

Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,

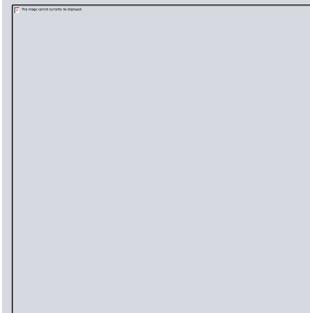
April 2010

It has been a couple of intense months for us here in San Andres running our current projects (the ecological park, the library, the volunteer program, and the natural resource school), but everything is running smoothly, and we now have a much clearer image of what our goals are for the upcoming year. We have had a lot of great workers and great groups help out the past couple of months, and we'd like to thank Ben, Tyler, Tarah, John, Deidre, Soyeon, Louisa, Zoe, Erik, and the two groups sent by Encountour from the Universities of Wesleyand, Emory, and British Colombia. Volunteers and volunteer groups are the backbone of what we are trying to accomplish in developing San Andres. Without them, it wouldn't be possible to have an ecological park, library, or school.

Our oldest and dearest project, the ecological park, has been the major focus of volunteer work this year. Over the past few years, the park took a "backseat" role as we focused on other developmental projects such as the library and schools. But as the government and society here in Guatemala focuses more and more on urbanization and modernization, the park is heavily under attack on all fronts. Thanks to the volunteers' efforts during the past few months, the park is in better shape than ever, and all that work on the fence line has really paid off. But we don't plan on letting up anytime soon. Our goal for 2010 is to have the fence line 100% reinforced, and develop a strategy for continual monitoring and cleaning of the fence line. With these new found security measures for the park, we will be able to meet other goals for the park in 2010 which include the development of sophisticated agricultural plots and a formal nursery.

The library and natural resource projects are going strong, but are in an even more precarious position than the ecological park due to Guatemala's attitude toward education. In a recent study by the World Economic Forum, experts place Guatemala's education at 126 out of 133 countries investigated, and by far the lowest of all American countries. From our perspective, we can 100% concur with their findings. As more and more children attend school, the quality of education continues in a downward spiral. And the push to modernize rather than develop education is a frightening trend that continues to lead Guatemala to its demise. As most of the developed world focuses on finding ways to send children in Guatemala to school, there is little thought into what is going on inside of the schools. Which leads to the question, what will be the outcome of sending so many children to the worst education system in this hemisphere? Yes, it is disturbing...but we'll continue to do our best to push in the opposite direction, and try somehow to focus on the education part of Guatemala's failed education system.

FEATURE PHOTO



Sergio Llorente and Erik Carlsen



Our third field trip of the year



Volunteer Group working in the library

[see more 2010 photos](#)

FEATURED EVENT

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Joel giving a tour of the ecological park to elementary students

[more information here](#)

HELP RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

With the help of all your generous donations during the past few months, we are attacking this problem head on (though in a very intimate and small way). We are very fortunate and lucky to have found Sergio Llorente, a biologist from Spain, to help us this semester with our natural resource school. We now know that just getting children to school is not enough, and most of our attention has to go into developing a formal and structured educational program. Your funds have helped to achieve the first part of our program, helping children to get to school and the funding necessary for Sergio, but now we need help to fund future teachers. Our current goal is to raise \$4,500 to pay for room, board, and a small stipend for 2 teachers who will participate from June-October 2010. Sergio is working on finding the right teachers for our program, now we just need your help to get them here.

Again, I can't express enough the gratitude I have for all who helped to support this year's programs. Student sponsors will be receiving letters and pictures this month of their students. With the aid of Sergio, international volunteers, and future teachers, I am certain that 2010 will prove to be an exciting year for San Andres. Your current donation will be going toward materials for school work and projects, field trips, and to house and feed international volunteer teachers like Sergio. Our first projects of the year will focus on agriculture, trash management, water management, and wildlife identification.

Visit us at www.volunteerpeten.org for more information or contact us at volunteerpeten@hotmail.com for any further information about the school for natural resources.

[Click here to donate.](#)

Thanks to all your help and support for our program, and we will continue our work here in San Andres and keep you informed of our goals and accomplishments.

Matthew R. Peters
Director

Donate Today!

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Your donations made to Volunteer Peten in 2009 went to establishing the School of Natural Resources in San Andres, scholarships to 22 students, park resources, the community library, and restoration projects in local schools.

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Forward this newsletter to all your family, friends, universities, colleges, high schools, local community groups, or whoever might be interested in our work in Guatemala.

