

BUENA ONDA

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PROJECTS ABROAD ARGENTINA



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BIENVENIDOS!

One at a Time

A friend of ours was walking down a deserted Mexican beach at sunset. As he walked along, he began to see another man in the distance. As he grew nearer, he notices that the local native kept leaning down, picking something up and throwing it out into the water. Time and again he kept hurling things out into the ocean.



As our friend approached even closer, he noticed that the man was picking up starfish that had been washed up on the beach and, one at a time, he was throwing them back into the water. Our friend was puzzled. He approached the man and said, "Good evening, friend. I was wondering what you are doing."

"I'm throwing these starfish back into the ocean. You see, it's low tide right now and all of these starfish have been washed up onto the shore. If I don't throw them back into the sea, they'll die up here from lack of oxygen."

"I understand," my friend replied, "but there must be thousands of starfish on this beach. You can't possibly get all of them. There are simply too many. And don't you realize this is probably happening on hundreds of beaches all up and down the coast. Can't you see that you can't possibly make a difference?"

The local native smiled, bent down and picked up yet another starfish, and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "Made a difference to that one."

Often we want to do big things, change the world and we don't realize that when we do things that may seem small to us, we are indeed changing the world!

Un abrazo para todos!
Guillermo Cogorno
Country Director

PROJECT UPDATES

HUMAN RIGHTS WORKSHOP

On September 12th, the Law & Human Rights Office ran a workshop for all volunteers with the aim of informing and raising awareness about Human Rights in Argentina. The volunteers focused not only on bringing light to these issues, but also on breaking taboos and providing valuable information in regards to Argentine reality. Victoria (Human Rights Manager) and the other Human Rights volunteers provided an overview on what human rights are, their importance and how the volunteers can incorporate human rights into their own projects and work in Argentina. The discussion included a background on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the history of human rights in Argentina.



In the workshop, volunteers learned and discussed rights such as:

Article 26: “...Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stage...” Here they compared the Argentine educational system with the ones in their countries.

Article 4: “...No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms...” They also addressed how human trafficking is a form of modern slavery and is a direct violation of human rights, one that all types of people face—regardless of their gender, race, or age. They established that there are three specific types of exploitation—gender, labor and the illicit removal of organs and tissues.

Article 11: “...Everyone charged with a penal offense has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence...”

The workshop covered many other aspects about human trafficking and was extremely informative for the volunteers.



PRIVATE DONATIONS...A GIFT FROM THE HEART

Teaching volunteer Karen Hendriks (Netherlands) collected money from friends and family before she left Netherlands and decided she wanted to do something special for the kids at her placement—Centro de Cuidados Infantiles “Los Pimpollos”. With Roman, our Volunteer Coordinator, she went to buy paint to repaint the entire placement—yes all of it! The staff and children pitched in to help paint! The final result below!



CONSERVATION PROJECT VIDEO

Projects Abroad Argentina offers a unique opportunity to work as a volunteer at the first and only Primate Rehabilitation center in Argentina. Whether you are studying a related subject, want to gain hands-on experience in the field of animal rescue and rehabilitation, or are simply passionate about animals, this project appeals to all sorts.

The center is situated about 80km north of Cordoba in the Tiu Mayu region of Cordoba province. Over the past 20 years the local team has focused on the rescue and rehabilitation of the Black Howler monkey. This species is now considered vulnerable as the local communities continue to keep them as pets and destroy their natural habitats.

The center aims to “teach monkeys to be monkeys again” through a program that focuses on physical, psychological and social rehabilitation. Through this specialized program the center has successfully re-introduced over 100 monkeys back into their natural habitat. A 360 hectare reserve surrounds the center allows the staff to monitor and follow the progress of the monkeys once they have been released!

[Please check out our conservation project video by clicking here!](#)

VOLUNTEER STORIES

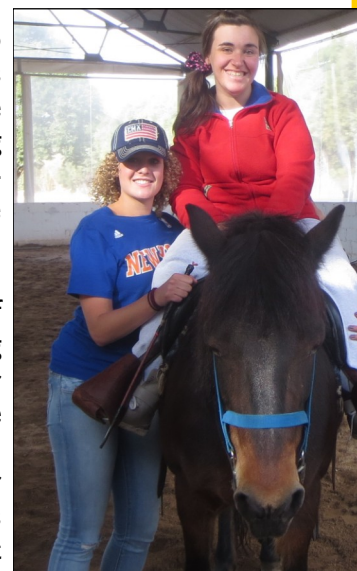
Occupational Therapy student gains invaluable experience in Equine Therapy while volunteering in Argentina

21-year-old Julie Yaroni, a current student at Boston University, decided to come to Argentina during her summer vacation to volunteer at the Projects Abroad Equine Therapy Project. Julie is not new to the unique work of Equine Therapy, as she has been volunteering in her home state of New Jersey doing similar work in a private equine therapy center since 2007. "I wanted to compare how it is done in Argentina, as well as learn new techniques and share some of my own knowledge."

The Equine Therapy program in Córdoba works with children and adults of varying physical and mental disabilities to improve their lifestyles by doing physical therapy while on horseback. Julie's daily responsibilities at the center included cleaning the stables, grooming the horses and preparing them for the lessons. After the students arrive, she would step in to help with the classes. Sometimes Julie was up on the horse with the student assisting the lesson, or walking alongside helping to guide the horse and provide support. "Working as a team with the other volunteers was key. Veronica, the director, gave us a lot of responsibility and freedom. It showed that she trusted us, which was really an honor. It was a lot of hands on work; more than I thought it would be."

