



BE IN CONTACT WITH US ON →



Editorial

Welcome to our June edition! People in Costa Rica are very happy to share with you some special activities that happened during the month. This time we have the visit of the Portslade School group, who will be volunteering at the Conservation and Care Projects. Also we are happy to receive our Two Weeks Special volunteers who visit us this time each a year. Keep in contact with us, and we hope you enjoy the newsletter!



Laura Estrada

Social Manager

@ Teaching Workshop at Café Liberia

On June 19th teaching volunteers had a good time sharing ideas, experiences, and more. The purpose of this activity was to involve teaching volunteers in order to learn more together about the work that they are developing at their projects, so this is a really good opportunity to get new ideas and apply them as much as possible at work.



@ *Social Event, June 19th.*

On Thursday 19th, volunteers had the second social event in Liberia city. They went to the ice-cream shop Gelato Italiano; everyone had a good time and the new volunteers were able to meet everyone.



Microfinance's Volunteers Experiences

- *Suzanne Hielckert*

As a Dutch economics student one year away from my bachelor's degree, I wanted to gain some hands-on experience in a business situation. That is why I decided to take part in the Projects Abroad Micro Financing programme. I acquired a reasonable level of Spanish a couple years ago, so I thought an internship in Costa Rica would be the perfect way to help relieve poverty, improve my Spanish and see how a business works in a different culture. I am currently helping a husband and wife, Florence and Flor, who own a handicraft business for which they produce wooden products that are useful for many types of housework, such as washing clothes and cooking. They sell their products door-to-door or directly at their house in Nazareth, a poor neighborhood in Liberia. My job is, for example, to write a business plan for them (in Spanish!), set up a marketing strategy so that customers actually know of their existence, figure out what materials and machines would help them to work more efficiently and not do all the production manually, extent the clientele to not only locals but also tourists, and make a costs overview of all this. This is quite a lot, especially if you don't have experience in business, so in the beginning I felt a bit overwhelmed. However, I found that with logical reasoning you can already do so much to help and improve their situation! My supervisors at Projects Abroad are a great help as well, and together with the other volunteer(s) in the Micro Financing Project, I feel like we are really doing something useful and structural. Even though I don't interact with children in my project like most of the other volunteers, I definitely do not feel like I am missing something. I actually get to see the results of my work quickly, and I the grateful faces of Flor and Florence are very much worth it. Besides, I have three of the cutest Costa Rican children living in my host family! I do advise future participants of the Micro Financing Project to study some Spanish beforehand, because most of the people you will be helping will probably barely speak English. It will make it more worth while if you can speak to the people

yourself. Also, in the four weeks I have been here I was able to do a lot, but I am glad I am staying for another four, so I hopefully get to see the end result!

- **Volunteer Janne Nielsen “Working with Christina to sell chorreadas”**

When Christina Garcia Mora came to Liberia in January 2013, she was looking for a job in order to support her and her two daughters. Not finding anything, she managed to get a bank loan of approximately \$ 1.000 to set up a small shop where she could sell chorreados (a typical Costa Rican type of tortilla made from corn). When I arrived in June 2013, she was only barely making ends meet, but she was eligible for an investment from IMAS (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social) – the governmental NGO responsible for helping the poorest groups in Costa Rica.

I spent my first week in Liberia assisting Christina with getting the necessary documentation in order to apply for the investment. This included going to all kitchen equipment vendors and getting the best quotation for the oven, blender and coffee machine that Christina was looking for to help her business. Since her blender was half broken and the electric pan only works occasionally due to a malfunction, the equipment was highly needed in order for Christina to produce more and better products. While we waited for IMAS to process the paperwork and hopefully grant the investment, Christina and I spent the mornings reviewing previous day sales and discussing how she can make even more sales. Christina has a lot of ideas for how to expand her business, and eventually she hopes to have a nice restaurant with a good turnover, so as she says: “It is no longer just a matter of surviving”.

I spent a lot of time with Christina talking about prices, costs, and margins, but ultimately nothing would change if it had not been for Christina’s own perseverance in changing the circumstances for her and her two daughters. I think that even just

the fact that someone was there to listen and support has been helpful and has given Christina even more energy to keep working hard to get what she wants.



Conservation Article

This is a month of rain; a month where the entire park is covered with green and new plants begin to grow from the earth. A month of starting new projects for conserving this beautiful National Park.

✓ Barra Honda self sufficient

Finally, the bio digester is about to reach its end. We have been working for a year in the bio digester, more than 100 volunteers have worked on this project, and we expect it to be successful.



We will make the first national park in Latin America with a project of this type. For the first time a national park will be self-sufficient, and with this we will have gas for cooking, hot water for showers and many other benefits.

✓ New bird project

With this new project volunteers are part of the investigation, walking transects made by them, and observing each bird and thus trying to identify the species and sex of the birds seen.

✓ Environmental education: a project to make children conservationists.

The staff and volunteers are very proud of this project management, working with children on environmental issues and teaching children how to protect nature is a project that has been in writing since last year.

We are working in three schools around the National Park, El Flor School, school of Barra Honda, and Santa Ana school. It was a very exciting experience to see how children arrive at school when they jump and scream with excitement to see staff and volunteers come to their school to explain things in nature and how to care for the forest.

For this month, we had a surprise for the children with "toño pizote", this is the symbol of forest fires, because we were explaining to the children and we were playing things related to forest fires.

Anthony Ruiz
Conservation Manager