

THE OFFICIAL

NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Costa Rica



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EDITORIAL

Propósitos del Año Nuevo/New Year's Resolutions



Late January/Early February is about the time when the motivation that comes with fresh resolutions for the new year typically begins to wane. In hopes of bringing some of that vigor back to your New Year's resolutions, I have compiled a list of quotes from some of history's greatest thinkers.

"Life shrinks and expands in proportion to one's courage,"
-- Anaïs Nin

"If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito."
--Dalai Lama

"If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be."
— Goethe

"The highest forms of human understanding we can achieve are laughter and compassion."
— Richard Feynmann

"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."
--John Lennon

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover."
--Mark Twain

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now. --Chinese Proverb

"We all have stories we're living and telling ourselves."
-- Bruce Springsteen

Volunteer Story

Lisa Nürnberger: Care at CECUDI



When a person decides to volunteer on a Care Project in Costa Rica, there are certain things that automatically come with the experience. You are placed with a local host family and given work in a care center. You are taught how to go about the city, and become part of a network of fellow volunteers with whom you can share experiences and weekend excursions. However, volunteers soon find that there is much more to a successful volunteering experience: getting to know the local culture and the people with whom you live and work for example. Your time on any project is a blank canvas, and it is up to you to create the colours. After spending ten weeks in Guardaria Cecudi, German care volunteer Lisa Nürnberger is the embodiment of this idea.

"I came to Costa Rica to support the children and teachers, but also to get to know the country. This country is all about the nature—the animals and the beaches. My trip has been better than I imagined," Says Lisa.

Lisa found herself working in CECUDI (Centro de Cuido Integral), a "guardaria" or care center, which takes in approximately 65 children aged three months to six years while employing a total of seven teachers and assistants to care for the children during the day. The care center is funded by IMAS (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social), a government institution aimed at helping families in poverty to cover their basic needs.

"The teachers are very few, so the time that the teachers have to give to the children individually is limited. I think that more staff would help the children so that the teachers are able to spend more time with them. But the teachers here do an excellent job with their work. They have a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of love, which is the most important thing," says Lisa. "My time here has been a great gift for me," she continues. "It's an incredible experience, and one that I won't forget. The children are very interested in my country, and they ask me lots of questions: where it is and why it's so far and if we have snow. There are some children that like physical contact, so I give them a lot of hugs. And during naptime they like for me to rub their backs. My time here has brought a lot of joy to the children and to me as well."

One of the most important aspects of Tico culture is the time that is spent with family, and through living with a host family volunteers quickly learn the value of relationships. "I think that when I return to Germany, I will try to spend more time with my family and friends because the time that we have together is short," says Lisa. "People invited me to their homes, they gave me typical Costa Rican souvenirs. Everyone I met was so friendly and open, and they helped me a lot with everything that I needed. I'm going to miss the people here a lot."

Project Update

Summer Vacation: Sports and Teaching Volunteers Hold Holiday Classes

In Costa Rica, summer holidays for students typically begin in December and last until early February. This leaves a very long time for students to forget the lessons learned during the previous year. However, our Teaching and Sports volunteers have taken the opportunity to lead free summer English and sports classes for students looking for extra practice during the vacation months.

Not only are the summer classes an opportunity for students to develop and continue practicing, but it is also a chance for volunteers to try something different from their typical placement. "Normally I only work with one or two children one-on-one, and it was much more relaxed," says Florica Barthe, a German Teaching volunteer in charge of one of the classes. "Here I teach the entire class which is about six or seven students. They know a lot of vocabulary, but having a basic conversation is difficult. I try to encourage a lot of dialogues, so they talk to each other."

Also helping out with summer classes is a group of students from State University of New York-Cortland (SUNY-Cortland) that are looking to gain practical teaching and intercultural experience for two weeks here in Costa Rica. "I think having the new faces of the volunteers coming in gets the children excited again," says SUNY-Cortland Teaching student, Michaela Auer.

"It's nice communicating with them. I told my children the other day, 'you teach me Spanish, and I'll teach you English,' so that was the deal we made. If I had trouble saying something in Spanish, they helped me, and if they had trouble saying something in English, I helped them. I think letting the children know that you want to learn with them instead of just teaching them helps them want to learn," she continues. "It's funny how it works, they're teaching us just as much as we're teaching them."

After three hours of classes in the morning, students take a break for lunch and then finish the day with football and basketball classes led by Sports volunteers and SUNY-Cortland students. The classes will last until students return to their normal school schedules in mid-February



Photo Essay

Care & Teaching with SUNY-Cortland

State University New York (SUNY)-Cortland students joined us in Heredia for two weeks this month, taking part in care projects in Centro Infantil: Luz Divina as well as teaching English to students during summer holidays. Their trip also included weekend excursions to Volcán Poás and Manuel Antonio where they enjoyed the extreme diversity of Costa Rica's natural geography, from beaches to mountain rainforests.

