bua. We are looking forward to seeing the finished product and putting it online when it is ready!

**Fenner Hoell** joined us in September to lead the Leap group on their volunteering and adventures. He will be staying with us, working part time in the office once the group has gone, to set up the volunteering projects for the next group that comes in January which he will also lead. As we are expecting a large group, we are seeking additional leaders to help with the workload. Fenner is a outdoor sports enthusiast from North Carolina.

We also welcomed back Ph.D. student **Audrey Joslin**, who helped us out last year giving a talk to the TBB group about water issues in Ecuador. Audrey is studying this very subject for her doctorate, and returned to Ecuador this year to finish her research. Luckily for us she was able to repeat her talk to a new group of TBB students, as well as continue to work in the office one day a week, helping out in the volunteer department.



## Project News . . .

### Tsa'chila

We are now into the second year of our project funded by the Inter American Foundation, and were glad to have received the latest round of funding before the American government was shut down temporarily in mid-October! This year will see us helping 71 farmers to maintain their new plots of improved cacao as well as offering training in fertilization, pruning, and protecting their trees in a sustainable manner. We will be organizing trips to other cacao producers who are more advanced, to stimulate the Tsa'chila's confidence and provide them with a vision of what they can achieve in the future.

We have often noted how it is relatively easy to work with individual Tsa'chila families as they welcome the attention and input that we can offer. But in the moment of trying to work within an organized framework with the Tsa'chila, everything tends to fall apart very quickly. This is true on the level of each individual "comuna" and at the level of the official "gobernación."

A recent and very frustrating experience for Yanapuma was a meeting that we organized in response to calls from several Tsa'chila farmers in different communities to learn about how to protect their environment and promote conservation. Cecilia, our project coordinator, arranged a meeting with the Tsa'chila governor and his advisors with a delegation from the Ministerio del Ambiente who are offering free training in conservation and environmental protection with the aim of producing local environmental promoters. It sounded like a "slam dunk" with a number of interested Tsa'chila and a government organization offering free training.

But one of the governor's advisers scuppered the entire initiative with an outburst that alienated the delegates from the ministerio, questioned our motives for being involved, and left everybody dumbfounded. And as the Tsa'chila will never raise their voice against each other, nobody offered an alternative view, not even the governor himself, and the delegates left feeling insulted and vowing never to return to do anything with the Tsa'chila.

While at Yanapuma, we have learned to take these things in our stride, and not get upset, we see time and again how Tsa'chila politics undermines virtually any attempt to offer help, and the Tsa'chila families that want help are denied by those who are supposed to be looking out for their interests. The roots of the problem are complex, and rooted in Tsa'chila traditions and the psychology that has developed as a result.

Our strategy has been to work with individual families to obtain results, trying not to let the politics get in our way, and just letting things ebb and flow as we have seen that they inevitably do!

### Estero de Plátano

The 13 students who are receiving the scholarships to study at high school, provided by Yanapuma from the \$25 regis-

tration fee that each student pays, are now into their last trimester of study before the end of the academic year. Volunteer and intern coordinator **Emily Brannan** went pays regular visits to Estero de Plátano to coordinate the work of Union College interns Andrew and Jacqui who are doing a great job working with the scholarship kids, as well as with the local school and other social groups within the community. For them it is a hands-on learning experience that comes with all the frustrations of working for positive change at the grass-roots level.

Volunteer coordinator **Angela Winston** also worked during the last two months with **Jennifer Wilson and Lisa Hoffman**. As part of their ongoing commitment to the Tsa'chila of Los Naranjos they had planned to fund a journey to California for **Wilmer Aguavil**, a young and motivated Tsa'chila. Unfortunately, the US immigration authorities were not so keen to award a visitor to Wilmer on this occasion. The pair are also continuing to work on promoting medicinal plant and other knowledge through a book they have prepared with the Tsa'chila, as well as writing down oral histories and conservation work.



### Donations . . .

**Annie Steward** sent two donations of \$100 each to the Sinchi Aqua project in the Napo region. This group of Kichwa women is working to improve the lives of their families through the development of tourism, agriculture and crafts production.

If you are interested in making a donation of any size, you can either send it via Paypal to [donate@yanapuma.org](mailto:donate@yanapuma.org), or you can contact us to make a deposit to our bank account. We pledge to dedicate 100% of small donations directly to project expenses.

### Service Learning in Ecuador . . .

Yanapuma Foundation runs a volunteer department staffed by two volunteer coordinators. They maintain regular contact with over 30 grass roots projects and organizations around Ecuador. Thus, we can help students and volunteers to set up a worthwhile volunteering experience with a trustworthy project, creating a win-win situation for both sides. Universities and colleges also can benefit from collaboration with Yanapuma to arrange programs for their students.

# Volunteer Photo Gallery