With the given freedom, Julie has been able to use some exercises that she learned at home with the children here. Recently she did an exercise with the children which focused on using fine motor skills. "It was very rewarding to see the kids doing the exercise that I taught them," she says, "though I don't speak Spanish, I was able to communicate with hand gestures and movements so that they could understand the exercise."

"After my experience in Argentina I have become a lot more confident in what I am doing. I have learned how to direct lessons in Spanish and learned not to be intimidated by not knowing the language. Throw yourself in there and if you don't understand something, ask!"



Julie has made many memories during her one month's stay in Argentina – traveling with other volunteers, exploring Córdoba and many great experiences at the Fundación Cordobesa de Equinoterapia. "My most memorable experience would have to be the first time riding on the horse with the students, as I had never done it before. I was sitting up there helping with the exercises and seeing the students smiling, laughing and just so happy."

Her experience in Argentina, along with her extensive experience working with people with severe disabilities, has solidified her goal to make this a career. After returning back to Boston University this fall, Julie plans to begin her studies for her Masters' degree in Occupational Therapy with some solid practical experience behind her.

JOURNALISM PUBLICATION

Jessica Marx
Germany
Journalism, 2 months

"While they were beating her they screamed that they were going to kill the creature inside of her. They insulted her and threatened her permanently. They told her: You are inside La Perla now. Nobody can save you; neither god, nor your father, nor the president."

This quote is an extract from the book "El tigre y la nieve" (The tiger and the snow), a novel written by Fernando Butazzoni in 1986, about an inmate of "La Perla". It is a very accurate description of the situation in the secret detention centers used during the Argentinean military dictatorship.

In order to give you a better overview of the main topic that this article is covering – the detention center "La Perla" – I will briefly summarize the period of the military dictatorship.



During the reign of Isabel Perón who had taken over power after the death of her husband in 1974 there was a grave economic crisis caused by the disruption of the different political groups; the government had right-wing political opinions whereas several extremist Guerilla groups held views of the left. All these problems were enabling factors for the violent change of government. After a coup on the 24th of March 1976 the military junta took over power; it was no secret that they planned to perform "cleaning actions" in order to "restore democracy". General Luciano Benjamin Menéndez, who personally supervised and directed torture and executions in the detention center "La Perla" explained it like this: "We are going to have to kill 50.000 people: 25.000 subversives, 20.000 sympathizers, and we will make 5.000 mistakes."

This quote leads me to the actual topic of this article; the secret detention and torture centers used during the dictatorship. In total, about 340 of these centers existed between 1976-1983. Their way of functioning was comparable to the concentration camps used by the Nazis in the Second World War; often the inmates were political opponents. They were held in the centers during months or even years without being given a trial. In general these people were systematically tortured and murdered.



Another crime committed in these institutions was the arrest of pregnant women; their children were abducted and given to families which held a high position within the military. The biological mothers were murdered, like the rest of the prisoners. Nowadays, there are still about 500 people missing; there is an organisation called "Abuelas del Plaza del Mayo", whose members are still looking for those children.

Only in 2003, when Nestor Kirchner came to power, did the Argentine government truly start to convict the perpetrators. Many actions are taken in order to process and reflect about the incidents that happened during the dictatorship; for example the former detention center "La Perla" has now been turned into a memorial space. About 5.000 students and 2.000

other visitors come every year to see the institution.

On Thursday, the 19th of September, the human rights volunteers also went to visit the memorial museum as it is important to learn about crimes committed against humanity in order to actually be able to understand and defend them. “La Perla” – which was the biggest detention and torture facility in the whole province of Córdoba – was used during the period between 1976-1979.

We had a guided tour through the detention center; before we actually visited the different rooms our guide explained to us the importance of reflecting and thinking about the terrible things that happened in this institution. The first room we saw was “La cuadra” – which is the most significant space as the inmates spent almost all of their time here. The only occasion allowing the prisoners to leave “La Cuadra” was when they went to the bathroom. Contrary to similar facilities, it was obligatory to take showers frequently; the reason for this was to take away the inmates humanity. They were not actual people, but only numbers - therefore, most of the detained peoples’ identities are not known.



Before the prisoners were brought to this “dormitory” they were interrogated in one of the offices located right across the hall; this included physical and psychological torture. An interesting fact is that the perpetrators actually told the inmates what was going to happen to them; this was a technique used to expose the detainees completely and show them that they had absolutely no rights inside “La Perla”.

The last part of the tour brought us to some rooms with pictures of the former inmates and also the perpetrators whose identity is known. Next to their picture there was often an information board telling the story of the prisoners’ abduction.

For me it was a very interesting and important experience to visit “La Perla”; especially as a German citizen I know that it is necessary to reflect about the crimes committed during a dictatorship. It is no use denying them; in order to preserve and defend human rights people have to confront themselves with these memories. I believe that memorial museums like “La Perla” are helping to raise awareness among the population – hopefully with the result of preventing crimes against humanity. ¡Nunca más!

Jessica Marx