

# El Clima Magazine

March 2015 — Programs

The Official Peace Corps Ecuador Volunteer Magazine



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# From the Editors

To start off the new year, we have decided to go back to the core of Peace Corps Ecuador: the different sectors (programs) that make its existence.

We all come to Ecuador with knowledge on different topics, past experiences, and expertise, which are divided into four groups: Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Natural Resource

Conservation (NRC), Community Health (CH), and Youth and Families (Y&F). Each program has its specialty, its distinct challenges, successes, and methods. Though culturally we might encounter similar instances, each program has a profound impact on what our two years in the country will be like.

With this issue, we hope you get a glimpse of what

our daily lives are like and what some of the highlights and downfalls are of being a volunteer within each program.

As we come to begin this issue, an end has come for Jazzy, our content editor. Having Jazzy on our team has been an immense blessing. Her seniority and knowledge of Ecuador helped relaunch *El Clima*. Thank you!

Cover Photos: Ali O'Neal, mural project / Krista Camp / Henry Harrison, cacao *charla* / Erin Fischer, camp  
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## Quick Facts

- ◆ The first group of PCVs came in June 2011.
- ◆ The main objective is to support English teachers of public schools in their teaching skills. By improving teachers, we expect students will improve also.
- ◆ There have been a total of 73 TEFL PCVs, with 30 more in OMN 113 who will be ready to serve in April 2015.
- ◆ Usually, TEFL PCVs work at public schools 5 days a week. Some also work at local universities, with youth groups, and at TOTs with teachers in different topics.

## Q&A with MD Chacón

**Q:** When did you begin your service as the TEFL Program Manager (PM)?

**A:** I was hired to start the TEFL program in September 2010, when we started the process of founding the TEFL program.

**Q:** What do you love about being the TEFL PM?

**A:** What I love is to see how in 1 or 2 years my TEFLeros turn into great teachers, and how excellent they are as trainers at the end of their service.

**Q:** Anything interesting about the TEFL program that you'd like to share?

**A:** I think the TEFL program has many years of success here in Ecuador. Four years ago no one knew about us in Ecuador, now a days, when they think of English classes or English training they think of PC TEFL PCVs, even the government. We have positioned the TEFL program in only 4 years in a good place in the mind of people and that is the impact we wanted. We also are going to start next year with a TEFL certification for PCVs, and that is also great news for our TEFLeros!



Yajaira Hernandez works alongside her needs group who she works with three times each week.

**Q:** What has been one of the successes of the TEFL program?

**A:** In my personal opinion we had two great successes: the first one is the great work PCVs do in their schools (even though PCVs do not see it), because we had the request of more PCVs for schools. And the second success are the Training of Teachers (TOTs) throughout the entire country. So far we trained 450 Go-Teachers only in this fiscal year 2015, and we trained more than 800 teachers in fiscal year 2014.

We had a written request of the MOE for more

“Patience and perseverance; prepare yourself and trust your good will and attitude. There is no job easy to perform, and schools are not easy for sure. But if you really get to like what you are doing, work is a lot easy to perform.”

PCVs that shows that PCVs are really doing a great job at schools. We are also working in an area (education) that now the Government is also investing a lot to improve and if they ask us for help it is because we are doing things right. Cervantes in his book *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, he said to Sancho Panza: “*Sancho, si los perros*

*ladran es señal que avanzamos...*”

**Q:** What has been an unforgettable experience or memory as the TEFL PM?

**A:** I have many unforgettable experiences with each one of the OMN in these four years. People said that memories are the memory of the heart, and I have many good memories in my heart.



Iris Cano, Cathy Jackson, and Manisha Maurya celebrate the completion of their English club.

# Day *in the* Life



The city of Gualaceo nestled in a sierran valley.

## Shaun Nesheim

As a TEFL volunteer (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), our primary work is the teachers in our schools. Thus, our lives are intertwined with theirs up to the point when they start thinking about what has to be done outside of school.

Whereas all TEFL volunteers live in the same community that their school is in, many teachers often have a forty-five-minute commute or longer every day; this applies to half of my teachers. Throw in additional, non-mandatory English courses, in which many teachers choose to participate, and the realistic expectations

of working for the full day quickly diminish.

That being said, there are many English teachers who want to diligently work, learn, and become better teachers. In my particular school of 850 students, I have five English teachers, of whom four are motivated to use me as a resource to improve their teaching abilities through modeling, trainings, and one-on-one practice.

Teaching is exhausting work. To stay energized, my breakfast consists of bread, bananas, an apple, and two cups of *guayusa* tea (think tea with half the caffeine of a cup of coffee).

To make planning efficient, I work with one teacher per morning in the

classroom and, in the afternoon, plan with another teacher, whom I will work with the following day.

As everyone arrives at seven in the morning, the Teacher-of-the-Day and I review our plan, make any necessary last-minute changes, and ensure that we have all the needed materials (this often includes a trip to an internet café the night before to make copies, print off pictures, and/or buy additional supplies). As we progress through the morning, we make changes to classes if needed as the day goes on.

On any given day, I work with teachers who have five to seven classes. Most will have a break before recess, which is after



Shaun leads an English activity.

the fifth period in a nine-period day. Again, during their break, we'll go over any changes that need to be made, but mostly it's a short time to relax.

The 45-minute recess after fifth period is my second-favorite part of the non-academic day (right behind lunch). After a little bite to eat, recess is the best time to chat with the students. Connecting with them during this time is my way of showing the students that I care about them as people, which hopefully translates into them caring about English class, if not their studies as a whole.

After recess, we finish up the last couple classes

of the day (or I'll lead the basketball club, if it's Thursday or Friday), and we'll get lunch at the start of the afternoon. As recess is the best time to connect with the students, lunch is the best time to personally connect with teachers.

Half of my work is co-teaching with the teachers during the day to show them what a classroom should look like, either by demonstrating how to explain grammar or vocabulary, to assess the comprehension of the students, or to execute any variety of activities. The other half is after lunch when a teacher and I plan the classes for the following day.

