



## Volunteer Petén San Andrés, Petén

January 2012

**Dear Friends of Volunteer Petén,**

### January 2012

Happy 2012 to all friends of Volunteer Petén!

As many of you know, our main project over the past three years has been focused on education and our school of natural resource management in San Andres. We are extremely proud to announce that we have successfully graduated eight young members of the community from our three year program, and feel confident that they will continue to work sustainably with their natural resources and promote a more ecologically conscience manner to live with nature as their modern society continues to change. Please take some time to look at some of the photos from the graduation ceremony here (<http://www.volunteerpeten.com/photos.htm>)

As we prepare for our departure from San Andres, we are diligently working to make sure that our projects are in their best state possible before we turn them over to the local authorities. Volunteers Sonia and Juan from Columbia and volunteer Christophe from France have helped us out tremendously to provide the maximum amount of natural beauty to the ecological park and the highest level of organization to the community library. In our library, we also conducted a number of arts and crafts workshops with the local children preparing for the holiday season and right now we are promoting a "Read-a-thon" that enables students to earn school supplies for reading books and writing book reports.

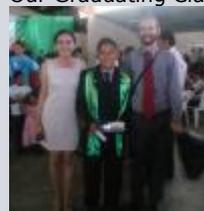
We are still dedicated to the sustainable development of San Andres, even with our departure in early 2012, and we still have one more goal to achieve before we depart. Six students will be entering their final year of training in natural resource management, and we want to ensure that they successfully complete the course and graduate in December. We are looking for donor's to help Lester, Roberto, Elida, Carlos, Bany, and Wilser this year, and sponsoring each student is \$400 for the entire year. One student is already sponsored, so we only have a little bit to go.

As our program comes to a close, I truly thank all of those that so generously gave during the past month to help our 10 years of service and work come to a close. All donations are being used in the most strategically and efficient manner to give the school, library, and park programs the highest possibility of being sustainably managed by the local

### FEATURE PHOTO



Our Graduating Class of 2011



Mateo, Inoky, and Marvin



Angel graduated first in his class

[see more 2012 photos](#)

### FEATURED EVENT

#### Final project

We have one more project to fundraise for before we finally close our project down in Marche. In 2012, we will continue to support 6 students as they finish up their studies in our School of Natural Resources. Each scholarship is \$400 USD for the year, and we have already recieved one donation so that makes 5 to go. These students will also be incharge of maintaining the projects in the ecological park and the community library.



[more information here](#)

community and authorities. I can't thank you all enough for all the help and support, and the community of San Andres will always be grateful for your involvement.

Matthew R. Peters  
Director  
[volunteerpeten@hotmail.com](mailto:volunteerpeten@hotmail.com)

### Important San Andres News

Our new Mayor takes office on January 16th. Let's hope for the best!

#### THANK YOU

Thank you all so very much for the 10 years of aid and service. We can all be extremely proud of our work and accomplishments in San Andres.

#### CONTACT US

**Volunteer Petèn**  
PO BOX 157  
Mohnton, PA 19540  
Tel: (502) 5711-0040  
[View donation information](#)

#### PAST VOLUNTEERS

Please continue to visit Guatemala and see all the wonderful changes we have made in San Andres



for more information, please visit [www.volunteerpeten.org](http://www.volunteerpeten.org)

WE ARE A 501c3 NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATION

June 2011

**Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,**

### June 2011

Well, it has been a difficult and very productive past 30 days here at Volunteer Petèn. As many of you already know, the Petèn has been put under a "state of siege" for the past 30 days and will remain in this state for another 30 days as Guatemala continues its struggle against powerful drug cartels that have been moving into the country during the

#### FEATURE PHOTO

David and Angel working on the chicken project

past few years. Thank you for all your concern, prayers and letters over the past few weeks, and we want to reassure you that we are all doing well and our projects are continuing as planned. And thanks to all the volunteers that stayed with us through the past few weeks (Philipp, Mackenzie, Juliet, Adam, Emily, and the great group from Global Youth Network), you all truly made a huge impact in our project.

We currently just finished up our semester with the Natural Resource Management School and are extremely pleased with the results. In January, we started to set up a work camp program for the students where they were trained daily in how to manage the forest reserve, reforestation, agriculture, tree nursery management, and animal husbandry. We are extremely thankful for all of your kind donations during the past few months that have helped us to make this project a success. Your donations went directly to sponsoring our students, their teachers (Amparo and Elena from Spain), and the work camp project. It wouldn't have been possible without your support. I truly feel that we have finally struck a chord in most of the students, and have seen a dramatic change in their attitude and work ethic.

