

EL CLIMA

PEACE CORPS ECUADOR

JUNE 2012

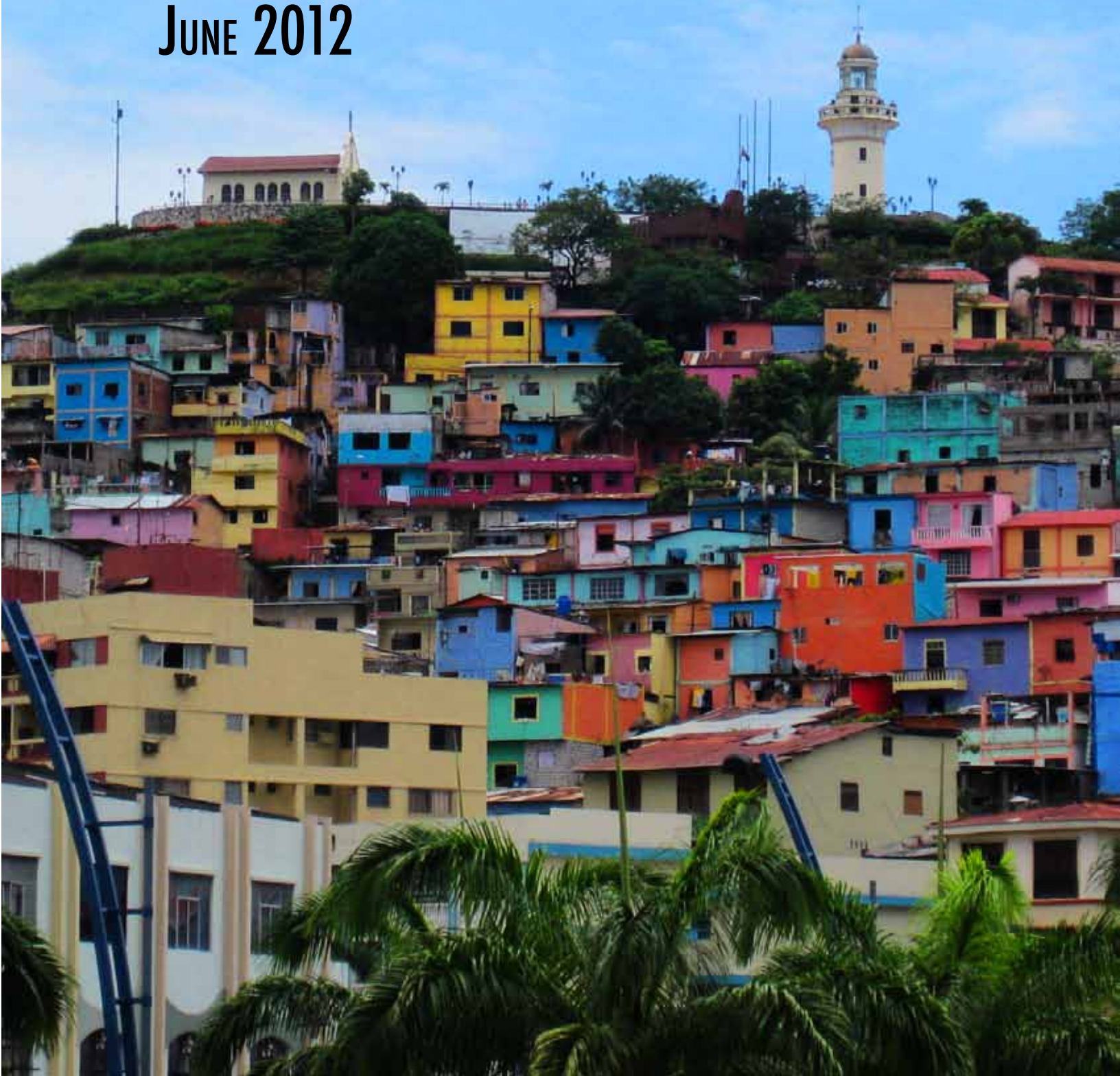


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Cover photo courtesy of Jordan Shuler a Youth and Families volunteer from Omnibus 104 living in the colorful, coastal city of Guayaquil, Guayas

BEASTS OF COMPANIONSHIP

BY KRISTIN FARR

When I arrived at my new home everything was new, exciting and a bit strange. My new family was welcoming but there were no doubt some strong cultural barriers between us. As I started the process of 'integration' (whatever that really means) and tried to find my place in this new family, there was one living being that instantly became my best friend and has loved me unconditionally since the first day we met.

I'm referring to Lobo, my best friend with one blue eye and one brown. Since that first day we've acquired two other dogs, Rocky and Bobby. Rocky is famous for being bravo and is the only one I've been able to train to sit. Bobby, the youngest, who became motherless a week after being born, has had the most charmed life of the three due to having a gringa around who vehemently will not hit a dog no matter what kind of mischief they get into – which has caused my host family to not hit them either, at least when I'm around. And then there is Lobo, the wisest and oldest of the pack. He has taught the other two youngsters everything he knows of being security guard by scaring anyone who dares to make the trek up the long driveway, and also the art of sneaking into the gringa's room to enjoy the cooler temperatures. I can't imagine what it would be like to not have my three best friend-beasts around the house every day always wagging their tails and begging for cariño, for which I'm always happy to oblige.

As Americans we've been raised on the notion that pets fulfill us and are to be treated as companions with mutual respect, or at the very least cared for. It's only natural that many volunteers choose to adopt an animal and care for it while here in Ecuador and perhaps take their pet home with

HE IS AN ABSOLUTE DIABLO,
BUT HE IS MY DIABLO AND I
COULDN'T IMAGINE MY LIFE
HERE IN MY COMMUNITY
WITHOUT HIM



them when they return to the US. Our pets seem to give us a sense of companionship and belonging. There is no need to have to understand one another, it just comes naturally. It can be difficult trying to understand the manner in which many Ecuadorians treat their "pets." No

doubt many an Ecuadorian's eyebrow has been raised after witnessing the "strange" manner in which we PCVs treat our pets. For some volunteers, their pets have been a teaching tool, to others they have been a source of ridicule. Regardless, PCVs have some tales to tell about their adventures in pet ownership while living in Ecuador.

**Lindsay M.
Sacha, Napo**

My dog's name is Supay, which means "diablo" in Kichwa. I gave him the name from a phrase that my host mother would always say when someone entered the house: "Pita shamun?" or "Quién viene?"



To which someone would reply, "Supay shamun" or "El diablo viene." It was a running joke in my host family's house, and since my Supay was always running in and out of the house and causing chaos during his puppy years, I thought maybe it would be a good name for him. My community members got a kick out of the name, especially when they asked me if I lived alone and I would tell them, "No, I live with the devil." He is an absolute diablo, but he is my diablo and I couldn't imagine my life here in my community without him. No matter how

sad, angry, or frustrated I am, he's always there, and his presence really helps me keep my head up and look forward to the next day.

**Jordan S.
Guayaquil, Guayas**

I did not intend to have pets at my site in Guayaquil. Fate had other plans and foisted upon me two cats. One morning three months after arriving in site, I



took my class to the park as a reward for good behavior. I observed them from a distance as they ran around screaming and flailing their arms per usual until suddenly they all converged upon the same point as if drawn there by some magnetic force. A moment later, one of the girls emerged from the cluster of children and walked toward me with her hands outstretched, bearing a tiny newborn kitten with its eyes still closed, botar'd in the park and mewling piteously. "You'll take it home, right? You'll take care of it, right?" I became their unwilling champion. Five months later someone else regalar'd me another kitten and I accepted it because heck, I already had one, so why not another?

Yes, there are a number of drawbacks to having pets. They are costly. They're prone to fleas, and breaking things, and there was that one period of time when my cats treated the futon as a litter box. My host brother teases me by saying I am a spinster cat lady. Frankly, I'm still a cat owner because I've passed the point of no return (I'm not sure exactly when that was, but apparently it was before my cats broke four panes of glass and chewed up the window screen). But on the whole it's been gratifying to have a smaller being dependent on me and me alone for its survival and development. I knew that, at the end of a frustrating or unproductive day, I could come home and feel secure in accomplishing at least one thing: caring for my cats. Now those cats are just a part of my daily life; they've grown on me, and I'd miss them if they weren't here.

**Erin M.
La Esmeralda, Los Ríos**

I absolutely adore my dog. He is one year old now and the Ecuadorian love of my life. I found him when he was just 3 weeks old, abandoned in the street. All my neighbors said he would die and that I was wasting my time and money. But since I have some tricks up my sleeve, like visiting the vet and proper canine nutrition, he did just fine. He and I are really attached to each other, but as he is generally wary of other people I was a little



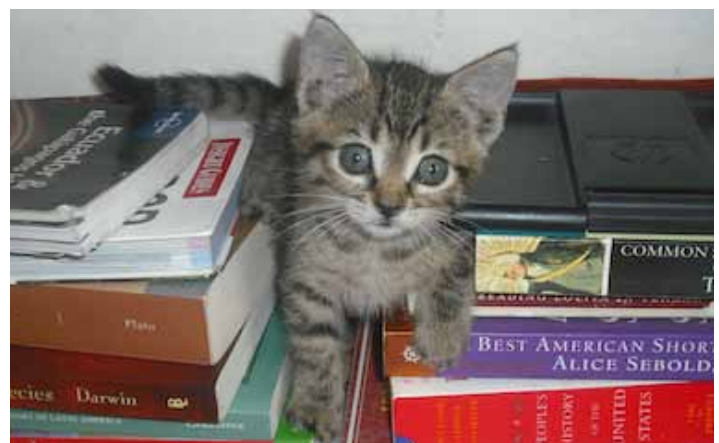
nervous when my whole family came to visit me in Ecuador. However, it was a great experience for us all. I was absolutely amazed by how quickly my dog took to them. He even abandoned his sleeping mat in my room to snuggle up with my dad and brother. Now that

the whole family has met him and loves him I'm even more excited to take him home at the end of my service. My mom sends him dog treats in the mail, my dad always asks about him, and my grandma who hasn't met him yet is already shopping for the perfect dog bed. I'm sure whatever she buys he'll prefer the burlap sack we've got here; he is a hardened Ecuadorian after all. Having a faithful, friendly and enthusiastic companion here in Ecuador has made all the difference in the world for me emotionally. He gives me the love I need on the days when I feel alone and very far away from home. I can't imagine this experience without him.

I HAD TO CARRY HER IN MY ARMS TO THE VET, WHICH IS ABOUT A 10-15 MINUTE WALK THROUGH TOWN

**Ricky A.
Bahía de Caráquez, Manabí**

Another volunteer gifted me Parker, my female cat, about two weeks after one of my sitemates left. We were



VOLUNTEER LIFE

trying to figure out a name and I suggested “Parker” as a joke, but it stuck. Human Parker checks in on kitty Parker every now and then.

Recently, after returning from a weeklong trip, I walked out of my house and the little girl that lives next to me said, “Mira, Parker está cogiendo con su novio!” I took Parker to get spayed the next day. I didn’t have a box for her, so I had to carry her in my arms to the vet, which is about a 10-15 minute walk through town and required

PEOPLE IN MY SITE THINK
IT’S HILARIOUS THAT SHE
HAS A COLLAR AND GETS A
BATH ONCE A MONTH

me to not only walk 15 minutes, but to do so past lots of people. I carried her six times total for the process. Parker was extremely nervous every time we made our trip to the vet. She hates all the loud noises that occur in a city, so each time a car honked (which was often), a motorcycle passed by, or anything else remotely loud sounded nearby, she would squirm and try to climb me, which involved her claws being fully out. Ouch! I received lots of looks and people saying “michu-michu-michu,” which scared her as well. At the end of the adventure Parker is spayed, content and still getting into mischief.

Katrina O.
24 de Mayo, Manabí

I got Lulu, my cat, after a month in site. Funny enough, she was given to me by a community member while I was doing my CAT surveys. She was teeny tiny and I

carried her home in my purse. I have never regretted adopting her, even after all those times she has climbed up my mosquito net – consequently tearing it down from the ceiling – or the one time she dragged a dead lizard around my house for two hours.

She has become an excellent assistant for bat/large insect extermination and the perfect companion to snuggle up and read with. People in my site think it’s hilarious that she has a collar and gets a bath once a month. When I took her to get spayed, everyone was SHOCKED. People seemed genuinely astonished that I was not even going to let her have one litter of kittens so she would “know what’s it’s like to be a mother.” When I brought her back from the city after being spayed, she had at least fifteen visitors who wanted to see how she was doing. They were also just curious because no one has ever had their cat spayed before. She has become kind of a celebrity; everyone knows she belongs to me, and if she wanders too far, someone will come and tell me where she is. The tienda in my community has even started stocking cat food for her!



Kristin Farr, an NRC Volunteer from Omnibus 105, lives with her canine compañeros at her site in Churute, Guayas.

LA SÁBILA GENIAL BY PORTIA BOYKIN

My skin itches from unidentified flying insects (mosquito, no-see-em, flea, etc.). It burns from those super close sun rays. My hair is completely dry, brittle, and thirsty. I don’t have any extra money, and a decent moisturizer, shampoo, and conditioner will cost over \$5.00 at the pharmacy! I could wait for the PC medical packet, but my skin will be scratched off by then. What shall I do? I see that my host family has tons of aloe vera plants all over the house, and I know that they help with soothing a burn. But what else is this plant good for? Falling deeper into the do-it-yourself (DIY) culture, I

saw it was fit to make a few items for my vanity box. Let’s take a look:

Hair:

The sun is so intense here and, having naturally dry hair, keeping my hair moisturized is one more task added to my daily regimen. Below is a quick and natural hair nourishing agent that any one of us can create.

Ingredients:

- 1 aloe vera leaf
- Water (optional)
- Honey
- Essential oil of your choice (sandalwood, lavender, mint, lemon, etc.)

Tools:

- Knife/Veggie peeler
- Blender
- Glass Bowl
- Spoon/Fork

Procedure:

With your knife, remove the thorny sides of the aloe leaf. Now, using your knife or your veggie peeler, peel the green skin off one side of the leaf. With your spoon, scrape out the meaty gel and place it in your blender. Add small amounts of water during the blending of the gel, making sure that the mixture is not too runny. Adding water is optional, since the aloe plant is over 97% water. Then, add a couple drops of

ROOM FOR DEBATE: COINS VS. BILLS

BY BUCKSHOT & DUBSTEP

When Buckshot and Dubstep last met, they got into a terrible tiff about male Ecuadorian hairstyles. Dubstep left the Shopping with a chunk of hair missing and Buckshot left with scratches on her face. The girls reconciled after finding out the cute boy with the rat-tail faux-hawk duo already had a gamut of girls.

After the revival of their friendship, they found themselves, once again, arguing about practical matters such as which is more useful, the dollar bill or the dollar coin. As they sat on a bus on the way to Midservice, Buckshot frantically dug through her loose change, while Dubstep suavely pulled out several worn, crinkled \$1 bills...

Dubstep: Buckshot, hurry up and pay the ayudante, you're embarrassing me.

Buckshot: Tranquilo, I'm just trying to find the exact amount of change here.

D: Are you 90 years old?

B: What does that even mean? Everyone who's anyone in this country uses the Sacajawea coins.

D: Yeah, I know. I hate it. Bills are much classier.

B: Really? Have a little pride. She's indigenous. Where's your solidarity?

D: Buckshot, look at her. She looks like any indigenous Andean Kichwa woman. George... now that face is 100% 'Merican.

B: So Washington won the Revolutionary War, big deal. If it wasn't for Sac, here, how could

your favorite essential oil and honey and blend one more time. There you have it: homemade hair conditioner! Great for all hair textures and types. Apply all over hair and scalp and let the mixture settle between 5-10 minutes. Rinse thoroughly; the mixture will become dry and flaky, so be sure to rinse all the gel out to avoid white flakes in your hair.

I found this way of extracting the inner gel to be the easiest, but of course you can remove the gel how you see fit. Also, adding or subtracting ingredients will only adapt the mixture to your own hair type, so siga no más with your experiment. If you don't have a blender, use a fork and press the meaty gel into fine pieces. Your hair will be left feeling soft and smelling sweet. You can make enough to last for a week or for a one time use. If you plan on making a batch for long term use, make sure to store it in a glass container.

BUT WHAT ELSE IS THIS PLANT GOOD FOR? FALLING DEEPER INTO THE DIY CULTURE, I SAW IT WAS FIT TO MAKE A FEW ITEMS FOR MY VANITY BOX

Skin:

Your skin will thank you after applying this cooling aloe vera gel. Aloe, being one of nature's healers, aids the skin in a number of ways. It penetrates the pores to heal wounds, revitalize skin cells, and soothe burned skin. This natural wonder is safe to use on any area of the body; even those with more sensitive skin can reap the benefits of aloe vera. You can apply the gel directly by rubbing the translucent inner part of the plant onto your skin, or you can proceed with the same process above, omitting the honey and essential oil. Adding vitamin C powder to the mixture will also

help preserve shelf life and color. Remember to store the leftover gel in a glass container in your refrigerator. Applying the gel 3 times per day to the irritated area will be sufficient to soothe your aching skin.

Disclaimer: before using, test for an allergic reaction. Rub a small amount of the pure aloe vera gel on the inner skin of your arm. If you notice any irritation or discoloration, please discontinue use. I really don't want you to have to call the PCMO.

The enzyme-packed, amino-acid-linked, vitamin-filled, succulent plant is everything that I ever wanted or needed in my dry, uncomfortable life. Join me as I try out more great "true aloe" health recipes. There are hundreds of different types of aloe plant, but the one most commonly known as aloe vera (in Spanish: sábila) has many beneficial properties, including anti-aging, anti-fungal, moisturizing, immune boosting, and the list goes on and on. No wonder it's been described for centuries as mystical and magical. I'm lucky enough to have this plant growing like weeds all around my home. If you don't have any nearby, I'm sure your li'l old vecina has some growing wildly on her rooftop and that she'd be happy to give you a few leaves or even a baby plant. If that falls through, go to your local marketplace and buy yourself a leaf for \$0.25. Either way, you've got to have this sensational plant near you at all times.

Let me know what aloe concoctions you come up with!

Until next time,
Portia B.

Portia Boykin, a Community Health Volunteer from Omnibus 106, gets her sábila fix at her site in Ibarra, Imbabura.

VOLUNTEER LIFE

Lewis and Clark have made it to the Pacific Ocean, let alone find such great territories like the Dakotas and the Yellowstone basin. She's a real American hero.

D: No one cares about the discovery of the Dakota region, except for the 200 people living there... The point I'm trying to make is these Sacajawea coins have been dumped in Ecuador with the adoption of the USD a few years ago. The coins are rejects.

B: Clearly you do not understand the historical importance of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Even if you're too much of a nincompoop to see the beauty in the Dakotas, without the expedition – to which Sacajawea was of great importance – we never could have completed our Manifest Destiny. AND, as far as the coins being rejects, Americans are just too close-minded these days to accept anything new and innovative. Coins are more practical; we are just stuck in our ways.

D: First, I don't deny that Ms. S is an integral part in American history. Two, "nincompoop?" Three, didn't the coin come before the bill? It's not a matter of being "stuck in our ways," it's a matter of comfort and convenience. Coins are ancient, bills are contemporary. We have evolved to a lighter and sleeker version of currency. Why go back in time?

B: Dubstep, did you not even bother to study vocabulary for the GRE? And, if I may quote the esteemed NPR program "Planet Money," coins cost less to make than dollar bills. Not only are they more practical, they're cheaper, too.

D: Buckshot, "nincompoop" is something a 90-year-old woman would say. That's two strikes! But I digress. A dear friend of mine told me about the same program and I learned that yes, perhaps the coin's

production is more cost-effective, but the government is making a profit off of the minting of the bill. I'll directly quote this highly intelligent source, who said "but [the funding] comes directly from us... so we, the people, will lose money if they switch to coins because they'll have to print more." Buckshot, now would not be the time to take any extreme measures to take money away from the American people. Also, your argument, no doubt, has some clout, but do you really think that will convince a population of switching to the coin?

B: Um, obviously a government mandate could do that. As far as taking money from the American people, I'm not going to argue that in these economic times it's necessarily



the best thing to do. However, this only applies if we leave our coins sitting in coin jars or lose them to the depths of couch seats. Seeing as we are poor Peace Corps volunteers in Ecuador, the latter does not apply; we can't afford couches. Besides, when have you experienced the "coin jar" syndrome in these parts? People down here are itching to spend those dolla dolla coins.