Each teacher has three or four different classes to plan per day which take between fifteen and twenty minutes each to plan. This

averages to about an hour of planning per teacher.

I work with four teachers who all have varying personalities, strengths, weaknesses, and experience, with English, so working with each one is a different experience every day. All of the teachers are excited to try the new things I suggest to them, but this mutual trust came from a year of inquiries, responses, and demonstrations. The phrase "Actions speak louder than words," truly expresses its dominance in this domain.

With these four teachers, I assign each a day with whom to work, Tuesday through Friday. Mondays are Peace Corps days or preparation days. On Peace Corps days, I'll fill out any PC documents or forms or coordinate with



Shaun Nesheim's school, the Unidad Educativa Alfonso Lituma Correa.

other volunteers on other projects if necessary.

Preparation days include everything under the sun from planning a training session for the teachers to getting materials for classes or talking with the school staff about things that I need done or anything that they need me to do. My Monday schedule varies week to week.

To not do all the work myself and in order to leave behind sustainable critical-thinking skills, the planning process is a series of questions posed to the teachers for each class.

Some typical questions that are asked are as follows: What is the objective of the class? How will any new vocabulary be taught (while avoiding translation if possible)? How will any new grammar be taught? How will you reinforce what was taught? What activities will you do? Do the activities support the objective? What resources do we need? Such is an attempt to instill a logical thought progression for the teachers while planning their classes when the volunteer is not available.

The main purpose of the

TEFL program is to leave the teachers with enough skills and ideas to be effective teachers on their own. Thus, each volunteer strives to be needed less and less in their schools. Although it will eventually put us out of a job, it is the desired, yet bitter-sweet, ending in our work towards sustainable education improvement.

At the end of the day, I like to get my food shopping done (occasionally running into students on the street), go for a light run, and settle down with a nice book.



The student body and relatives of the senior class gather for Ecuadorian Flag Day on September 26.

# Teaching Adults

## Erin Bohler

Across Peace Corps programs, we PCVs have one important thing in common: at some point, we are all teachers of adults.

Whether we are teaching teachers how to write objectives for their lessons or working with members of the community on topics related to health or the environment, we transmit

new information to adults on a daily basis.

As facilitators of adult learning, we might ask ourselves: Can we be more effective adult educators? Perhaps we can. We can start by examining how adults learn differently from children and then apply a few adult-specific teaching principles to address the way that adults process new information.

## ***How is adult learning different from child or adolescent learning?***

Before we look at whom we're teaching, we should keep in mind why adult learning may look different from child learning when put in practice.

The chart below, adapted from Sunny Ahonsi's *The Tricological Learning Approaches*, highlights some key differences:

“Child Learning” (Pedagogy)	“Adult Learning” (Andragogy)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Motivated externally by parents and teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Intrinsically motivated: need to advance in career or personal life</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Led by others: teachers and parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Self-directed and assisted by a teacher</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Learning objective determined by the teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Objective determined by the teacher and learner and based on the learners' needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Curriculum-centered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Problem-centered, relevant to real life</li> </ul>



### ***Know the learner and their needs:***

Knowing what motivates an adult learner, in contrast to what typically motivates a child or adolescent, helps us recognize how to make new information relevant to adults.

To make information relevant, we should identify our audience and their learning needs:

Whom are we teaching?

What is their academic/language/technical background on the topic?

Have they already identified the problem?

What have they already tried?

How can they engage in hands-on practice?

These are some questions to ask before and during teaching to facilitate the acquisition and application of new skills.

### ***Facilitating Adult Learning***

After identifying the learners and their needs, here are a few suggestions on how to facilitate based on Malcom Knowles' pillars of adult learning (Knowles, 1980):

- ◆ Honor their knowledge and experience—ask questions about their experience related to the topic. Paraphrasing indicates a desire to understand exactly what they said.
- ◆ Connect to what they already practice—relate the topic to something they already know or do.
- ◆ Make it relevant: Information must be immediately relevant to an adult or it may be rejected; communicate why and how the information will benefit the learner. Include hands-on practice whenever possible.
- ◆ Encourage reflection—ask questions and share your own experience: Have you tried this and did it work? Why or why not?
- ◆ Non-judgmental: The goal is progress, so focus on specific feedback. Example: I saw that the students were engaged vs. That was a really good lesson.
- ◆ Foster a noncompetitive atmosphere—learners may be anxious about their ability to learn for many reasons. Encourage participation from everyone.

With these adult-specific teaching strategies in mind, we might find an audience who is more receptive to new ideas and who are better able to identify their own solutions through discussion of their past experience related to the topic, be it related to farming or lesson planning.

Jossey-Boss. A, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, N9, Spring 2001, Publishing unit of 3, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Knowles, M. S., *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy*, Chicago: Follett, 1980

Sunny Ahonsi, *The Tricological Learning Approaches: Pedagogy, Andragogy and Heutagogy*, 2012

# English Club

## Cathy Jackson

After putting up flyers all over town and constantly promoting a free English club for children in Zamora ages 7 to 18, PCVs Iris Cano, Manisha Maurya, and I had over 200 kids show up!

We decided to hold the first semester of our club from September 15 to January 28 with one class per week for each age group (7-10 year olds on Mondays, 11-14 year olds on Tuesdays, and 15-18 year olds on Wednesdays).

The club is to practice functional English skills and to give the students more confidence speaking English. We have been surprised by the turn out.

The students were promised a certificate if they did not miss more than three classes. I did not think the children would keep on coming back, but lo and behold, they kept returning! During the first week of February, 118 students received certificates and

were invited back for another semester.

During the club, Iris, Manisha, and I play lots of games to help the students review and practice the skills while keeping them engaged. We give them multiple opportunities to practice the same skill.

This club has been really rewarding for my service in Zamora. I love seeing the students return week after week. The club also helps me integrate into my community. When I walk through town, I am almost guaranteed to hear “Teacher Caty.”