We have one more semester to go, and we want to continue to raise the bar and push the students to their maximum potential. Unfortunately, with recent events in the region, the tourist industry has hit record lows and our international volunteer program numbers are also at all time lows; leaving us for the first time to rely on individual donations to run our daily programs in the ecological park and community library. In order for us to make it through this final semester, we are going to need all of your support to help sponsor the teachers, the work camp, the ecological park, and the community library. For those of you that understand how our organization works know how we pride ourselves on the fact that nearly every aspect of our program is funded and sustained by the international volunteer program, and that personal donations have always gone to specific projects (i.e. building the community library, building local schools, sponsoring students in the Natural Resource School, etc.). We don't believe in grants or foundations, but in the intimate relation between our little project and those that have been a part of it. Therefore, it has always been difficult for us to continue to ask for financial contributions, but these are some dark days for the Petén, and the next few months are going to put our organization to the test.

It truly breaks my heart to see so many aspects of Guatemalan society collapsing before my eyes, but working with this small but extremely strong group of young students and watching them struggle and fight through the rigorous work schedule and tasks we have set up for them is truly inspiring. I have seen them change during the past three years. They are starting to see all the problems that surround them, and opening their eyes to all the possibilities to solve each problem. With your help, we can see this last semester through and give this project all the attention that it deserves.

Children working with the baby chicks

Children learning about goats  
[see more 2011 photos](#)

### FEATURED EVENT

**Help Sponsor our Natural Resource School for San Andres.**

In January 2009, we started the Natural Resource Management School for the community of San Andres. To date, we have 15 students enrolled in our first, second, and third year. This is an amazing and historic project for the region, and the results are phenomenal. Help today to fund this important and fundamental project which we expect to grow in 2011.

Marvin learning how to manage goats.

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

### HELP RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

2009 and 2010 were unexpected low seasons for tourism in Guatemala, and our volunteer numbers have dropped off. Please help spread the word about our project so 2011 can be a productive year.

### CONTACT US

**Volunteer Petén**  
P.O. Box 157

Visit us at [www.volunteerpeten.org](http://www.volunteerpeten.org) for more information or contact us at [volunteerpeten@hotmail.com](mailto: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!

Help our program grow in 2011 by donating today or by joining the Volunteer PAYten club, which donates \$10 a month to our efforts. [Click here to donate](#), and all donations are fully tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Your donations made to Volunteer Peten in 2010 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.

Mohnton, PA 19540  
[View donation information](#)

### PAST VOLUNTEERS

Please send us any photos you have of your experience in Guatemala to [volunteerpeten@hotmail.com](mailto:volunteerpeten@hotmail.com)

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WE ARE A 501c3 NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATION



August 2011

**Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,**

### August 2011

Summer is quickly coming to an end, and we working continuously with our small group of students in our Natural Resource school preparing them for graduation. Classes will finish up toward the end of October, so we only have a couple of months to go. In order to graduate, each student has to complete a series of tasks both as individuals and as a group. The tasks include developing and implementing an economic project based on natural resources, a planting

### FEATURE PHOTOS

Volunteers and Students exploring the rainforest

projects, training local teachers in different areas of natural resource management, and completing a professional study and investigation on water resources in the area. All this piled on top of formal classes. Our other students, first years and second years, are also working hard on their normal school work and on the Breadnut reforestation project in the park.

I thank all of those that have so generously given to our cause during the past month. With national and local elections just a few weeks away, the tension in the region is building. The Petén has been put under a “state of siege” for the past two months, and the government has just declared a “state of alarm” for the next 30 days to insure that the democratic process can be carried out during the next few weeks. The effect on tourism has been devastating in the region, and has definitely taken its toll on our program. If not for your contributions, it would have been impossible to continue to carry out our projects; so I thank you all again.

We had a nice small group of volunteers in July (Joey, Rachael, Tyler, Ben, Rebecca, Hanna, Liv, and Gardner) helping out extensively with park management and helping to teach classes in the library and to our students.

One of our side projects during the past couple of months was to try to get our most advanced student, Angel, a VISA to the US so he could spend a year working with legendary mountain man Eustace Conway. