

BUENA ONDA

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA



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BIENVENIDOS!

Hola amigos!

Summer is winding down in Córdoba, schools are back in session and the warmer weather is quickly leaving us. Teaching and sports volunteers are returning to the schools to work within their placements, and the care volunteers are back on schedule at the day care and children's homes where they have been working. Our Law and Human Rights volunteers continue to reach out more and more to the community of Córdoba to raise awareness of the human rights of Córdoba's citizens!



March has been a very busy month – read on for more details on all that went on this month! Nos vemos pronto!

Stephanie Wall
Information Manager

PROJECT UPDATES

LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS - COMMUNITY ALARM UPDATE



It has been 2 months since the community alarms were installed in the Blas Pascal neighborhood. The Law & Human Rights volunteers recently conducted a survey with the families that had the alarm installed in their houses to evaluate how they feel about the effectiveness of the alarms and overall feeling of the security of their neighborhood since the alarms were installed. Volunteers presented the results of the survey at last week's meeting at Blas Pascal, showing that overall the results are positive, with 100% of the residents saying that they feel more secure with the alarms installed and that it has been effective in deterring crime in the area.



The next goal of the Law and Human Rights volunteers will be to recruit other neighbors to install the alarm. While conducting the survey they found that there were some misunderstandings amongst the neighbors regarding the costs of the alarm. Hopefully by talking to more people they will be able to clear up the misunderstanding and get them on board to install the

NEW PLACEMENT - EQUINE THERAPY

In February we began working with a new Equine Therapy placement in Córdoba. This center is a public institution, part of the province of Córdoba and the Córdoba Sports Agency. The center helps children and adults with various mental and physical disabilities to improve their lifestyle by doing therapies while on horseback. Services are provided free of charge to the students, the only requirement is that students are recommended by their doctors or therapists, as the work of equine therapy would be beneficial to their disability.



The role of the volunteers is essentially an extra pair of hands, helping with the day-to-day running of the center. Their work includes not only helping students with the lessons, but also giving a helping hand with the general maintenance of the horses and center.

Future volunteers are encouraged to come prepared with comfortable shoes and clothes that they are willing to get dirty! You are going to work!

In addition to the volunteers, there will be additional assistance from therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists to help the students in the lessons and to help teach the volunteers.

CLEAN UP DAY AT COPA DE LECHE

On Saturday March 29th volunteers headed to the Copa de Leche care placement for a much needed day of cleaning. The Copa de Leche is located in a marginal neighborhood in Córdoba and provides local kids a safe place to play for a few hours a day and an afternoon snack. The placement is run by Projects Abroad volunteers and they put a lot of hard work into organizing activities, preparing the snacks, and making the placement run smoothly!

In total 11 volunteers participated in the dirty day activity. We had a lot of work cut out for us, so we divided into three groups. One group stayed inside to clean the storage area, kitchen and main area when the kids play and eat. We took out all of the furniture and got to work. Another group worked outside to pick up the garbage and loose rocks in the grass surrounding the building, clean the walls to take off paint and clean the windows and frames.

To bring a bit more color to the outside of Copa de Leche, we found old tires and laid them in the shape of a worm. With the help of the neighborhood kids that all hurried to help, we painted the tires in bright colors and designs. The tires will be another place for the kids to play. We also planted a few flowers in the flower pots at the door to bring more color!



VOLUNTEER STORIES

Hélène Bichet

France

Care, 2 months

When I decided to arrange my trip to a foreign country, I had no precise idea of the place I would like to go to or the project I would like to do. While I was looking for a destination, I knew I would like to go to South America, I wondered what would be the best and most rewarding way to travel for me. Consequently, one step at a time, the idea to be volunteer started to form.

Looking on the Internet, I happened to land on the Projects Abroad website. Taking a close look and after comparing with others associations, I quickly decided on doing a Care Project in Argentina for 2 months.

The reason I choose Argentina was simply because I'm fluent in Spanish and because it's a country which is fascinating for me: History, culture, gastronomy, people, everything tempted me about this country. I was curious to discover the country of tango, Gauchos, big spaces and Maradona! Why I chose the Care Project was simply because after doing children's animation in my work, I felt that I was able to share my professional experience with children living in hard and even risky conditions.

So on January 8th I landed in the summer heat of Cordoba where Naty, my coordinator, was waiting for me at the airport. I had absolutely no idea of what to expect because I refused to imagine anything. Indeed, I decided to have no expectations from this new experience, except to discover it day after day; that will be my next 2 months in Argentina. I'm still convinced that I made the right choice, letting myself drift away by the events as I wasn't disappointed thereafter.