Parents in the town ask the three of us when can they register their children for the next semester, and

we hate saying it, but there is no more room. The club is too full! We thought no one would come, but now we are turning students away.

The club is one of the best things that I am doing for my community with my service. Not only are we teaching English, but we are sharing our culture with the students. I love teaching with Iris and Manisha because it shows the students that Americans can look different. Manisha, Iris, and I have different accents, different backgrounds, different dreams; but we work together for the common goal of helping our students.



Students after receiving their certificates for completing the English club.

## Manisha Maurya

“Where did all these kids come from?”

I asked myself this when the Zamora volunteers and I started our English club and had about 250 kids attending our classes every week in September 2014.

Part of me believed that the new Omnibus 111 volunteer (erhm, Cathy Jackson) was a good luck charm (I love you too, Iris Cano) that brought all this fortune to town, but I also knew that she was assigned to a school with amazing faculty members that helped us with our club (sorry, Cathy).

For instance, the principal and the secretary contacted parents to encourage students to come to our club, and they allowed us to use the school’s classrooms.

Their school is located in the center of town, where most of Zamora’s schoolchildren reside. The location made it easier and safer for students to walk to the classes, and perhaps that’s one of the reasons why so many kids showed up to our club.

However, I know that it was also successful because we worked hard to advertise our club. We even announced our club on the two radio stations in Zamora.

At one of the radio stations, Cathy and I were asked to be on a radio talk show where we talked about the Peace Corps (basically, we answered questions about the organization and then talked about our jobs as volunteers). In addition, we talked about the details of our English club (when it would start, what days, what kinds of activities we would do, etc.).

And Iris was a motivational factor for some of the students to attend the classes since a lot of them thought she was “chévere.”

Of course, I will not discount the fact that Iris,

Cathy, and I work well together. We gather our ideas and form some very interestingly crazy (by crazy, I mean dynamic) lessons for the students.

I loved planning sessions with Iris and Cathy; especially the times when we would get into deep discussions on what is “American,” thinking about how to introduce the students to an aspect of United States’ culture. Cathy, Iris, and I have been brought up differently and our differences in upbringing have made our club richer and more interesting for the students.

Without the English club, my Peace Corps service would have felt meaningless and futile. Okay, that was dramatic and I was mildly kidding, but it really was one of the best moments of my service.



Certificate ceremony for Zamora students who have 3 or fewer absences.

# “I love being a...

“TEFL PCV because there’s always something different, from Christmas caroling with novenos to training English teachers around the country to leading summer camps. There’s little time to get bored with a project!”

– Erin Fischer, TEFL 111



Erin leads a camp in Ambato with coastal students.



Monica with her world map project in the background.

“TEFL PCV because teaching—teaching anything, not just English—is, in my mind, the most worthwhile thing a person can do. It puts me in the position where, as Brad Henry (past governor of Oklahoma) said of teachers, I ‘can inspire hope, ignite the imagination and instill a love of learning.’”

– Miranda Duncan, TEFL 111

“NRC PCV because I bond with my family over harvesting potatoes and talking about cows.”

– Monica Harmon, NRC 109



Miranda participates in the Founding Day Parade.

## Quick Facts

- ◆ Work specific to this sector began in the late 1970s and early 80s when the Ministry of Agriculture's Forestry Development Department requested the collaboration of Peace Corps in reforestation.
- ◆ At least 600 PCVs have served within this program sector.
- ◆ NRC PCVs work in many areas: environmental education, reforestation, tree nurseries, improved pastures, small animal production, fish ponds, eco-tourism, solid waste management, and recycling and up-cycling.

## Q&A with Sandra Loor

**Q:** When did you begin your service as the NRC Program Manager?

**A:** I started working as the NRC Program Manager in June 2010 and it has been one of the most fulfilling and rewarding jobs I have ever had.

**Q:** What do you hope will be the legacy of the NRC program here in Ecuador?

**A:** I hope the recycling and up-cycling wave continues to be part of PC Ecuador and that this activity continues to grow, as our planet is in desperate need of less waste generation, and this is something anyone can do to help our planet.

**Q:** What do you love about being the NRC PM?

**A:** I love to work with PCVs and supporting them through their service. In particular, I love to see PCVs grow into their roles, to adjust, and succeed. I also have enjoyed discovering my own country and its great cultural diversity. I enjoy being able to support those eager communities that want the support of PCVs.

**Q:** What has been one of the biggest challenges being



NRC OMN 109 volunteers attend their close of service conference in Quito before departing Ecuador.

the NRC PM?

**A:** I think one of the biggest challenges I had at the beginning of my Peace Corps experience was the learning curve. During my first year (or two) I was lost most of the time, but I had great mentors that helped me navigate those first two years. Former DPT Dana Platin is one the greatest mentors I have ever had, same as my colleague YF PM Cris Rojas.

**Q:** What has been one of the greatest successes of the NRC program?

**A:** As of lately, I think one of the major successes of the program has been helping the recycling and up-cycling wave grow. I love seeing those community ladies (and sometimes guys) discover that they can create beautiful pieces of art with their own hands and a bit of waste material. I particularly treasure the fact that we are helping our planet become less polluted, but that is my personal take as a biologist and a conservationist. During the early years, I think reforestation was also a great hit, and it still was until few years back.

“You guys do an amazing job out there, I could not do it any better, so keep working hard because our commitment to the environment, our planet, and the communities you are serving should never cease. I thank you once again that you have chosen to serve in my country. You are my heroes!”

**Q:** Where or how has it been particularly effective?

**A:** I think the program was particularly effective in changing the view of local people, in teaching them that they could profit out of the environment while decreasing the impact of those activities on it, to be able to use their resources sustainably.

**Q:** What has been an unforgettable experience or memory as the NRC PM?

**A:** I don't know, I have so many wonderful memories of my PCVs, their projects... Ah!!! I remember one unforgettable experience: I had to approve a house in the Amazonia. Therefore I met with the Shuar/Kichwa family and I had to drink the chewed chicha (two bowls of it) out of courtesy to the family. I got so sick after that. Unforgettable, definitely.