D: Okay, you got me there. Ecuadorians are no doubt "itching" to spend those dollar coins. In fact, one could point out that they love dollar coins. I've received one too many a stank eye for paying with a nefarious dollar bill. For that reason, I'm insulted when someone gives me a dollar bill back in change. But the principle of the whole thing truly irks me, Buckshot. Why are they so keen on those cumbersome dollar coins? Having them in your pocket says "Hey everyone! See that giant bulge? Hear

that jingle? That's money baby! Oh what? You want it? Well... come and take it from me." I bet ten one-dollar bills Julieta is on my side when it comes to the safety and security of paper money.

B: Bills, I would think, pose more of a security risk than coins. People might mistake them for \$20s. If anything, coins are certainly cleaner. Doctor Carmen would approve.

D: Buckshot, there are no germs in Ecuador. And contrary to your argument that coins are safer, let me just say that you could make it rain with money; with coins, you'll make it hail.

B: Did you really just go there?

D: I did. We could go at this for days... Crap! Buckshot, did we miss the Tambillo stop? The last thing I want to do is waste an extra two hours getting to Tumbaco. I don't want to miss the delicious dinner they're going to serve us in the Training Center.

With that, the two intrepid guayacas jumped off the bus into the frigid rain of the Sierra and forgot all about dollar coins and dollar bills as they ran to catch their next bus.

If you would like to listen to the full NPR debate, check out "Cage Match: Coin vs. Bill" on NPR's Planet Money. Spoiler alert: they side with Buckshot.

Also, if you have any hot topic debates that cannot possibly be settled between friends, Dubstep and Buckshot would be more than willing to take them on for you.

Just email us at elclimamag@gmail.com.

Dubstep is an NRC Volunteer from Omnibus 105 and does her dubstepping and bill crinkling in her site of Churute, Guayas.

Buckshot is an Agriculture Volunteer from Omnibus 105 and does her buck-shooting and coin clinking in her site of Paccha, El Oro.

BETTER KNOW A VOLUNTEER: PCVs STACIE & PETER CONSTANIAN



Site: San Francisco del Congo, Guayas

'Bus: 105

How did you two meet?

We met at band camp in high school.

And the first date?

Ben Folds Halloween Concert, Stacie went as a flapper, Peter went as Yasser Arafat.

Stacie

Hometown: Fairmont, MN

What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Flexible, patient, and integrated.

What's your dream job?

Owning my own orchard and selling apples, cider and honey.

Hobbies: got any?

Painting, violin, photography, and cats.

Favorite Spanish phrase?

Ahí no máaaaaas.

Where would you like to be 25 years from now?

Doing Epidemiological research at the Mayo clinic in Rochester, MN.

Perks of being married in Peace Corps?

There are so many.

Biggest challenge of being married while in Peace Corps?

No alone time.

Peter

Hometown: Rochester, MN

What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Soft-spoken, humble, and sincere.

What's your dream job?

County Ag Extensionist.

Hobbies: got any?

Socratic dialogue, stenciling, and learning guitar.

Favorite Spanish phrase?

Dé una.

Where would you like to be 25 years from now?

Living on a farm of my own in southeast Minnesota.

Perks of being married in Peace Corps?

Never being lonely.

Biggest challenge of being married while in Peace Corps?

Never being alone.

Juntos

Any words of wisdom for other serving couples?

Don't say, "It's ok" and then go to sleep mad.

Patience is a virtue best shared with a spouse.

Divide and conquer (have separate jobs).

Interview by Whitney Ciofalo, an Agriculture Volunteer from Omnibus 105 living in Paccha, El Oro. Whitney is Layout Editor for El Clima.

BETTER KNOW A STAFF MEMBER:

DR. ANDRÉS TROYA, MD. MPH.

Dr. Andrés Troya is the new medical coordinator at the Peace Corps office in Quito. This interview was conducted during my COS checkup. It could have been super awkward, but Dr. Troya is a really cool person, so it wasn't at all. The next time you're in Quito, stop by the medical office to say hello and ask about his marathon running and fascinating medical mysteries. –Claire Davis

What is your full name? Do you have a nickname?

Paul Andrés Troya Villacorta. When I was younger, my friends called me "Andy."

What did you eat for breakfast this morning?

I had some orange juice and part of an apple. I only like to eat fruits in the morning.

What did you do prior to coming to work for the Peace Corps in Ecuador?

I was the director of the Seguro Social in Quito for three years, and before that I worked at the Hospital Metropolitano.

Do you have kids?

Yes. Felipe is 23. María José is 21. She is studying biology at Western Kentucky and San Francisco de Quito. They both divide their time between the U.S. and Ecuador.

Have you traveled to the United States?

Yes, we lived in North Carolina at two different times, three years each time. I first went to North Carolina to work on my MPH at UNC Chapel Hill. We went back later because I had a job with the health program at IBM and I was also the director for an organization called Centro Hispano, which tries to provide health care for Hispanic immigrants in North Carolina.

What has been your most interesting medical case?

There was this little boy once who swallowed a coin; it was pretty big and the mother was really upset. We had to continue to do x-rays to watch the coin as it progressed down his digestive tract. It all turned out okay. I had this other patient who was a hypochondriac. The patient had over 300 medical visits in one year, but there was

absolutely nothing wrong with him physically.

Do you watch doctor shows like Grey's Anatomy, Scrubs, House, etc.?

Sure, I like Dr. House. I like to watch to criticize their errors. It's entertaining, but it's fiction.

Do you like to cook?

Sure, I love to cook. I like to make things like ceviches and soups. We also really like to barbeque outside on the weekends with family and friends.

After your first two weeks here, what is your impression of the Peace Corps and Peace Corps volunteers?

The Peace Corps is a great organization. The philosophy of John F. Kennedy is wonderful. I feel a connection to the U.S. too because I went to the American School of Quito, and it was funded in part by the U.S. government. The U.S. government made my education possible. I have a lot of respect for Peace Corps volunteers and their important work meeting the needs of people in Ecuador.

Do you have a favorite city or place in Ecuador?

Probably Cuenca because my wife is from there and it is just so beautiful.

What is the single most important thing that volunteers can do to stay healthy in Ecuador?

It's the water. Do not drink the tap water and be careful to avoid ingesting unclean water. Wash your fruits and vegetables. Most of the diseases we get here originate from the water.

Interview by Claire Davis, a Youth & Families Volunteer from Omnibus 104 living in Machala, El Oro. Claire is Editor for El Clima's Volunteer Life section.



PEER SUPPORT NETWORK BY ORRIN TIBERI

For the first time in many years, members of the reformed Peer Support Network were out supporting our fellow volunteers in force! In May every newly hatched volunteer from 107 was visited by one of our core team members. We traversed high and low, followed obscure directions that many times led us to a dead end, and experienced hair-raising cuy-eating situations. Somehow we all made it out alive, parasite free (mostly), and hopefully a little wiser with a better immune system.

"Orrin," you ask, "what is this so-called *Peer Support Network*, and why are they prying into every corner of Ecuador trying to find the PCV newbies?" Well, as Parmer so eloquently put it, "*the members (of PSN) are here to help out, lend an ear and be supportive as you adjust to life as a Volunteer in Ecuador. Sometimes it is just easier and more comfortable to call on another Volunteer for minor (or major) adjustment issues than to call on staff.*" Thank you Parmer for your beautiful words! Our group is made up of 7 volunteers: 2 Health, 1 Y&F, 2 TEFL, 1 Ag, and 1 NRC. Whether your problem has to do with the nasty cacao tree growing under your bed or the gang of 600 children that follow you around trying to steal your shoes, give us a call or send us an email, we got you covered!

So, everyone clear on the "what?" "But Orrin," you continue, "Why?" To quote from another hero of mine,

our fearless president Kristin Farr: "*We believe that during the first few months, having another volunteer check in on new volunteers to work through their personal issues or commend them for their triumphs is incredibly beneficial!*" Couldn't have said it better myself. These visits also provide an opportunity to get the new volunteer more connected with other volunteers in their area.

This season's visits went exceptionally well, and I hope that all the 107ers reading this feel the same way. I personally got to trek into the heart of the jungle, and though I did not get the opportunity to meet Kurtz, it was an incredible time nonetheless. Lamentably, we only had the time (and funding) to visit the new volunteers; however, a site visit by a PSN team member is available and encouraged to anyone living anywhere in Ecuador, regardless of how much time you have in country. Simply give one of us a call and we'll make it happen. As the Peer Support Team we took upon ourselves the task of making Ecuador one of the best posts to live and work in. So go ahead and make a call to one of the PSN team members if you need anything – our doors are proverbially always open for you, my fellow volunteers.

Orrin Tiberi is an HIV/AIDS Volunteer in Riobamba, Chimborazo from Omnibus 106. He is also a Peer Support Network Team Member.

INTRODUCING THIS YEAR'S PSN TEAM:

Kristin Farr – NRC 105

08-089-3595 / farrkristin@yahoo.com

Site: Churute, Guayas

Hometown: Fort Worth, TX

Free Time: Drawing, trying to train campo dogs, making stuff out of recycled materials, traveling the mega-diverse Ecuador, watching low-quality pirated DVDs, hanging out with my host family.

Favorite Ecu-a-moment: My 80-year-old host dad telling me he hated molido de verde (mashed green plantains) until I started preparing it for the family. That's because I add a special ingredient: gringa cariño.

Favorite Plato Típico: Encebollado



Whitni "Buckshot" Ciofalo – AG 105

08-887-2869 / wciofalo@gmail.com

Site: Paccha, El Oro

Hometown: Sioux Falls, SD

Free Time: Kickin' it in cowboy boots, pretending I don't follow politics, acting like I'm athletic, indoctrinating Ecuadorian children with the Talking Heads, eating absurd amounts of fresh produce, and snuggling in alpaca blankets with my cat. Oh, and reading.

Favorite Ecu-a-moment: Conversations with random strangers on buses

Favorite Plato Típico: Empanadas y morocho



VOLUNTEER LIFE

Katrina Organ – CH 106

06-949-3346 / katrina.organs88@gmail.com

Site: 24 de Mayo, Manabí

Hometown: Scranton, PA

Free Time: Reading, hammock time, movies, chalk drawing with the kids, bat extermination with my cat Lulu, and reading anything written by Tim Wise and Nicholas Kristof, who are two of the most perceptive, intelligent, and articulate humans on the planet right now.

Favorite Ecuamoment: Los Fieles (Day of the Dead) was pretty awesome, so was the first time I gave the kids in my host family chalk to play with. They had never played with chalk before, and it took some convincing before they realized they could draw whatever they wanted all over my patio.