Arriving at my new "house", I find out the "way of life" for the young Argentinians on summer holidays: meet up on the patio, talk about holiday destinations, friends, studies, passing a strange wooden cup full of herbs to everybody. I learnt that it is the famous "mate", emblematic drink of Argentina. They asked me to drink with them but I refused and learned that you never refuse as it is like being rude. After all, I had a good excuse: I just arrived after almost 48 hours of travelling so apart from a shower, a glass of water and a real bed; I didn't really want anything else. My new "mother" finally arrived, coming back from work and offered to show me my room, the bathroom, everything I could need during my stay and gave me time to settle in. I'm lucky as I do speak Spanish (even if they

call me the "Gallega" because I speak European Spanish), so my acclimatization was really fast. My new "mum" is so lovely, extravagant, speaking loudly, having ants in her pants but also attentive, curious, a listener; in short, we adopted each other mutually. I was only living in this house for just a few hours but I already felt like it will be really difficult for me to go back home without leaving a little piece of my heart behind. The following day, Naty picked me up with 2 other new volunteers for our 1st "Cordobese" day. So we went to discover the Projects Abroad office and the city of Cordoba. Made copies of my passport for the files for the Projects abroad office, purchased a bus card, were shown how to use the buses to go to the city center, purchased a local cell phone, exchanged phone numbers, lunch and it was already time to go back home. I spent my 1st day in Argentina and I had a lot of images in my memory. I felt that I would enjoy my life here certainly more than I was expecting. I was also very excited as the next day I would discover the placement where I will be working!

My 2nd day in Cordoba was the real start of my project. I travelled with Naty and another volunteer (we arrived on the same day in Argentina) with the bus to the placement. During the 50 minutes, we crossed the city center I discovered the day before and then we arrived in a really poor district. It was a shock and

I had the impression of arriving in another universe, a kind of parallel town regarding the Cordoba I thought I knew. It reminded me of the Indian townships I saw in the movie "City of Joy". Here, there is sheet metal in lieu for a roof or cardboard in lieu for a bed and poverty weeps from the walls of the houses. Despite everything, I felt happy because I knew that I could be useful and helpful and that was part of my reason for coming to Argentina as a volunteer. After a 10 minute walk, we arrived at "Los Pimpollos". Around twenty children rushed up to us, jumped on us, screamed and asked us: What is your name? Where are you coming from? How old are you? Why do you have this funny and strange accent? (even for them, my "Spanish" accent is blindingly obvious). In short, if I had expected curiosity from them, I didn't expect to be THE attraction of the day! And I remember also that 20 or 30 excited children make a lot of noise and can give you headaches. I was happy, I remembered quickly how to share their games and activities. I also met my 2 care co-workers, we would get on well.



Day after day, a routine sets in: wake-up, breakfast, swimming-pool, shower, lunch and it's time to go to work. The few hours I spend with these little imps are like an oxygen bubble in my European city-dweller life. I rediscovered the joy the children can have by jumping rope or drawing. Here, there is no Nintendo DS, no X-Box or tablet. If you don't want to be bored, you have to create your own games, your own activities with what you have. It comes at the right time because my co-workers and I have plenty of ideas! We established a "Water Day" every week, which means that all the games of the day involved water (with 40°C in the shade, the children loved that). We draw, we paint, we color, we make some bracelets, we make origami and we bake some cakes or cookies; we just have fun and the children too. It's hard, you need to have a lot of energy, preparation, organization, anticipation. We work 3 or 4 hours a day and we go back home as if we worked 8 hours, but what a satisfaction when the children come with us to the bus stop to say us goodbye with smiles on their faces. You feel useful, the children are happy, so everybody is winning on all counts. We also have weekends, those few hours we spend in order to discover Cordoba and its surroundings areas. This is a part of your trip also. We go out with the others volunteers, we enjoy dinners or drinks and we discover "Cordoba by night". As it is summer we also go from festival to festival, from city to city.



One month passed already and I have the impression of being here for just a few days. In 3 weeks, I will be back home, ready to go back to my active life being a professional in tourism but one thing I'm sure of, if I won't be a different person, I won't be exactly the same either. This is all possible thanks to an extraordinary host family, great co-workers and of course the children that, if they have nothing material to give you, offer you all the love they have and that is the most important thing!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone I met during this amazing adventure (and sorry if I forget some of you but you are so many):

Silvia, Sofia, Constanza, Ignacio, Sonia: you're the best host family a volunteer can wish for.

Sophie, Dianne, Alex, Hannah, Tani, Patrick, Jo, Charlotte and all the others volunteers: thank you for being there, like me, for the children and all the other people you were working with.

Max and Jacob: special dedication for 2 specials and amazing German Teachers!

Naty, Stephanie, Sofia, Roman and all the coordinators of Projects Abroad: thank you for being there, quite simply, for all the volunteers. Without you, none of this would be possible.

Erica and Jasmin: Best Roommates "For Ever" ;-)

AND TO ALL THE CHILDREN OF "LOS PIMPOLLOS": THANK YOU, QUITE SIMPLY!!!

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