Merissa Curran takes a break from creating a canal in the mangroves.

# Day *in the* Life



PCV Devin Yeoman shows the spirit of his alma mater.

## Devin Yeoman

**5:00 to 7:00am:** Wake up and begin reading. Non-fiction books are for the morning because I am more focused and can retain more of the information. Best non-fiction books I have read: *Nothing Like it in the World*, *Moonshot*, *Team of Rivals*, *1491*, *1493*, and *Outliers*.

**7:00am:** Eat and get ready for the day. I still live with a host-family, so my breakfasts are very Ecuadorian: a bowl of rice, with some veggies, maybe some tuna, and for sure potatoes.

**8:00am to 12:00pm:** Go to work. This typically includes one of four

things:

1. Office work which entails getting paperwork done (VRFs, *officios*, etc.) and planning with my counterpart.

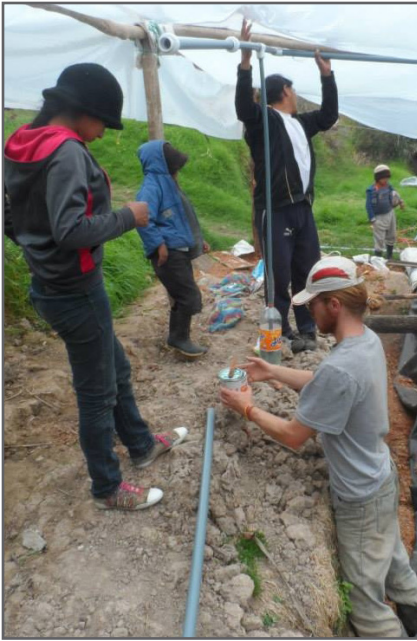
2. Go to local communities to teach a variety of topics such as: waste management, the importance of not burning trash, organic farming methods, how to build and maintain fishponds, and much more.

3. Work with local farmers or communities on their daily activities or in *mingas*: planting trees and crops, harvesting crops, digging ditches, setting up irrigation systems, and removing weeds.

4. Work with my family doing house chores (that's

right, I have chores when I do not have other work to do). These chores include but are not limited to: milking the cows, changing the irrigation system, picking *tomate de arbol* or *granadilla* (I probably eat more granadilla than I pick, but I still have to do it), and many more fun activities.

**12:00 to 1:00pm:** Eat lunch. Typically, this includes some type of soup, either potato/rice, potato/noodle, or noodle/rice. No one can say that I don't get enough carbs, that's for sure. My family is pretty poor, so meals don't include meats or other fancy things like flavor. If I am working in another community, they will usually



Devin works on the water supply.

provide me with my lunch. This is when I gain some extra calories to get me through the lean times. I think they try to see if they can get me to explode. Soup, a huge *segundo* (similar to an entrée), and a big drink is a typical lunch outside of the house.

**1:00 to 4:00pm:** Go back to work, see above for usual jobs. It is very hard for me to explain my daily schedule because it changes every day. One day I am helping farmers plant fruiting trees, the next I am teaching students how to properly separate trash, and the next day I am working in a *minga*

to build a community-wide irrigation system. On Saturdays, I used to take carpentry classes from a neighbor. He taught me how to make a chair, a table, and a flowerbed. But, as my work load has increased I have had to stop those classes.

**4:00 to 5:00pm:** Run or bike or play tag with my host-brothers and host-sisters which ends with a cold shower.

**5:00 to 7:00pm:** Read or write in my journal. At night I read fiction books. Some of the highlights include: reading the Harry Potter series for the first time (I know how I got to be 27 years old without reading them. Get over it, it happened, and now I have read them. Thank you

Peace Corps.), the Dune series, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Atlas Shrugged*, and *The Hitchhikers Guide*.

**7:00pm:** Eat dinner (or supper), similar to lunch.

**8:00pm:** Games with the host-brothers and host-sisters or English classes. Card games that are played: spoons, Uno, burro (Ecuadorian game), war, Jenga, and chess.

**9:00-11:00pm:** Read or sometimes I will watch a TV show (thanks to all the volunteers who get them and then give them to me). Good ones include: The Sopranos, Wire, Boardwalk Empire, basically anything HBO. But, if Justin St. Marie recommends *Justified*, DO NOT WATCH IT. Big waste of time. Thanks, Justin!



Devin co-leads a local children's environmental education event.



# Farm to Farmington

## Monica Harmon

I have lived on a farm for the past two years. I have become accustomed to cold bucket baths. I have adjusted to a diet based on potatoes. I have humbled myself to the rules of my host-family's house and behaved accordingly. But now it's my turn to exchange my Andean farm life for the hustle and bustle of America. Something that preoccupies my thoughts is how I will handle a new beginning in the home country I used to be familiar with but haven't experienced in two years.

Living in Achupallas as an NRC volunteer has allowed me to be a part of traditions that are new to me and helped me realize there are a lot of ways to be happy. For example, when rainy season hits, it is time to gather a traditional delicacy of the Andes: beetles. Catching them is one of my favorite activities.

The occasion only lasts a few months at the beginning of what we classify as winter. Off we march in the dark, drizzle, and dawn to our locale. The beetles emerge from their underground dwellings for their first flight as adult coleopterans and as they lazily buzz, hovering low, we smack them to the ground and grab them as fast as possible. By the time we can actually see what we are doing, it is over.

We carry our bounty home and decide whether to eat or sell them, usually saving some to eat and selling the rest. We pull their legs and wings off, wash them in cold water but quickly warm them up in a hot frying pan, add salt, and enjoy their crunchy, salty, earthy taste.

Then there is our daily milking of cows. Twice a day, rain or shine, we trek out to the pasture, round



Monica partaking in one of the many Sierran traditions—potato peeling.

up our eight cows, milk them, and corral them close to the house. It is a source of income for my family and I have gotten pretty good at it.

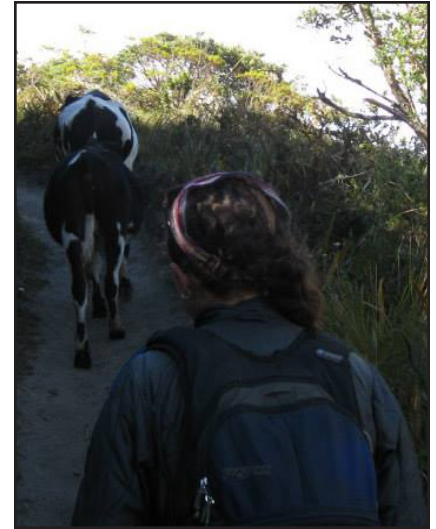
While I may not pine for cow milking for long, I feel a transition to a faster paced life-style will be a jolt. On the farm, sometimes we just have to wait. On the farm, we gather around the fire at night to warm up and we talk. Things are slower, but going with the flow works; it's not that the family is lazy or that they're not willing to help work. Here,

patience is inherent and valued.

While the worry of adjusting to the U.S. may swim in my head, I realize the experiences I've come to know at the pace I've come to know them have bettered me. Waking up early was a small sacrifice to experience the joy that catching beetles brings to my host-family. The discipline I learned milking cows is something I will carry with me in many aspects of my life. I earned it from being a part of this culture.

My life here has been

what one might call slow-paced, but what I take away are life skills that are applicable wherever I go. I just have to take things slow.



Monica before milking the cows.



Monica walks to the traditional Inti Raymi festival with her host-family.

# Day in the Life

Rachel Childs

Normal for my life is like normal for a temp worker in the U.S., only more machetes and everyone is my supervisor.

I live a typical *campo* life in my site. It is a medium-sized community near the Cotacachi volcano in Imbabura that boasts indigenous culture and natural beauty. My ears usually steer to the morning crow of a rooster, bark of a dog, or the squeal of kids getting on the bus to school.

Those sounds signal that it is time to shove my two cats off of my bed and go into Peace Corps mode.

Breakfast is a choice of leftover soup with bread and tea in my family's kitchen, or a hearty omelet in my personal kitchen.

Usually, I do not have a

need for makeup or deodorant because I am ready to dig my hands into the dirt at Vivero Morochos, my community's tree nursery.

The tree nursery only has two other employees to care for more than 13,000 native trees. This means I become weed collector, machete-wielder, and soil-bagger for a few hours a day.

Twice a week, I get gussied up enough to teach English and turn trash into treasure at Escuela Basica "Pichincha" down the road from my house. On Mondays, I tell kids how to say their names, and Fridays they turn garbage into something beautiful.

My day is broken in half by lunch. My family makes rice, beans, salad, potatoes, and whatever else is available. Many families return from their *quebradas*, or farms, for lunch so a high carb meal is important.

The rest of the afternoon is up to me. On Thursdays I play English games with an after-school group for an hour. A small group of dedicated students keep the club going each week, and they are home by sunset.

Committees plan meetings close to 6:30 p.m.

when they have business. However, people usually arrive nearer to 7:00 p.m. or later.

Members speak mostly Kichwa, so I wait until lulls in the meeting to get a summary of the conversation regarding tourism, alpaca goods, and other issues. Last-minute changes are common. A recent meeting welcomed a fair trade company interested in purchasing alpaca wool for other artisans rather than the planned conversation between committee members.

Dinner is a human-sized pot of soup. Famed *caldo de gallina*, or chicken soup, is an easy favorite most nights. But *sopa de kareshina*, also known as soup for lazy people, and *colada de maiz* are also pretty delicious. Hot tea and bread accompany the soup most nights and becomes breakfast the next day.

Midnight was a normal time to sleep in the States, but these days, 9 p.m. is when I rub my eyes. I take a few minutes to write in a journal or listen to a few good podcasts before I hibernate for the interesting days ahead.

# “I’m most proud of. . .

“planting a school garden and a community garden with the kids in Chibuleo. We harvested loads of potatoes and veggies for school lunches.”

– Garrett Paul Fox, CH 110



Garrett Fox teaches campers how to make s'mores.



Leah Gillett wears an Amazonian-style head band.

“fostering a particular student’s interest in the English language. At the beginning of the school year, the student hated English. But now he is excited to actively participate in class, and he is always asking me about American culture.”

– Emily Sutthoff, TEFL 111

“the camps and clubs with the kids from my town. Getting to play outside with the kids and see them get interested in their local environment—it makes me feel good about our future.”

– Leah Gillett, NRC 111



Emily Sutthoff with the youth of her community.

## Quick Facts

- ◆ The Youth and Families program was established in 1983 with the Rural Youth Development Project.
- ◆ In 1987, Peace Corps-Ecuador welcomed its first group of Urban Youth Development volunteers.
- ◆ In 2000, the program evolved into the current Youth and Families Development Program.
- ◆ According to the 2010 government census, children, adolescents and youth in Ecuador represent 58.26% of the country's total population.
- ◆ Approximately 650 PCVs have served as part of the youth program.

## Q&A with Cristina Rojas

**Q:** When did you begin your service as the Y&F Program Manager?

**A:** I began on January 8, 2006. When I started, I was one of the youngest program managers worldwide and currently, I am the youngest program manager of PC/Ecuador—in age—but the senior one in terms of knowledge of length of service.

**Q:** What do you love about being the Y&F PM?

**A:** What I love that I have the privilege to work shoulder-to-shoulder, lead, and learn from such a diverse, rich, and committed group of individuals that truly care about improving the quality of lives of the youth and families of my country. Being the Y&F PM has allowed me to enjoy and celebrate the small and big victories that my volunteers achieved during each of their services.