Favorite Plato Típico: Ceviche de pescado, hands down. It's delicious and refreshing and I eat it at least once a week.

Bryan Hamilton – Y&F 106

09-120-5537 / hamiltob@gmail.com

Site: Bahía de Caráquez, Manabí

Hometown: Traverse City, Michigan

Free time: Love to play sports. Back home it was

golf, running and basketball. Here, I have given up the links and attempted to take up soccer. Otherwise, just being outdoors; swimming, camping, hiking. If stuck inside, a book is always good, but I enjoy a decent film.

Favorite Ecuamoment: Liga 1,

Emelec 0 in THE Casa Blanca, July 2011. Friends, beers, and a break from training to watch rivalry soccer is tough to beat.

Favorite Plato Típico: Encebollado; could eat it every day and nearly do.

Orrin Tiberi – CH 106

08-060-1295 / otiberi@gmail.com

Site: Riobamba, Chimborazo

Hometown: Helena, Montana



Free Time: I dar the vueltas with the best of them. Also am prone to reading voraciously, currently reading the Dark Tower series by Stephen King.

Favorite Ecuamoment: Hmmm, I think that would have to be my Mondays. I am working at a University here on a Happiness Campaign. Every Monday I give away FREE HUGS to all the giggling Ecuam-ladies.

Favorite Plato Típico: RICE!! No, that is a horrible horrible joke. I think Ilapingachos? Or yaguarlocra...can't make up my mind.



I am also part of the LGBT group in Peace Corps, so if anyone needs help forwarding the gay agenda, I'm their man.

Elizabeth Stokely – TEFL 106

08-263-2823 / elizabeth.stokely@gmail.com

Site: Loja, Loja

Hometown: Hamilton, Massachusetts (north of Boston)

Free Time: I enjoy teaching at

the Colegio Técnico, playing instruments while teaching at a music conservatory, and eating popcorn with Kim Peek (other PSN team member).

Favorite Ecuamoment: One of the most memorable moments I had in Ecuador was getting lost while running an unmarked half marathon.

Favorite Plato Típico: Heladito and chifles (although not usually combined).

Kim Peek – TEFL 106

06-911-3475 / kpeek585@gmail.com

Site: Loja, Loja

Hometown: Highland, Illinois

Free Time: I like to read, write short stories, sing, have one-minute dance parties with my friends, and perfect my popcorn making skills.

Favorite Ecuamoment: When my family met my Ecuadorian host family. They spent the evening eating cookies, practicing English, and talking about cultural differences.

Favorite Plato Típico: Chifles, hands down.



ASK RONALD: POR FIN

BY RONALD IKECHI-OGBONNA

I am looking to take integration to the next level and start dating a girl in my site. I understand that the technique of wooing a small town girl is different than flattering a hip quiteña, but it seems that all my advances seem to be falling short. Any advice on how to conquistar a campo chica?

–Smitten in Santo Domingo

Ah, yes, campo love.

Congratulations on deciding to put down some in-country roots. I imagine this is a big deal for you so I want you to read carefully. Get closer to the page so you can soak all this in, alright? SHE'S JUST NOT THAT INTO YOU.

When it comes to sharing a physical space, holding hands, besos on the cheek, and making out, Ecuadorian women do not play too hard to get (For those offended by my gross generalizations, please get your own article to write. Thanks!). If she likes you, she'll let you know. The cariño touching intensifies and

the “-itos” and the “itas” get a little bit longer. She'll even gastar a little saldo so you can call her back. And if things are serious, she may even make you her “Mejor Amig@” via Claro. Alas, this is not the case for you, so move on.

For your future “campo conquest,” I suggest you stop considering her a “conquest” and court her properly like the lady or gentleman you are—invite her out.

My host mother is constantly cleaning up after me, despite my best attempts to limit my messiness to my personal space in the house. Somehow we cannot seem to come to a cultural truce, and her Ecuadorian motherly instincts are continually trumping my bachelorette lifestyle. From sweeping my room to washing my clothes by hand, I am constantly stressing that my housekeeping inadequacy is becoming a continual source

of extra work for her. How can I stop this cycle?

–Machona in Machala

You're absolutely right that your inadequacy is extra work. This woman has been cleaning her house in a particular style for years and now you come in from who knows where and want to do things your way. You're in Ecuador now. The only personal space you have is the skin on your body. You didn't buy that room, you may be paying for it, but it ain't yours (yes, I used “ain't”). I think where you went wrong is assuming that your estadounidense cleaning techniques would be comparable to those of Ecuador. Your best bet is to take a week and just watch and learn how she does things because you obviously don't get it. Take this as an opportunity for a learning experience.

Peace Corps is flooding my inbox with emails. If I am to actually read through all of them, the cyber in my town will be a lot richer and I am going to be broke



at the end of each month. Help!

–Newbie in Napo

Yeah, we get a crap ton of emails, but I'm sure the people sending them hate sending them as much as you do reading them. But they are important, so keep reading. If it's really an issue, you can beg Josh to pry his fingers from the PC-Ecuador piggy bank. Otherwise following this link:

<http://www.howtogeek.com/68863/how-to-downloadbackup-your-gmail-google-calendar-and-docs-data/>

I am in a small campo community full of evangelicals who are convinced that dancing is a sin. So whenever a community fiesta comes around, I constantly feel judged by my host family and counterpart when I join in this sinful activity. I know that cultural sensitivity is best, but I just want to dance.

–Happy Feet in Huaquillas

Your story is like half the plotline of Footloose. Get that movie in Spanish and watch it with them.

No one ever writes asking about how you're doing, so I'd like to take this opportunity to do so. How are you?

–Curious Volunteers EVERYWHERE

Wow. Thanks for asking. Believe it or not, my service ends this August 2012 and I'm a little sad about it. Like many of you out there, despite the conundrums, I love my site and

most definitely my work. It's hard to imagine if I will ever have such an awesome life and work experience again in the years to come—as of now anyways. I mean when/where else will I ever be able to call all my own shots and still live in a boss apartment for \$100 ever again? The options are limited—believe me, I've already checked.

In these last months, I've learned that I can still be surprised. I'm not an expert traveler by any means, but I've left New Jersey enough times to know there are places almost as cool and almost as important. I've come to terms with the fact that family dynamics, religion, politics, and food can still be overwhelming here, even though I rarely hesitate to bring them into my life. This is a good thing because it means I'm not jaded. I'm still a sponge eager to soak up new experiences.

Before I go, I'd like you all to remember a few things:

1. Smile at people even when you are sad. Everybody's life blows for at least a moment, but you can make it a little better by fixing your cheeks.

2. Always ask for a DISCOUNT. Prices are going up everywhere and Joshua Ebenezer Cuscaden Scrooge isn't budging with the plata.

3. Keep asking questions... and don't be afraid to ask the same

question twice or even five times. You are not insane, you will get different answers.

4. Don't forget why you decided to join Peace Corps. Find your application essays and read them. Your passions and hopes are essential to fueling resilience through the toughest, darkest, coldest, and wettest moments in your site and your service.

5. Life goes on. If there is one thing Ecuador has reinforced in me it's that even when "pasa algo," maybe it won't happen tomorrow.

6. PITY WILL GET NO ONE ANYWHERE GOOD. Let that marinate for a bit.

Ronald Ikechi-Ogbonna, a Community Health Volunteer from Omnibus 104, imparts these last words of wisdom from his site in Santo Domingo, Santo Domingo de Los Tsáchilas. He undoubtedly leaves behind him a population of sager, satisfied, successful PCVs who have benefited from his probing insights and stellar advice.

DON'T FORGET WHY YOU DECIDED TO JOIN PEACE CORPS. FIND YOUR APPLICATION ESSAYS AND READ THEM. YOUR PASSIONS AND HOPES ARE ESSENTIAL TO FUELING RESILIENCE THROUGH THE TOUGHEST, DARKEST, COLDEST, AND WETTEST MOMENTS IN YOUR SITE AND YOUR SERVICE.

PC OFFICE UPDATE

BY PARMER HEACOX, COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Dear Volunteers,

Greetings from Quito! Things have almost slowed down a bit here after a really busy first few months of 2012. Here is a quick overview of what is happening these days... **Omnibus 108** arrived in May and they should keep us busy for awhile. Jeanett and her crew have everything ready for them. Many of you will be invited to different PST events and we know you will be invaluable resources and guides for them. We are organizing **Field Training for Host Families** for Omnibus 107. This is our first time working with families in the field in support of the 6 month host family living requirements. Eveliz and Julieta visit Latacunga, Tena and Machala clusters the week of June 11, and the same week Carmen and I visit Esmeraldas and Cuenca. It will be nice to get out and see everybody and I'm curious to see how family living is coming along. We are also working on a new approach to **Volunteer Visits** in an effort to better support you in the field. A new requirement will be that each Volunteer should receive at least 6 full visits from staff and PCVLs during their 2 years of service. These visits will be coordinated between all program staff, medical staff and some admin staff, and you should receive a copy of the site visit report from each of us so that we are all clear on what follow-up is needed. I'm very excited about this initiative as I believe it will be a good time for you to show us what you are doing, get some good tips and support, and create a broader understanding of Volunteer work and life in the field for all staff. Additionally, a member of the **Peer Support Network** is currently visiting every new Volunteer of Omnibus 107 during their first month at site. I will be sending a separate email soon about the Peer Support Network, but suffice it to say I'm happy this Volunteer-initiated support system is up and running.

I'm sure I'm forgetting many things but wanted to make sure I mention we are building on the good work of PCVLs by recruiting and promoting **Regional PCVLs** as a means of providing field support to Volunteers by region. I hope to eventually have all regions covered. At this point the following Volunteers are extending to support our program and Volunteers in the following sites: Melissa Chan – Tena; Allison Kent – Riobamba; Kendra Smyth – Loja; Jack Woodruff – Bahía de Caráquez. Additionally, Evergreen Torres will be extending as PCVL for Community Health in Guayaquil and Mitchell Adams

in Quito. We welcome this group to the team. With time it is my hope to also have Regional PCVLs in Ibarra and possibly Esmeraldas. The Regional PCVLs and PCVLs will be going through training in June and we will send all of you a description of the support role the Regional PCVLs will play for you. The idea is to have more resources close to you AND we are very interested in Regional PCVLs coordinating cluster meetings for technical and other kinds of support. More news to come...

We just finished updating and rewriting the **Policy Manual** and I think you will find it a little more user friendly now. I found a few errors in the first version we sent out with Omnibus 107 and those we gave to Omnibus 105 at their MST. These are corrected, but if you find something that doesn't make sense please contact me. We will be sending them out in the pouch to all of you. You know, during his exit interview, one Volunteer grilled me on the "why" behind policies, and we spent nearly 3 hours talking about the rumor mill of why decisions are made. It was interesting to me, and I wish Volunteers would really talk to me about policy anytime they have questions rather than wait until their last week of service. It was a good conversation, and I think his service would have been much more productive had he asked some of those questions early on. I do believe we are as transparent as we possibly can be and all you have to do is ask. Please take a close look at the new manual and don't depend on hearsay and rumors. Mil gracias...

For the last while I have been enjoying some very nice **Close of Service Interviews** with Omnibus 103 and now Omnibus 104. It is gratifying to see so many people leave here with so much learning and having made a positive impact in their sites, with individuals and as representatives of our culture(s) in the United States. I think that these interviews are becoming a highlight of my job and I wish I could share, word for word, the great experiences described to me. Of course it is not all rosy and easy and some Volunteers are very hard on themselves, concerned they have not made an impact. So it is worth reminding all of you that Peace Corps has three goals. Some of you are better at sharing our culture or connecting friends and family to Ecuador. Others find technical transference easier. But all three are so linked. I want to thank Omnibus 103 and 104 for their amazing and exceptional service and I think the best way to do so is to share some of their wisdom and learning with you. I'm going to draw on their final comments when I ask

VOLUNTEER LIFE

them for words of advice for new Volunteers:

"Never turn down an invitation for coffee, a visit or dinner. Those moments, especially early in your service, will make you a part of your community and pave the way for any work you may be able to do."

"Read Two Ears of Corn and remember that Peace Corps has three goals. Be patient with people and with yourself. You will probably only work 25% of the time on your assigned project, but there is so much more you can do and you will have to study."

"It is impossible for training to do more than get you prepared to start."

"Have very open expectations, not only of your service and community, but of PC as an agency... and then set realistic goals. We are not going to save the world but we can have influence."

"Peace Corps is what you make of it. Everything is there to set up your life and work, within policy boundaries... you have total control. Make the most of it. It is the most freedom you will ever have and don't make yourself a victim of your freedom when this is such an amazing opportunity to live and grow."

"Every site has work to do and even if it is not in your project area, there is no excuse for being bored or feeling sorry for yourself. Peace Corps cannot guarantee everything for you. You have to make it happen."

"Make Ecuadorian friends and learn about the culture. Then you will be able to get some work done."

"Volunteers who leave their sites all the time should remember why they came here. Nobody said it was going to be easy. Stick it out early on when it is rough and you will make the friends and connections to do some work."

"Build relationships with all the program managers. They have so many resources and when they see you are interested, they will help you out."

These were only a few of the comments, but I thought they were very important. It really is not easy to be a Peace Corps Volunteer, but it is the opportunity of a lifetime. If you are willing to give of yourself, take some personal emotional risks as you are working to integrate, draw on your training and ongoing staff resources, make local friends and reserve judgment on the culture until you have really understood it... you will be a success. THANK YOU AGAIN OMNIBUS 103 and 104 FOR DOING SUCH AN AMAZING JOB!

On another note, **Friends of Ecuador** or FOE is an RPCV group that continues to do lots of good 3rd goal work and has been very supportive of our program. They have promoted Volunteer projects on their web page and have also helped to fundraise in a number of ways. In a recent phone conversation with FOE Director RPCV Josh Busby, he and I discussed some ways in which we can increase coordination. I'm listing these ideas below:

- Support Volunteer/Community projects by promoting them on their webpage for fundraising. The idea is that once a PCPP project (or could be other projects such as coordination with Engineers without Borders) is approved, the committee would send it to FOE. They would fundraise in the name of this project, and proceeds would be transferred to our PCPP account at HQ for your individual project.
- FOE would like to be supportive of Volunteers who are COSing and looking for jobs, networking, grad school, etc. Volunteers could be in direct contact with FOE and we can provide more info at COS conferences. They and we are interested to know, from you, what would make FOE more useful, and you are welcome to get a dialogue going with Joshua. His email: busbyj@austin.utexas.edu
- FOE is also interested in recruiting RPCVs to be a part of the organization – a great affiliation and a way to continue to support Ecuador after you have left service.
- Additionally, FOE is interested in keeping their webpage (www.friendsofecuador.org) up to date to reflect what we are doing today. They are very interested in current articles from Volunteers dealing with projects, culture, etc., and photos of Volunteers in action today.
- FOE would also be interested in possibly sending a quarterly update to be published in El Clima to keep us all up to date and to better coordinate.



The idea is that our service and contributions to development and to Ecuador do not have to end at COS. I'm very happy to step up our coordination and collaboration and will be working with staff and Volunteers to do so.

I cannot end **without reflecting on policy** and I am choosing **Out of Site Policy** since this one seems to be the most misinterpreted and misunderstood. I have to state clearly that this one is extremely important for a number of reasons I will go into further on.

Out of Site time is meant for you to get some business done, take a short breather, do some shopping and maybe visit another Volunteer who lives CLOSE BY. The policy states that "2 nights and three days" per month is an acceptable time to be out of your site. It really is important to stay in your site as much as possible for integration, building relationships and developing meaningful work, not to mention safety. I have been extremely clear that if you need more time out of site, all you have to do is let your program manager know and we will work with you. This does not include traveling across the country to see your best friends. If this becomes a habit, then we can only assume that something is wrong and we will talk to you about it. That is what collaborative and caring colleagues do for each other. Together, we will get to the root of the challenge and work on a solution.

IMPORTANT NOTE! We are asking Volunteers in their **first year** to stay closer to site when taking advantage of out of site time. Guidance I sent out recommended 2-4 hours away and within the adjoining provinces. The idea is to build support and relationships with the Volunteers who live closest to you. Of course this guidance has some flexibility. Some of you live in very isolated areas and you may have to travel 5-6 hours just to get to the closest large community or you may live so far away from other Volunteers that you have to travel further just to see another Volunteer. PLEASE, in these kinds of cases, or similar situations, talk to your program manager and we will work it out. Let's use a common sense rule and good communication. Additionally, we want to encourage you to really establish your Ecuadorian connections and relationships. If you have been invited to a family celebration or event from your host family in Tumbaco, go for it. We are delighted that you have built such strong ties.

Important Notes about Out of Site and Reporting:

- Any night spent out of your site must be reported via the out of site phone number through a text message. This includes travel for medical appointments in Quito and travel to ISTs. Our tracking system is called VIDA and all out of site communications go there. In an emergency that is where we look to see where you are.

- You must report when you return to site in the same way.
- If your time outside of site becomes extended for any reason, you must report this time via the same number AND as a courtesy you should let your program manager or PTS know.
- Out of site is technically "official business," so you should not be taking night buses in order to be able to go longer distances. Night buses are prohibited for official business and we encourage you to not take night buses for personal travel as well.
- **Finally, if you ignore out of site policy and you get caught, you leave me no choice to but to enforce the policy. Four Volunteers have been sent home since December.**

Please understand that this policy is serious and will be enforced. It is in place for very good reasons and it has built-in flexibility that gives you some wiggle room. It is not meant for us to wield power over you, and it is not a "them and us" policy. All of us are here under certain restrictions. You will have many opportunities to see different parts of Ecuador, and besides taking advantage of out of site for close-by interactions with other Volunteers, you can also use Technical Exchanges to travel to other Volunteers' sites to get hands on training or information for project areas that you feel would be valuable in your sites.

Ending on this note, I again want to refer to exit interviews. It was so obvious that the happiest of this group were those who really dedicated themselves to their sites and became a part of their communities. They will be remembered as the people who came to help, who shared, who contributed and tried their best. Others, unfortunately, will only be remembered for having spent some time there.

I do hope that you are all integrating well and taking advantage of this amazing experience to serve in your communities and learn about Ecuadorian cultures. Please do drop in when you are in Quito, drop me a line at any time and call if you have any questions or want to share experiences of your service.

FINAL NOTE: I have been hearing from a lot of you with great stories and adventures in your sites and at work. I really enjoy hearing from you all so please stay in touch.
-Parmer

CREATIVE WRITING:

ABAJO, BEHIND THE ORANGE CURTAIN

BY JASMINE LOUIS

This is a creative nonfiction piece by Jasmine Louis, current TEFL Volunteer from Omnibus 106, stationed in Pineapples in the province of The Gold! It's a fantastic synthesis of one of the greatest cultural changes we encounter here in Ecuador as gringos: the paseo, otherwise known as visiting that mythical land of... Abajo. I think it absolutely says what most of us have experienced and/or felt/thought at one point or another during our service. But don't take my word for it... Read on and decide for yourselves.

—A&E Editor Manuel Melendez

What a bizarre day.

My counterpart called me three times but I didn't pick up because... honestly, I was avoiding calls. It was just one of those Saturdays when I wanted to sit in front of the computer and play games on *addictinggames.com*. Little did I know, that would make her come to my house and talk to me in person.

In Ecuador, it's very hard for me to get a straight answer about anything. I've learned that if I want to know what's going on, I just need to let go and enjoy the ride.

There I was, in my PJs and in the middle of an intense game of Helicopter, when my counterpart appears in front of me, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

"Hello Jasmin!"

"Ohh, heyy... what's... going on?" I said, trying to sound surprised.

"I tried calling you three or four times," she said sweetly. "I want to invite you to a place."

"Ohhh, yea, sorry, my phone's in the other room and I didn't realize you called." *Did that sound convincing enough?* I thought to myself.

"That's okay, you want to come with me?" she asked.

"Uhhh, where are you going?"

"To a place abajo (down there)."

"Oh... ummm, okay... but where... is that?"

"It's just right down that way," she said, pointing absentmindedly out the window at a mountain.

"Ummm... okaay... well, what are we going to do?"

"Just right down there."

"Yea, okay... but what are we going to do?"

"Yes."

English clearly wasn't getting us anywhere so I decided to switch to Spanish. But even that was a lost cause.

All I gathered was that her mother was going to get a massage somewhere. But what did that have to do with me? She didn't say WE were gonna get massages, just her mom. *Just go, Jasmine*, I thought. "I'll be back in 20 minutos," she said.

I got ready and she, her brother, sister-in-law, and mother were outside waiting for me in their SUV. I climbed in and we were on our way. We drove through Piñas' winding roads and misty clouds and through other small, unknown towns. Even now, I'm still not over how beautiful this area is. The charming hills, the

IF I WANT TO KNOW

WHAT'S GOING ON, I

JUST NEED TO LET GO

AND ENJOY THE RIDE

hidden waterfalls, the surprise mule on the side of the road. Wait, where am I going again? I hadn't realized 30 minutes had gone by.

"Okay, where are we going?" I asked, this time firmly, in Spanish. I wasn't going to back down

without an answer this time. "Right down there," she replied. "Yes. I know. But what are we going... to dooooo?" I don't even remember her reply. All I remember is, I didn't get a straight answer. *What is the meaning of this?* I thought. *I trust her, and I'm not worried at all. But I just want to know what we're freaking doing!*

And yeah, I trust my counterpart. We have a really good relationship. She's probably the most friendly, lovable teacher at the school. And she's a little dorky too, which is why we get along.

Within ten minutes, we pulled up to a restaurant. (One of those big, open-air restaurants that Ecu-buses pull up to when they're making a stop for lunch.) Only the brother got out of the car so I thought we were stopping to ask for directions or something. He came back to the car and everyone got out.

We walked to the back of the restaurant and came to this open, concrete space decorated with a big pile of broken rubble and a small Care Bears sheet hanging from the ceiling. There were about 20 emerald green plastic chairs on the further side of the room that sat right outside of a doorway covered by an orange curtain. *Where the hell am I?* I thought.

The mother sat in a chair, followed by the brother, sister-in-law, and my counterpart. I sat next to the mother

and no one said a word. **THE ENTIRE ROOM SMELLED LIKE**

A man in a grey, button-up mechanic's shirt came from behind the orange curtain and told us to follow him. He pulled back the curtain and we found ourselves in a small room with two more plastic chairs, an old wooden table, and a green, full-sized cot. My counterpart and I sat on the cot as the mother and brother sat in the chairs. We all listened as the mysterious man in grey spoke.

He was of average height, probably in his mid-50s, with thinning hair strands slicked back to cover his bald spot. Although I couldn't understand what he was saying most of the time, he spoke with much self-assurance and confidence. I read his shirt: Dr. Ramírez.

The mother stood up and began to explain how her left ankle had been hurting her for some time. She took off her shoes and slowly limped around on the concrete floor.

"It's not your ankle that hurts, it's the ligament!" the doctor proclaimed. He laid her down on the cot so her stomach was facing down and slabbed a light green menthol cream on her ankle. As he rubbed it in, he rotated her ankle around and around until she whimpered in pain. He explained the importance of exercising your joints.

"The ligaments BEHIND the joints are the issue! You need to work them out!"

He rotated her ankle for no more than two minutes. Once he was done, she sat up and put her shoes on. Then, it was the brother's turn. He said he also had pain, but on his hip, so the doctor repeated the same treatment with him, but on his hip, with no cream. Then, it was the sister-in-law's turn. She said she also experiences pain in her foot.

He laid her on the cot and all hell broke loose.

He massaged her ankle with such force that she began to wail and wail. She even shouted "I'm scared!" twice. Her body jerked and wiggled around the cot as his fingers dug behind her ankle.

That's when everyone started to laugh.

"Hahaha, she said 'she's scared,'" my counterpart laughed. The mother put her hand over her mouth to keep herself from laughing. The brother giggled, hunched over. In the middle of laughing, I thought, *Why the hell am I here??* (She called me three times and drove me 40 minutes away for this?? Why am I here??)

The sister-in-law rose up from the bed with a look of exhaustion on her face. I looked at my counterpart and I could tell she was getting ready to say something.

For the past two weeks, my counterpart's upper left arm has been hurting her. Every time she goes to erase

the board, she recoils in pain. I'm still not clear on what happened but I've been telling her to go to the doctor. However, I didn't mean this guy.

Of course, she began to explain how her arm isn't functioning properly. Dr. Ramírez got out the menthol cream and spread it behind her shoulder. "Look, it's not the shoulder. It's the ligament BEHIND the shoulder!"

He raised her arm high up in the air and my counterpart shrieked and just about yelled bloody murder. He dug his fingers into her back and rotated her arm around and around. The shrieks only became louder and more urgent. "OW WOW WOW WOW WOW!!!" she screamed and shot her head backwards. Her black hair tossed left and right and I wasn't sure what was happening anymore.

At this point I began to worry. Is he really helping her right now?? The doctor turned to me and said jokingly, "The terrible doctor is hurting her!" I must've had that look written all over my face. We all laughed and he continued "treating" my counterpart.

Finally, he stopped. It felt like 30 minutes had gone by. The entire room smelled like menthol and fear.

"Listen, you have to exercise your muscles. It's never the joint, but the LIGAMENT. I recommend all of you to exercise these ligaments every day, twice a day. You have to do it!" He rose onto his toes and slowly went back

down on his feet, strengthening the muscles at the top of the heel. He did this about three times and everyone watched him carefully. He was a very self-assured man. He had all the answers they ever needed to hear.

The mother and sister-in-law each gave him \$20. The brother and my counterpart each gave him \$10. Here, all of that combined equals the rent for a one bedroom, one bath apartment. This guy is getting BANK.

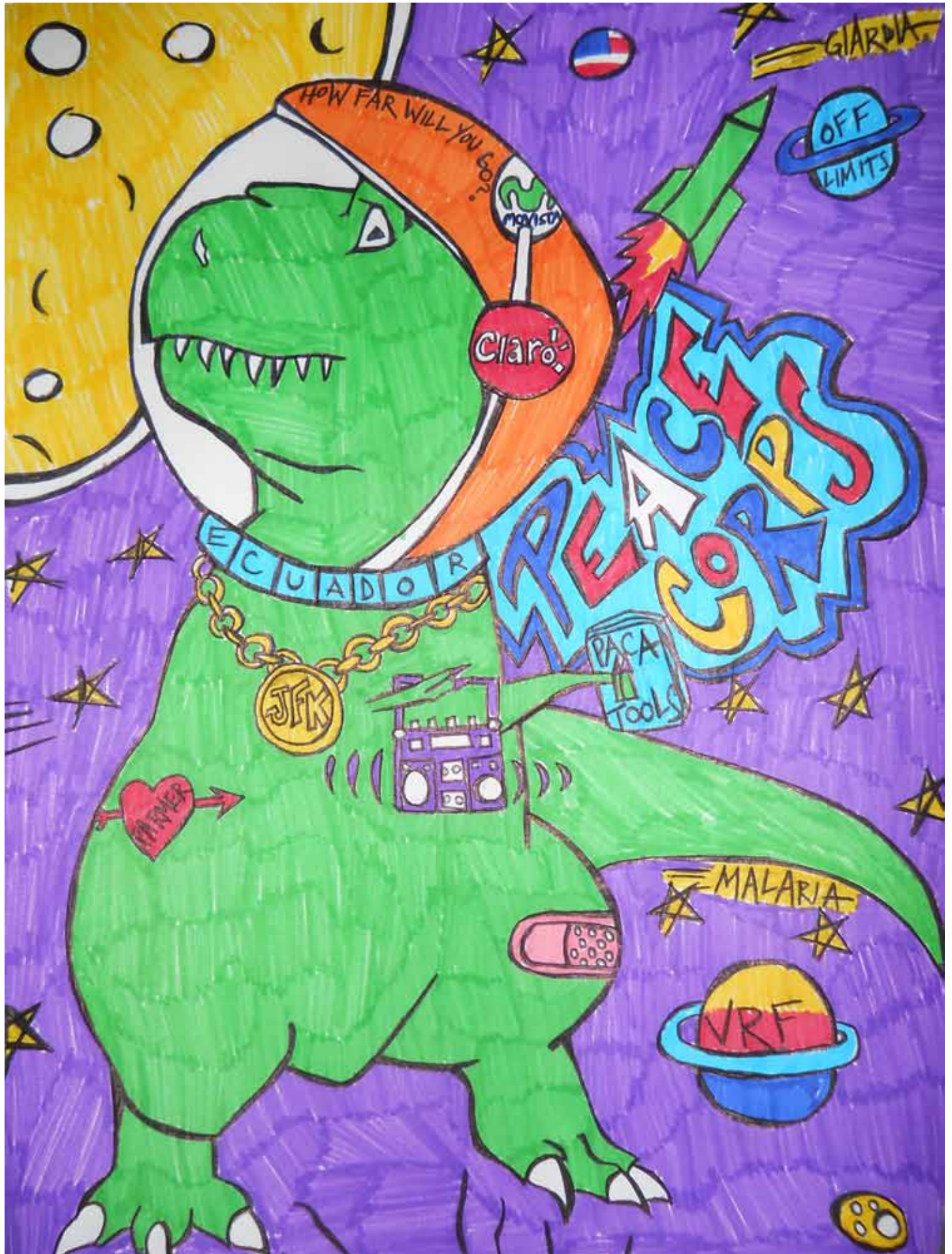
As we left, I still could not figure out why I was invited. "Do you feel better?" I asked the mother. "Oh yes, he's a very good doctor," she nodded, quite sincerely.

Okay, if you say so.

Jasmine Louis, a TEFL Volunteer from Omnibus 106, exercises her ligaments twice a day at her site in Piñas, El Oro.

HE WAS A VERY SELF-ASSURED MAN. HE HAD ALL THE ANSWERS THEY EVER NEEDED TO HEAR

LIKE WHAT WE DO? WANT TO JOIN IN ON THE FUN? EL CLIMA IS OPEN TO ANY AND ALL VOLUNTEER SUBMISSIONS. (DON'T WORRY, WE DO EDIT.) IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF OUR LOVELY EDITORS OR EMAIL US AT ELCLIMAMAG@GMAIL.COM



THE MOVIES AND TV SHOWS OF MY (PRESENT) LIFE

BY RICKY ACKERMAN

The drawing on the previous page is courtesy of Benjamin Niespodziany. Ben is a Youth & Families Volunteer from Omnibus 106, who lives in Machala, El Oro and draws baller Peace Corps dinosaurs, among other things.

Everyone has films and TV shows they can relate to their Peace Corps service, and here are some of mine. I tried to avoid using obvious ones, such as *Lost in Translation* or *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, but perhaps mine are still generic. You can be the judge. And let me know what movies remind you of your time in PC!

Red River (1948)

For those unfamiliar with this classic western, it is the story of Dunson (John Wayne), a man who creates his own cattle ranch down in Texas, and his adopted son Matt (Montgomery Clift). They go on a cattle drive to Missouri, but along the way they hear there is a new railroad in Abilene, Kansas, a much closer location. Dunson is skeptical of the news while Matt and the other men want to go there. Matt ends up taking over the drive and leaving Dunson behind. They make it to Abilene and sell the cattle. Dunson comes around and starts a fight, but all ends well.

Dunson is a stubborn old man set in his ways while Matt is young, open to trying new things, and willing to lead people down unexplored paths. Many PCVs encounter such characters as Dunson in their sites; those folks that have been doing things their way for a long time and do not like the idea of a young face coming in to tell them any



different. Much of the movie explores the struggle between Dunson's tyrannical stubbornness and Matt's careful treading around it. Hopefully when we encounter these situations at site we are more capable of approaching them carefully and no one tries to shoot us afterward.

Thor (2011)

Readers are probably more familiar with this film, where the Norse god Thor is stripped of his powers and sent to Earth in exile until he is worthy to wield his hammer again. While on Earth he develops a love interest. He ends up fighting the bad guy and regaining his powers, which leads him back to Asgard.

Although some conceited volunteers may unfortunately think of themselves as godlike, that is not the object of this comparison. Thor travels to an unknown land where he learns the customs and develops a love interest with a local. He is looked at as odd by others and grows as a person before returning back home. How can one not relate to that as a PCV? (Don't forget about the deleted scene where Thor tries to get Natalie Portman's character a visa to Asgard.)

Arrested Development

Those who have not seen this show: make it happen. Throughout the various plotlines, there are characters and situations that many can relate to their time in Ecuador.

You may feel like Michael at times, trying to get things organized while everyone else is causing problems and asking you for money. Other characters may remind you of people you have encountered. There is Buster, who is still attached to his mom, and his brother Gob, who often has his name mispronounced. Michael's son, George Michael, is relatable in his awkwardness and his desire to do right while constantly being lost in what's going on. His girlfriend, Ann, may recall some significant others you've met where all you could say is, "Her?" (or "Him?"). Then there are the situations these characters find themselves in, from the miscommunication over who is "hermano" to the awkwardness that occurs when Michael sings "Afternoon Delight" with his niece without understanding the connotations of the song until midway through. Overall, the show is easy to relate to our time here and is also one of the best things ever put on TV. Remember, there's always money in the banana stand.



Parks & Recreation

This show centers around Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler), the deputy parks director of Pawnee, Indiana.



Leslie is an optimistic and passionate worker who, despite many setbacks, maintains motivation to complete projects. She is consistently the only one working hard to accomplish what needs to be done, and without her the entire department would achieve nothing. Then there are her co-workers. Ron, the director, allows Leslie to work but does not desire to accomplish anything himself. Tom Haverford cares more about his appearance and hitting on women than doing anything productive. Ann Perkins is Leslie's best friend and because of that she gets dragged along to everything Leslie does. April, a younger worker who begins as an intern, always hangs around but is disinterested in working. The constant struggles Leslie goes through to accomplish her tasks while continuously having to rally the troops will likely remind many PCVs of their work in Ecuador. This, along with her co-workers and other individuals she encounters, make Parks & Rec a very relatable show, especially for those that have worked with municipios. So much red tape.

Ricky Ackerman, a Natural Resources Conservation Volunteer from Omnibus 105 who lives in Bahía de Caráquez, is currently preparing to defend his brilliant thesis – “Peace Corps-Ecuador: It’s Like Taking The Money From the Banana Stand And Going On A Cattle Drive To Asgard With Leslie Knope” – in which he analyzes the rigors of being a Peace Corps Volunteer as related to the American entertainment industry. Stay tuned.

BOOK REVIEW: 20 BOOKS IN THREE SENTENCES OR LESS

BY JORDAN SHULER

The Bridge of San Luis Rey Thornton Wilder

Pulitzer Prize winner set in Lima, Peru. A priest witnesses the tragic collapse of a bridge that kills five people. He sets out to investigate the lives of those who perished and to determine whether they died due to divine intervention or fate.

Wool: Omnibus Edition Hugh Howey

Sci-fi dystopian apocalyptic fiction in serial form. Mankind survives in the subterranean Silo, with one law paramount: Never speak of or ask to go outside. Features a female protagonist who’s got the ovaries to challenge the status quo – she and Ripley from the Alien series would be BFFs.

American Pastoral Philip Roth

Pulitzer Prize winner with a deceptively simple plot that Roth deepens and colors within the minds of the characters as much as he propels it through external events, managing to evoke an entire generation and era of social revolution in the process. By the end, you feel that you, too, are participating in the legend, the ruin, the imagined person of The Swede.

River Town Peter Hessler

Hessler’s account of the two years he spent living in a small town on the Yangtze is more a personification of a place through history and culture than anything. Not your

typical Peace Corps memoir. Highly recommended.

Haunted Chuck Palahniuk

A collection of short stories, the premise being that a group of individuals attend a rather unconventional writers’ retreat. The (in)famous story “Guts” is not the only dark & disturbing piece. Do not read this book while eating.

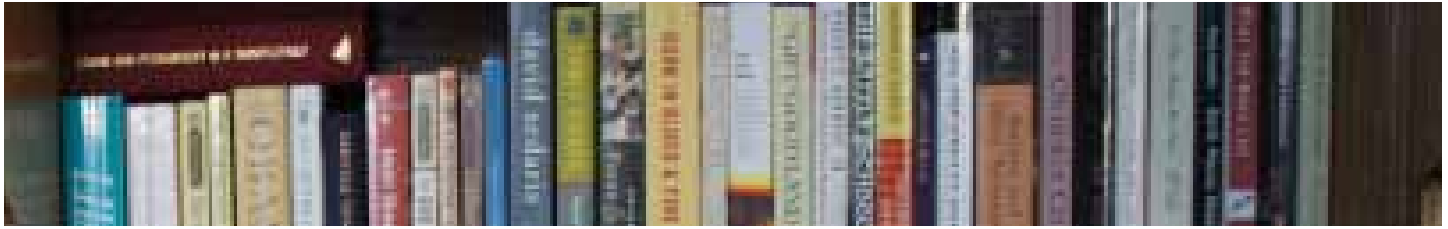
The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Junot Díaz

“Our hero was not one of those Dominican cats everybody’s always going on about—he wasn’t no home-run hitter or a fly bachatero, not a playboy with a million hots on his jock.” Díaz’s rhythmic, sonically crafted prose captivates from the very first sentence and begs to be read aloud. Yet another Pulitzer Prize winner, a must-read especially for audiences bilingual in English and Spanish.

Suite française Irène Némirovsky

Némirovsky, a French writer from a Ukrainian Jewish family, sets her novel during the German occupation of France in WWII—which happened to be the same time that she was writing it. She composes an ensemble of characters and then plays the role of conductor, harmonizing the individual stories as in a musical performance (from whence the book takes its name). Only two of the planned five



“movements” were completed due to Némirovsky’s detainment and death at Auschwitz, but her notes for the remaining portions are included as appendices in the English language publication.

The Ecuador Reader
Eds. Carlos de la Torre and Steve Striffler

At first glance it appears to be a textbook, but this collection of scholarly essays, journalistic pieces, traditional stories, songs, and even recipes carries a lot more meaning after having lived here.

Reasons to Leave the Slaughter
Ben Clark

Far from esoteric, Clark’s poems (poetry, people!—read it) are grounded in concrete detail, honest and raw, and largely informed by his rural Nebraska upbringing. Example: This year-old beard, the beers / in my fridge, the sadness hibernating / in my body like a family of bears / will not survive the summer months. Of particular note are the “split” poems, arranged in two columns, which may be read line by line across the separating spine, or vertically one column at a time.

Run with the Horsemen
Ferrol Sams

Another writer who draws heavily from his local culture and landscape, Ferrol Sams is also a master storyteller. This novel about

a young boy coming of age in the post-Depression Era South is one of my all-time favorites.

Mayflower
Nathaniel Philbrick

A history of the Pilgrims and Plymouth Colony that spans half a century and pays special attention to the developing relations with Native Americans. Philbrick’s narrative framework makes it a compelling read for the Average Joe as much as for history lovers.

Unaccustomed Earth
Jhumpa Lahiri

It’s nice to see Jhumpa Lahiri return to the short story. Her writing continues to revolve around themes of displacement, specifically the immigrant experience as characters navigate the nebulous border between their native culture and that of their new home – something PCVs may be able to relate to.

The Firm
John Grisham

Grisham, always a good bet for a straightforward, accelerating plot and characters that elicit empathy, delivers no more and no less in this legal thriller page-turner. When shady dealings are uncovered at his law firm, a young lawyer must assess the risks and decide whether to play informant to the FBI. After you finish reading, make a trip to your local pirated DVD store and buy the movie,

starring Tom Cruise.

The Eyre Affair
Jasper Fforde

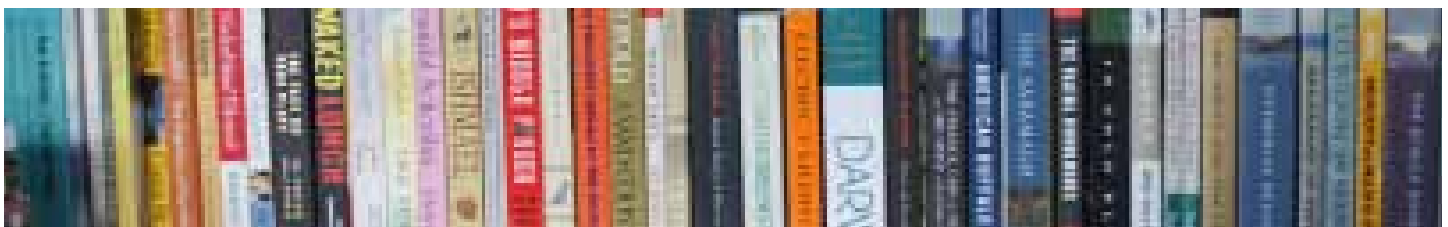
In an alternate universe in the year 1985, literary detective Thursday Next tracks a mysterious criminal through the world of Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre. If the mark of a good fiction writer is their ability to create a credible fantasy world with its own set of rules, then routinely test those boundaries with plot twists and other devices, Fforde makes the cut. This is the first in a delightfully witty, dryly humorous series that conflates the real (sortof) world with the literary.

A Million Miles in a Thousand Years
Donald Miller

Chronicles the process of collaboratively writing a screenplay from his previous published memoir, *Blue Like Jazz*. As he adapts the book to the screen, Miller reviews the elements of story and realizes that in order to live an interesting and fulfilling life, one must live a good story, making deliberate and sometimes challenging choices to this end. An especially valuable read for those interested in the formation of plot, narrative, and character.

The Hunger Games
Suzanne Collins

With not-so-great prose and a premise requiring just a tad extra effort to suspend your disbelief, this



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

one's all about plot, suspense, drama (and just a hint of the political theme that emerges in the remainder of the trilogy). Frankly, I think the movie is better and probably takes as much time to watch as it does to read the book plus eat an ice cream cone. So, treat yourself to the movie and helado – and may the odds be ever in your favor.

The Love of a Good Woman

Alice Munro

Short story collection. With the subtlest and loveliest sleight of hand, Canadian author Alice Munro transforms the surface appearances of ordinary life into manifestations of betrayal, love, secrets, and the more covert workings of the human heart.

Housekeeping

Marilynne Robinson

A novel whose stark setting belies

the cadences of its prose. Two young girls find themselves orphaned and without a home. When they are taken in by first one and then a series of relatives, the elder sister narrates their search for domestic happiness, which becomes synonymous with their search for a spiritual resting place amidst grief and loss.

Girls of Riyadh

Rajaa Alsanea

Written in the form of e-mails, this book recounts the stories of four young girls looking for love within an often restrictive and rigid social system. Upon finishing, its simple style leaves one feeling that this is just the tip of the iceberg. Perhaps it's worth reading more for the cultural insights it offers, from knowing that the book was initially banned in Saudi Arabia due to controversial content.

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay

Michael Chabon

Follows two cousins, the graceful artist Joe Kavalier and frenetic writer Sam Clay, in their New York City quest to create something legendary during the golden age of comics. Another Pulitzer Prize winner. Full disclosure: I haven't finished it yet, but I'm real excited to keep reading... and I think I'll go do that now.

Jordan Shuler, a Youth & Families Volunteer from Omnibus 104, lives in Guayaquil, Guayas and wishes she had time to read all the books on her shelf. She is currently the Editor in Chief of El Clima but will soon be ceding her powers to whoever pulls the Sword from the Stone. Good luck.

MEETING PEOPLE BY BENJAMIN NIESPODZIANY

“DOCTOR BEER”

Two doctors from the El Oro region stepped into my life a few weeks ago, if only for a brief moment. I met a lawyer while he was intoxicated alongside his veterinarian friend (who claimed to be the only person with his name), his partner in crime, in an imported goods store, Il Bambino, in the shopping mall of Machala. The two doctoral pals were enjoying a \$5 Belgium beer when my friend Tyler and I entered the store, scanning for Cuban cigars. Other than the overpriced stogies (\$12!), we also admired the store's impressive selections of various goods: international beer, liquor, and wine, Starburst fruit chews, Snickers, peanut M&Ms, two feet long Pixie sticks, \$210 Adidas tennis shoes, a baker's dozen of different cigarette packs, Starbucks instant coffee packets, and Pokemon cards. After being unable to handle the prices, my buddy and I made our way towards the door, the possibility of eating at Chili's

ahead of us. Instead, los doctores stopped us, shook our hands, and had us try the \$5 Belgium beer they were slurring through. While admiring their names, I saw that el abogado had a mustache and a comover, while the animal doctor was clean cut, no joking around. We both tried the beer. It was named Leffe, claiming to be around since 1240.

It was delicious.

We got to talking and found out that the veterinarian was from a nearby town, visiting the shopping center for a change of pace and darker beer (“más oscuro”). He had visited the States briefly as a child and had family living in Philadelphia, but he never bothered to attempt any words in English. I respected him for it. He asked about me, his drunken self playing the impressed card. He eventually invited me to his “casa grande” whenever I pleased, saying that I could teach him English, offering me \$20 bills, good beer, and his daughter. I accepted only the beer.

THE TWO DOCTORAL PALS
WERE ENJOYING A \$5 BELGIUM
BEER WHEN MY FRIEND TYLER
AND I ENTERED THE STORE

ON MOST DAYS, I SPEAK
WITH STORE OWNERS,
TEACHERS, NINE-YEAR-
OLDS, 96-YEAR-OLDS,
AND STUDENTS

then proceeded to unbutton his own shirt, frowning at the minimal dark black hairs he presented.

While I was talking to the vet, Tyler was being groped by the lawyer, who was unbuttoning Tyler's shirt and being amazed at the tall gringo's chest hair, a blonde batch of manhood. The lawyer

These two men were a wonderful contrast to the family-oriented sobriety normally present in shopping centers. Rarely is someone fumbling drunk in a store, chattering away while removing articles of clothing. The two doctors were also very different from the people I normally converse with in Machala. On most days, I speak with store owners, teachers, nine-year-olds, 96-year-olds, and students. I was happy that these odd men swung into the shopping center (and my life) for a brief stint of natural comedy. As we departed and shook hands, Mr. Lawyer gave me his business card (laminated!) and bought us two bottles of Leffe to go. As he paid for the beers, he dropped his own out of his hand, shattering it on the ground of the expensive store. Tyler and I knew it was time to go.

My buddy and I ended up having the two Belgium beers on us when we met up with a handful of my Ecuadorian friends sitting in the back trunk of an ancient white Jeep, listening to music louder than most concerts. They wanted to taste the new beer, so they poured cups with with ½ Leffe, ½ Pilsener.

And that's how you burn \$5.

My friends claimed they didn't want to try new things, saying that they wanted to start "poco a poco." Despite the nightmarish mixture, they loved it. "Rico!" they shouted over the loud tunes.

The second bottle of Leffe is still in my fridge, waiting for the next adventure. Thanks, Dr. Lawyer and Dr. Doolittle. Cheers!

When Benjamin Niespodziany, a Youth & Families Volunteer from Omnibus 106, walks around his site of Machala, El Oro, his easygoing demeanor and natural charm illuminate the air around him like a blinking neon sign that reads, "I am awesome, make friends with me." He meets lots of people all the time. And he'll be introducing you to more of his acquaintances ya mismo.



RECIPES: 3 WAYS TO EAT QUINOA

BY CLAIRE DAVIS

Quinoa has achieved a “superfood” status among health gurus in recent years, but the people of the Andean region of South America have always known of quinoa’s many nutritional benefits. Legend has it that quinoa fueled the construction of the Inca Empire, and the Spanish conquistadors replaced the Incas’ quinoa fields with wheat in order to weaken and subdue them. Technically, quinoa is a seed, although it resembles and cooks like a grain. In one cup of cooked quinoa, you will consume 8 grams of protein, 5 grams of fiber, and a respectable percentage of the recommended daily value of folate, iron, magnesium, and many other essential vitamins and minerals. Here are three delicious ways to incorporate quinoa into your diet:



QUINOA BREAKFAST PORRIDGE

Serves 1

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 1/2 cup milk (soy milk or almond milk also works)
- Half of a very ripe banana, mashed
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- Dash of salt

DIRECTIONS

Bring milk and quinoa to a boil in a small saucepan. Lower to a simmer and cook until the quinoa absorbs liquid and becomes creamy. Add mashed banana, cinnamon, and salt. Remove from heat and top with sliced bananas, fresh berries, diced apple, nuts, or whatever you desire

QUINOA-CRUST PIZZA

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup raw quinoa
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ cup filtered water
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ Tsp fresh or dried herbs

DIRECTIONS

Place the quinoa in a bowl and cover with water. Soak the quinoa overnight or for at least 8 hours. Preheat the oven to 200 C. Use a large, 12-inch cast iron skillet and brush it with oil. Place the skillet in the oven to preheat. Drain and rinse the quinoa. Blend the quinoa in a blender with filtered water and seasonings. Pour the batter into the skillet, spreading evenly. Bake in the oven for about 10 minutes, or until the underside is well browned and starting to crisp. Carefully flip the crust with a large spatula. Bake for an additional 10 minutes. Remove crust from the oven and add the desired toppings. Bake the pizza for another 5-10 minutes.

In the photo: I topped my pizza with slices of heirloom tomatoes, roasted garlic, sauteed mushrooms, and a handful of mixed salad greens dressed with balsamic vinegar (I added the greens after taking the pizza out of the oven).



QUINOA VEGGIE BURGERS

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup lentils
- 1 cup quinoa
- 1 garlic clove
- ¼ cup minced carrot
- ¼ cup walnuts (optional)
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- small red onion, diced
- 1 tsp cumin (or whatever spices you prefer)
- bread crumbs or cornmeal
- 1 egg, beaten (or use a flax egg to make this a vegan recipe)
- oil, for cooking

DIRECTIONS

Cover the lentils with at least 1/2 cup water. Bring the lentils to a boil, turn the heat down to low, and simmer for 20-30 minutes, or until the lentils are tender. Drain and transfer the lentils to a food processor. Bring a separate pot of water to a boil. Add the quinoa and boil, uncovered, for about 10 minutes. Strain and rinse the quinoa with cold water and transfer to a large mixing bowl. Add the garlic, walnuts, cilantro, carrot, and onion to the lentils in the food processor. Pulse until the mixture has reached a thick puree. If you don't have a food processor or a blender, mash the lentils with a fork and finely mince the other ingredients. Transfer the mixture to the mixing bowl with the quinoa and stir to combine. Add the cumin. Fold the beaten egg into the lentil quinoa mixture. Slowly add breadcrumbs or cornmeal until the mixture reaches a burger-like consistency. Form 4 patties with your hands. Heat a little canola oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook both side of the patties until golden brown. Enjoy on toasted whole wheat bread or plain.



Claire Davis, a Youth & Families Volunteer from Omnibus 104 living in Machala, El Oro, dares you to try and subdue her by taking away her quinoa. Just try it, see what happens.

EL CLIMA WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS MOMENT TO RECOGNIZE AND SAY "THANK YOU" TO JORDAN SHULER, CLAIRE DAVIS, HANNAH REED, RONALD IKECHI-OGBONNA, AND BRENT WILLIAMS FOR ALL THE TIME AND EFFORT THEY'VE PUT INTO THIS MAGAZINE.

QUE LE VAYA BIEN.

