

Galapagos Newsletter



Scanning the ocean



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December 2013

Happy New Year..!

2013 is ending and it has been another very successful year for San Cristobal Island and our Projects Abroad volunteers. First of all, we would like to thank all our volunteers for their hard work during the year. Last month we had our first Volunteer's Day with the community, when we entertained everyone with games and a barbecue on the beach, we helped maintain a children's park, and had our first seminar about sharks which was directed by our staff and university students. Numbers continue to increase and the positive results to the island and community are very clear. More than 100 children study English in our centre every month, the kindergarten and special needs children continue to benefit from the personal attention given to them by our volunteers, our sports volunteers to assist the local coaches different sports to the high school students, the schools and town are being provided with endemic plants from our nursery in the Highlands, we have had our first creative art volunteer who is teaching piano lessons, and our summer school has developed with the help of our visitors. We are also developing our first botanical garden in the grounds of a local school. Our house-parents benefit from having the extra income and the local shops and restaurants are very pleased to welcome our overseas visitors. We hope that everyone who has spent time with us over the last year has a wonderful 2014 and that anyone reading this who has not visited our island and the Galapagos knows that he or she will have a great welcome from the community, the children and teenagers, and the staff at Projects Abroad Galapagos. We are living in one of the most wonderful areas on the planet and we are very happy to welcome you to our paradise. May all your wishes come true, and we hope we will see you soon on San Cristobal Island, your second home in the Pacific. Happy New Year!



William Puga
Country Director, Ecuador



MUSIC AND ARTS PROJECT

By Sarah Bramböck – Germany



I would have never dared to expect my great desire, volunteering on the Galapagos Islands for 3 months, coming true. I still can't believe that I am living in San Cristobal for 5 weeks now.

Before arriving on this Island, I could not have imagined how my stay would look like. I was the first volunteer at the new Music and Arts Project, so nobody was able to give me some details about what I will have to do there. I only knew that I was expected to teach piano.

Well, teaching piano in the music and arts center in San Cristobal turned out to differ a lot from my experiences in Germany. There are 3 little rooms provided with a couple of keyboards in each of them. Every

afternoon, children between the ages 5 to 16 came there to practice their songs, but don't expect myself or them to be on time. I got used to it, wearing no watch because for "Ecuadorian time" you don't need it! It is real fun helping the music teacher and practicing with young, motivated students for some local presentations. You can also sing with them or teach them how to play the violin or saxophone.

One hour a day I also joined a music teacher in a public school. There, the teacher practiced with a couple of students to play Salsa, Merengue or some other typical Ecuadorian rhythms. They play drums, bongos, melodicas or the piano.



Even though I wasn't used to playing such kind of music at the beginning, I am now able to practice together with the students, because the music teacher puts much effort into teaching me some local rhythms.

In my free time I always have something to do. I go to the beach, write in my diary, have fun with my host family and get to know to the local culture. The people here are so hospitable and friendly, it was easy to make some friends. Most of the time I was hanging out with other volunteers. We



always venture something together, like going to special beaches, snorkeling,



camping or planning trips to other islands. Almost 3 times a week we were joining the local Zumba lesson and try to move like the inhabitants... well, we are still trying. Some evenings we spend together playing pool or cards and just having fun.

I am really looking forward to my last 7 weeks here, especially for Christmas and Sylvester with my host family. It will be such a great experience!

I could not have chosen a better project or placement, living and teaching in San Cristobal is awesome!

TEACHING PROJECT

By David Rosen - Canada



In 1974, I volunteered for the first time in a hospital on the Miskito coast of Nicaragua. I was there for six months. The experience awakened in me a great interest in Latin America—its history, its literature, its music and culture. Almost 40 years later, I agreed to spend one month in Ecuador helping children learn to speak and understand English.

Assisting a teacher at the A. Humboldt Colegio on San Cristobel Island in the Galapagos has been challenging. It takes time for the volunteer to understand the teacher's methods (largely didactic), to

gain the trust of the children as well as the teacher, and to formulate a plan to help the children who are having difficulties. Projects Abroad also holds free afternoon and evening classes for any children, from beginners to the more advanced. I worked with the latter.

San Cristobel Island is fascinating because of its weather, the animals and birds, the variety of plants and trees, and the sea life. There are nearby beaches, shared with the sea lions, where we snorkel alongside giant majestic sea turtles and schools of multi-



colored tropical fish. There are opportunities to travel to other islands and immerse oneself in the history of the Galapagos. This is, after all, where Charles Darwin stunned the world with his theories of evolution.

The Projects Abroad staff was very conscientious in facilitating my preparation and travel arrangements. While here, I have enjoyed good facilities and great meals with my very friendly host family. I'm impressed by the number of young enthusiastic volunteers from European countries, who took their roles seriously and stayed for several months. In fact, I would recommend that volunteers who are planning to assist in a school stay at least 3 months for the reasons mentioned above.

In my second week, with the teacher's permission, I took aside a young boy who was having great difficulty with some grammatical points. With the one-on-one attention he learned the concepts and thereafter he participates more and his face lights up when he raises his hand to give an answer. Seeing that happen makes it all worthwhile.



CARE PROJECT IN THE GALAPAGOS

By Isabelle de Vinck – Belgium

October, November and December 2013

In a school in San Cristobal....I got a good reception and I've had the pleasure of working with children aged from 4 years. As an artist, I have had the pleasure of participating in workshops and sharing my creative and technical expertise. It is a pleasure to work with children of this age. All are amazed to be able to perform different activities, such as painting, cutting, recreating work, and designing collages. Because of this experience, I will always remember the eyes and the expressions on each face. Every child is different and contributes to the

wealth of a creative group. It is normal for a child of this age to be noisy, but it wonderful to see the joy of life that animates him or her. Time past quickly, and when I arrive home, my heart will always stay full of memories of the smiles of each one.



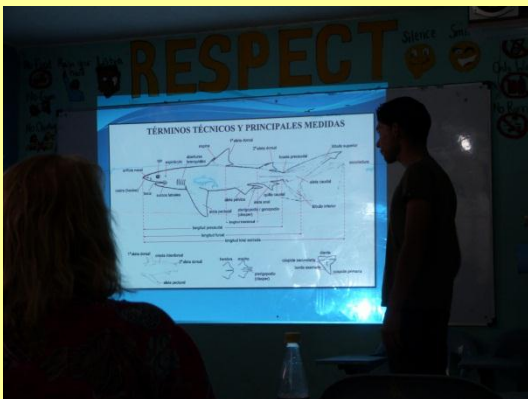
CHRISTMAS AT THE KINDERGARTEN



DECEMBER DIRTY DAY- Social Work



VOLUNTEERS DURING DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES





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Best wishes for this New Year from Ecuador!