**Q:** What has been one of the biggest challenges?

**A:** Encouraging each of my Y&F PCVs to focus on their own reality and service while not comparing it (positively or negatively) to someone else's experience. Every youth, family, organization, and community is different, and there is not a magic recipe to achieve the



Eric Aiken, Kathryn Smith, and Hannah Moore teaching children about hygiene.

results in the same way as there are always different circumstances and realities that need to be taken into account in each Volunteer experience.

**Q:** Where or how has it been particularly effective?

**A:** According to 2014 VRF's information, PCVs are reporting their work under the four Y&F Program's Goals. Fifty PCVs are actively working on Goal 1: "Asset-based Development with Youth," 33 PCVs are working on Goal 2: "Building Skills for the World of Work with Youth," 26 PCVs are working on Goal 3: "Engaging Youth as Active Citizens," and 22 PCVs are supporting Goal 4: "Building Com-

munity Support for Youth Development." Therefore, PCVs are working on the 4 programmatic goals of the Youth and Families Development Program with more emphasis on the first and second goals, as goals 3 and 4 require more training and a more in-depth work for the volunteers on the behavior change component with adults, which imply a mid- and long-term period of work and the impact is slower.

**Q:** What has been an unforgettable experience or memory as the Y&F PM?

**A:** There are so many unforgettable experiences and memories during my tenure as program manager that it is hard to focus

on one.

I would say that having the opportunity to visit my volunteers and counterparts in the field, having the opportunity to spend a day in their lives, being part of their activities and having the fortune to interact with them and the people they serve is always amazing while having the opportunity to continue exploring, discovering and rediscovering my country and my people.

I keep a board in my office with different photos that help me capture all these different moments and memories! Everyone is welcome to take a look at them while at the PC office!

“First, ALL my Y&F Volunteers have my respect and admiration not only for making the decision to leave their country and their comfort zone, but for making a commitment to service.

Second, remember that working in development is rewarding; however, at the same time, the nature of our work makes us focus on different scales. We can work with some population at the knowledge level, but we also have the responsibility to be role models, to become an inspiration for the people that we work with to change their behavior and positively take control of their lives. This is something crucial to always keep in mind so we can measure, enjoy, and celebrate our small, middle, and bigger victories.

As an old Peace Corps motto used to say: "Being a Volunteer is the toughest job that you (and me as your PM) will ever love!"

# From the Ground Up

## Hannah Moore

I stand sweating, drenched and fighting with a nearby cherry tree to cover myself with its shade, but the sun seems to have won. I wipe my face with my dirty shirt and look over to the smiling woman sitting in a red plastic chair who begins to sing “*rabanos, rabanos, me encantan los rabann-noooosss!*” The radishes, along with the onions, carrots, peppers, corn, and cucumbers, haven’t shown themselves yet. So we sing to them, encouraging them to sprout.

Gardening in 110 degree weather began with the seed of a single avocado that, for me and a family of 8, had been part of our typical Ecuadorian salad.

My counterpart Lidia rolled the heavy coastal seed in her hand, side-eyeing me as if I were Pinky and she were the Brain, and proclaimed, “*Quiero hacer un jardin.*” (“I want to make a garden.”) With

an over-exaggerated head nod, I managed to mask my apprehension of a project that would fall into my hands—hands that have thumbs but are far from green.

My counterpart is the heart of our *barrio*. She is small and plump. In every chair I’ve ever seen her sit upon, her feet childishly dangle inches above the floor. When she finds something funny, she gives

a heavy tilted bellow that provides a glimpse into her warm personality and a chance to view the only tooth still going strong in a mouthful of gums.

However, Lidia is sick. I’m nothing of a doctor—I get extremely anxious in the presence of the game Operation—but I can see that Lidia has developed what seems to be an extreme case of rheumatoid arthritis.



Community youth show their enthusiasm for harvesting in the garden.

She gets knots and aches, lying on the couch in such agony that I've heard her hold back whimpers when her 3-year-old grandson Neymar hugs her. It's truly saddening, and I decided I wanted nothing more than for her to have her garden.

Since I made that internal promise of constructing Ecuador's greatest garden, our plants have faced the fury of an Arenillas winter, nightly monsoons, and the ferocious stomping of children who have no regard for our barriers of wood, wire, or tall tales of soil monsters waiting to eat little humans under the age of 10.

Our garden, or *huerto*, has become a place where we share laughs, struggles, and botanical epiphanies. We've covered ourselves in *caca de vaca* traveling far out into a pasture throwing cow patties into cardboard boxes as if we were thieves in the night stealing ancient rubies. We've slaughtered the eggs of hundreds of snails (RIP) after finding little moon-shaped nibbles on all of our bean sprouts. We've labeled each seed

with a popsicle stick only to find the sticks an hour later tucked into Neymar's pants, his socks, or broken, wet from his slobber.

Yet, regardless of our setbacks, each day we head out to our spot. Lidia takes a seat in her red plastic chair and cackles when I slip in the cow poop trying to pull down a cherry from the nearby tree, and we talk about our day all while pretending we are gardening experts.

Despite the fact that my *huerto* isn't flourishing with much besides weird smells and devastated parent snails, these experiences are what I regard as successful. I work alongside children I teach and who teach me. I watch *tele-*

*novelas* with Lidia when her body begins to hurt, sharing mangos during our breaks. I take naps in the hammock in the afternoon and clean up dishes after lunch. I am part of their family as they are part of mine.

As youth and families volunteers, we have the opportunity to immerse ourselves within a community, providing necessary tools and resources while gaining much more than we give. I am so lucky to have found my niche underneath a tin roof, chasing giant roosters out of my garden patch while singing with the greatest woman I've ever known, "*frijoles, frijoles, me encantan frijoles!!!*"



Seeds are ready to be planted to start the garden project.



# Youth Encounter

## Jose Romero

The mission of the Ecuadorian Red Cross youth program (Juventud) is to train youth volunteers as leaders in their respective communities.

The Red Cross sees these young men and women as agents of change and development. Red Cross volunteers work within five fields of specialty: sexual and reproductive education, drug and alcohol prevention, natural resource conservation, conflict resolution training and the reduction of stigmas related to discrimination (gender, racial, medical, etc.).

Volunteers trained in these subjects are then sent into schools, barrios, churches and public events to share the knowledge they have acquired with the wider community. In Loja, the youth program has worked to promote conflict resolution and anti-bullying in schools, painted children's faces during city events as a

means of youth outreach, taught recycled art workshops in orphanages and worked with the parents of volunteers to share parenting and communication skills. Recently Loja was chosen to host the National Youth Encounter, which drew volunteers from all over Ecuador.

The slogan behind the National Youth Encounter was "Ideas that Transform," and the goal was to transform these volunteers through the power

of ideas. There were more than 180 volunteers from all over Ecuador including Quito, Carchi, Esmeraldas, Riobamba, Morona Santiago, Orellana, Guayaquil, and Galapagos.

Many of these volunteers were teenagers who are already taking leadership roles in their respective Red Cross programs. The goal of this encounter was to provide skills training so that these volunteers could then carry back with them and implement



Youth from all over Ecuador at the end their annual Red Cross event.

in their communities.

The theme of this encounter was environmental preservation, with the objective being to spread awareness concerning the relation between quality of life/health and quality of natural environment.

There were three activities done in order to achieve this objective. The first activity was “Ecologist Cheerleaders.” The goal of this activity was to cheer and sing for the environment in four different areas of Loja, with these areas chosen based on the amount of people that were present at the event.

These areas included markets and parks. The second activity was “Get Green on Red.” Volunteers would perform for motorists at different traffic lights throughout the city. Some of these performances included a play about not throwing trash out of the car window, performing songs and dances about the environment and displaying signs with positive messages about the need to take care of the environment. The last activity involved gathering

youth for a collective trash pickup, or *minga*. The city of Loja coordinated with the Red Cross in choosing an area close to the Lojano river in specific need of trash removal which the volunteers then cleaned.

The outcome of the event was important for the development of these volunteers. It not only educated them on the importance of a clean environment but also displayed practical ways they could make a difference in their community. Furthermore, not only was awareness spread among volunteers, the city of Loja was also impacted positively. There was media coverage of the activities carried out by volunteers and showed the community’s warm reception to their efforts. Through this event the Red Cross was able to promote a positive image of itself to younger generations in the hope that these activities would draw in more young adults who would be willing to dedicate their time.

Lastly, all volunteers took the energy and skills of this experience back to their respective communi-

ties. Everything learned by volunteers at this event will hopefully serve as an inspiration for future projects, boost recruitment, and spread a positive image as well as awareness of the Red Cross’ youth program.

The National Youth Encounter served to teach and train volunteers from all Ecuador to lead in their communities. The theme of this encounter, environmental preservation, taught volunteers how to interact directly with the larger community through community-managed clean up efforts, how to promote environmental awareness and how to spread awareness of such issues.

The volunteers enjoyed these activities and will hopefully implement them in their own communities. This encounter not only developed the skills of the volunteers but also strengthened the relationship between the city and Red Cross of Loja. It was a wonderful event for everybody involved and the Loja Red Cross hopes it will have the opportunity to host such an event again.

# “As a PCV, I’ve learned. . .

“the importance of working with the entire family as a unit because in order to effectively reach out and produce positive change with the youth, you must also address their family, friend, educational, and environmental components.”

– Marissa Cohen, Y&F 110



Marissa Cohen (second from left) dances during a skit.



Caroline Hernandez in the Otavalo region.

“to be flexible. Things just don’t happen the way you expect them to or wish them to sometimes. But that doesn’t mean it’s going poorly, it just means you have to adjust.”

– Caroline Hernandez, NRC 111

“that health means many things, and understanding the cultural context of health in Ecuador is of the utmost importance for a sustainable impact.”

– Shay Priester, CH 112



Shay Priester with indigenous youth.

## Quick Facts

- ◆ The purpose of the Community Health program is to aid community members in rural and underprivileged areas to lead healthier lives.
- ◆ The first goal of the CH program is food security via gardens and nutrition education.
- ◆ The second goal is to increase awareness of good hygiene and safe water consumption.
- ◆ The third goal is to promote sexual and reproductive health and for community members to adopt safe sexual behaviors and reduce STI and HIV transmission.

## Q&A with Rebecca Carolfilis

**Q:** When did you begin your service as the Community Health (CH) Program Manager?

**A:** I have been with Peace Corps for 5 years.

**Q:** What do you love about being the CH PM?

**A:** Each time I go into the field, I learn something new about my country. I love to share everything I have learned over the years from my volunteers. We have a unique working relationship. In the beginning, I am the teacher. But as time progresses, they learn from me and I learn from them.

**Q:** What has been one of the biggest challenges being the CH PM?

**A:** I am all the time traveling. I have a family and sometimes they complain.

**Q:** What has been an unforgettable experience or memory as the CH PM?

**A:** I love to see the miracles that happen in the volunteers' lives. The most remarkable moments are at COS dinner. That's when we can see the transformation. They leave this country with the name "Ecuador" embroidered on their hearts.



Ashley Aretz (red T-shirt) works to promote health in her community.

The work in Community Health is an amazing career path and an opportunity to change the world. I am really proud of the work that our volunteers are doing in all corners of Ecuador. The work they do is remarkable.

# Medical Brigade

## Jamie Doone

As a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV), one of the many questions I am always being asked is “What is your schedule like?” A difficult question to answer for someone who has never done Peace Corps. Most of us are not set up in 9-5 jobs, nor told what to do. Through integration and surveys in the community, we slowly learn their needs. From there, we attempt to rally community members to participate in our projects. In my case, projects can be anything from health talks (focused on chronic disease and nutrition), to sex education youth groups, recycled art, or sports.

No day is ever the same for me: one day it’s an after school youth group, the next English classes, and another it’s working with an elderly exercise group doing exercises. By American standards, this is a pretty difficult concept to wrap your head around,

especially considering that every two to three months I have to start all over again, searching for new students or new groups to form. This can be a very tiring process, especially because, many times, we PCVs are met with failure.

Despite the inconsistency, my experience as a volunteer has highlights, some I never imagined I would have.

My interest in health began at a young age as did my interest in languages. I can still remember as a little girl listening to family, friends, neighbors, even strangers, speaking in different languages. I was always in awe of them. To be one of them was unfathomable, yet here I am after a year and a half

in Ecuador and I am given the opportunity to translate in a medical brigade. January of 2015, I set out to help three doctors, two physician’s assistants, and a group of nurses and nursing students in Santo Domingo, Ecuador.

In our week together, we saw just under 500 patients in some of the most under-privileged communities. As a Peace Corps community health volunteer, I have given general lectures on the importance of nutrition, but on this brigade, I was able to apply my knowledge to key populations: diabetics, anemics, and hypertensives. The doctors allowed me to talk to the patients about the importance of eating well to help control



Jamie shows a picture to Tsachila youth after a thank-you event.

these conditions. Being able to work on such a personal level was enchanting for me. With a Master in Health Education, this was exactly the sort of work I wanted to be doing.

I was not merely a translator for the doctors, but I was given the opportunity to educate as well. Education is so vital, especially in communities such as these where so many of the parents do not even have a high school degree and the grandparents, often primary caretakers, have only studied through grade school. Information that seems so basic can be unknown and is imperative for good health.

I have seen firsthand the amount of sugar added to juices, or plates filled with just carbohydrates. When asking why a family serves noodles and rice, they answer because a meal is

not complete without rice. They often don't understand that rice and noodles are both carbohydrates and vegetables should be replaced with one or the other. Not having a clear understanding of the different food groups and their nutritive values leads to malnutrition in both children and adults, as well as chronic illnesses.

Having the Spanish skills and knowledge to relay the value of preventative health education was a very rewarding and eye-opening experience, and I am blessed to have had the opportunity. I met an enthusiastic group of doctors and nurses and hundreds of extremely grateful Ecuadorians.

I remember an older married couple who had worked on a farm all their lives. They were so very grateful for the doctors

being here, there were tears in their eyes as they thanked us for our services.

As a Peace Corps volunteer, I have found many times that my services in the community do not merit thank you's. After close to two years of service and a myriad of community projects, the ratio of thank you's I have received to the number I have given out for attendance and participation in my events is rather skewed. However, the appreciation and gratitude I felt from this older couple was heartwarming and I knew we as a doctor-translator team made an impact.

Upon my return to the States, I am considering going back to school to become a physician's assistant. After working so closely with such amazing doctors, I am once again in awe as I was as a little girl. Medicine is another language and, who knows, maybe one day the unfathomable might become the fathomable, yet again.



Members of the Santo Domingo community wait to be seen by staff.

# Bailoterapia

## Bryanna Stukes

As a community health volunteer, the possibilities are endless; you never know what kind of project will come your way. Yet, when I replaced a volunteer, she informed me that she had a Bailoterapia group. Bailoterapia is like Ecuador's answer to Zumba. Luckily, the group was requesting me to continue and take over. I could not believe how fortunate I was; dance has been a passion of mine for my entire life.

When I came to La Asunción, my site, I found that there was a representative from the Ministry of Health who taught Bailoterapia Monday through Wednesday and the ladies of the group requested I teach the remainder of the week, Thursdays and Fridays. I first began teaching hip-hop aerobics and other choreography I was familiar with.

As I began to learn more about different traditional

dances, I was able to incorporate them into the class.

In January, the representative from the Ministry of Health terminated her contract and now I teach Bailoterapia Mondays-Wednesdays. The majority of the group includes members of the Hypertension and Diabetes Club at the local Health Center, and some like to bring their children or grandchildren.

This has allowed me to form relationships in the community, and now Thursdays and Fridays are dedicated to giving charlas on these specific topics.

My relationship with dance has also changed. Now when I am dancing, I am more of a teacher. I explain movements and techniques with details like never before. I have made it into a typical dance class, more than what a



Bryanna Stukes leads her group during one of their presentations.

basic bailoterapia class is in Ecuador. This is because I have begun to tailor my work to my audience, the elderly. I cater to their specific needs and the dance moves are also a way for them to work on their memory and retention.

The classes are constantly adapted and having this flexible spirit has really been a gateway to the community. Most recently, I organized a group to perform in Carnaval festivities, a very popular four-day Latin American holiday. We worked hard practicing the choreography.

My favorite part of Bailoterapia is how open the group is to cultural exchange. They have such enthusiasm for learning different styles of dancing and even other forms of fitness like meditation, yoga, and different strength exercises.

Just like I am teaching them, they are teaching me. Our bailoterapia continues to shift in many directions. We celebrate birthdays and special occasions. Plus, the group repeatedly tells me of their skills and takes the time to teach me new things such as knitting and cooking

different dishes.

This group is a staple in the community and in my service. I am oftentimes referred to as “*la morena con baile en su sangre*,” or “the girl with dance in her blood.” This has opened other doors for me: the enthusiasm of the group members has spread so that I am getting other solicitations to do dance groups at schools and nearby communities.

I never thought that dance, a great passion of mine, would be my way into the community and hearts of Ecuadorians, but I am glad it has.



Bryanna poses alongside members of the group who performed during Carnaval celebrations.



# Parting Shot



TEFL PCVs Shaun Nesheim, Patrick Lagan, and Damien Lazzari (Bottom, L-R) work together during an English camp.

“As a volunteer, I’ve learned that despite global forces that are forcing a sense of uniformity, local folks continue to find their own answers, make their own meaning, and engage with the world in their own unique and interesting ways, ways that serve others.”

– Dr. Miguel Llorca, PCV

Suggestions or submissions? Email us at [elclimamagazine@gmail.com](mailto:elclimamagazine@gmail.com). Thank you!