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Volunteer Petèn

11 Kenny Drive Mohnton, PA 19540

Tel: (502) 5711-0040

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Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,

May 2010

2010 is quickly turning in to one of our most productive years to date. The ecological park is stronger than ever, the library has been kicked into high gear with constant daily programs, and we are pushing education to the max with our school project.

Our oldest and dearest project, the ecological park, has been the major focus of volunteer work this year. Thanks to the volunteers' efforts during the past few months, the park is in better shape than ever, and all that work on the fence line has really paid off. With the aid of other organizations (The Nature Conservancy, CONAP, and INAB), the park is now nationally recognized as a Regional Municipal Park, one of only 36 in the entire country. Although there is still no local interest by groups or government to help the park, at least we are bringing in some positive press to the region and helping to establish some sort of permanency for the park.

The library and natural resource school projects are going strong, but are in an even more precarious position than the ecological park due to Guatemala's attitude toward education. With the help of so many volunteers, we were able to set up constant daily programs for children in the library, that include teaching languages, art, arts and crafts, and general reading. As for the school, we can't express enough how fortunate and lucky we are to have the assistance of Sergio Llorente, a biologist from Spain, to help us this semester with our natural resource school. We had great Earth Day and Mother's Day celebrations with the school, and we are getting ready for our huge 5 day trek in the jungle the first week of June.

Your funds have helped to achieve the first part of our program, helping children to get to school and the funding necessary for Sergio, but now we need help to fund future teachers. Our current goal is to raise \$4,500 to pay for room, board, and a small stipend for 2 teachers who will participate from June-October 2010. Sergio is working on finding the right teachers for our program, now we just need your help to get them here. Those who have helped us this year by sponsoring a student will be receiving pictures and a letter from your student in the next couple of weeks.

We have had a lot of great workers and great groups help out the past couple of months, and we'd like to thank Tyler, Tarah, John, Deidre, Inana, Debbie, Wil, Kaylee, the two groups sent by Global Youth Network (Elise, Brittany, Kelsey, Andrea, Ashley, Greg, Elizabeth, Sarah, Gillian, Emilia, Kevin, and Pauline) the group of Global Stewardship Students from Canada (Miryam, Justine, Taryn, Miho, and Amanda). Volunteers and volunteer groups are the backbone of what we are trying to accomplish in developing San

FEATURE PHOTO



Tarah teaching French to David



Agricultural Project



Volunteer Group working in the library

[see more 2010 photos](#)

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Luis and Franklin working in the agricultural project

[more information here](#)

Andres. Without them, it wouldn't be possible to have an ecological park, library, or school.

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Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,

July 2010

Glad to say that our first major field trip with the school was a complete success. In June, we took our school to the Mirador National Park, which hold the largest Mayan ruins in the world. It was a wonderful 2 day walk through the jungle to get there, and a wonderful 2 day walk through the jungle to get back to civilization. Thanks to all of your generous donations, we were able to give a handful of San Andres students the one in a lifetime experience of visiting one of the greatest world wonders in their own backyard.

2010 is quickly turning in to one of our most productive years to date. The ecological park is stronger than ever, the library has been kicked into high gear with constant daily programs, and we are pushing education to the max with our school project.

All the focus on the ecological park this year has really paid off. There are now a number of schools from the Santa Elena area and a group of women from the adjacent town that are conduction projects in the park. And even last year, we received a visit from the Governor of the Petén.

As our new school is evolving, we continue to recruit new teachers to help inject this part of the world with a proper and decent education. Sergio, our teacher from last semester, has returned to Spain, and we now welcome Miriam from Argentina. Miriam, a biologist like Sergio, will be helping us with our school through October.

We are still looking for some funds to help our teacher recruitment program, so quality teachers like Miriam and Sergio continue to help our efforts. For 2011, we will need to boost the fund to pay for 2 to 3 teachers.

We have had a lot of great workers and great groups help out the past couple of months, and we'd like to thank John, Dan, RK, Tricia, Amber, Joey, Matt, Alex, Beth, Patrick, Ahn, Jade, Jackson, Anya, and Alicia. Volunteers and volunteer groups are the backbone of what we are trying to accomplish in developing San Andres. Without them, it wouldn't be possible to have an ecological park, library, or school.

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FEATURE PHOTO



On top of the world at Mirador National Park



Volunteers in the Library



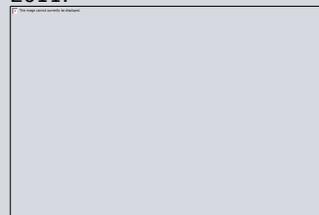
Volunteer Group receiving diplomas

[see more 2010 photos](#)

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Luis and Franklin working in the agricultural project

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Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,

September 2010

Summer is quickly coming to an end, and I want to thank the wonderful volunteers that worked with us in August. In August, we had (and still have now) an amazing group of volunteers who have been working every morning, afternoon and evening with local children in the library in schools. This amazing group includes; RK working with elementary and secondary schools, Jessica with the marching band, Roni with dance groups, Stacy in the library, Marin in the schools, Ana teaching English, Steph focusing on education, Tiffani in the park, and Cloe in the school. In terms of work, August has proved to be the most productive month, and I have never seen so many volunteers working around the clock on different projects.

In August, we also took another amazing field trip with the School of Natural Resources to Rio Dulce and the Caribbean Sea, to visit with another school called Ak'Tenemit. It was a great trip and truly an eye opener for our students and volunteers. Miriam and I are still putting in 10-12 hours a day in the Natural Resource School, doing our best to create a positive change in the education system. The first year students worked on a project to hang up pollen traps for scientific research, and second year students worked on creating ecological signs for the beach front.

Next month we will be winding down our school year, and we will be traveling back to the States at the very end of October to work on fundraising and to talk about our project. If you

FEATURE PHOTO



Volunteers and students reforest areas in the park



Teaching in local schools



Our wonderful trip to Rio Dulce
[see more 2010 photos](#)

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or your institution would like a presentation, I will be free the first couple of weeks in November for talks. The presentation won't be a pretty picture about the current state of Guatemalan society or its future, but my understanding of the problems facing Guatemala has more than doubled the last year, so I have a lot of observations and insight.

So thinking on to 2011...we are now accepting applications for full time Teachers to help us out from January – June. Teachers need to be completely fluent in Spanish and have a university degree. We will cover airfare, room and board. Oh...and to all potential donors for next year...we will need a little help to sponsor teachers. 2011 will be the key year for our education project, and I want to make sure that we do everything we can to push this idea forward. So we will be looking for a 2-3 teachers for next year.

Our **Goal** is currently set at **\$18,000**. We need \$6,000 to pay for room and board of the teachers, \$6,000 to pay for transportation, and \$6,000 for resources for each teacher (which include books for students, photocopies, materials for local transport, project development, etc.). Again, 2011 is make or break year for this project, so please help us find funds to make 2011 a success!

Visit us at www.volunteerpeten.org for more information or contact us at volunteerpeten@hotmail.com for any further information about the school for natural resources.

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2011.

Luis and Franklin working in the agricultural project.

[Click Here](#) to see the updated information on the school.

HELP RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

I will be in the US from October 26th through November 18th and am available to give talks about the program, the current situation in Guatemala, and our role as Americans in the development and assistance to under developed countries.

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Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,

October 2010

The school year is over...I am currently in the US on break...and we are eager to get things ready for 2011. Next year will be one of the most critical years in the development of our project, and it will be the culmination of 3 years dedicated to our school of natural resources. We are now in the final stages of contracting teachers for January-June, and we are getting some interesting projects lined up for the students for next year. Dozens of past volunteers, friends, and family members helped through their donations to make 2010 such a success. We cannot thank you all enough. We are currently campaigning for funds for 2011. We are extremely excited about our program for next year, and hope that you can help to get it funded.

We finished up our school projects in September and October with some great volunteers; Ronnie, Jessica, Stephanie, Ana, and Amanda. And we bid farewell to Miriam, the wonderful teacher from Argentina that spent 5 months with our project.

Looking back on 2010, we have a long list of achievements that include hundreds of hours in teaching in elementary and secondary schools by volunteers, working with 21 students on a daily basis in our school of natural resources, numerous daily library activities for the community, and an outstanding job in maintenance and upkeep of the ecological park. This was the first year that independent groups took the initiative to carry out small projects in the ecological park, which is a huge milestone for this project. Projects include agricultural projects, trail projects, new signs, renovation of kiosks, and work in the museum.

As many of you know, the school of natural resources is our greatest gift to the community of San Andres to date, the gift of knowledge. Our hope and leap of faith, is that with this gift, they can continue to run and manage projects in the community and begin to take charge of the problems that plague Guatemala.

Our **Goal** is currently set at \$12,000. We need \$4,000 to pay for room and board of the teachers, \$4,000 to pay for transportation, and \$4,000 for resources for each teacher (which include books for students, photocopies, materials, local transport, project development, etc.). Again, 2011 is a make or break year for this project, so please help us find the funds to make 2011 a success!

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FEATURE PHOTO

Students studying Mayan artifacts on a field trip

Exploring Mayan Ruins

Students learn about Xate palms
[see more 2010 photos](#)

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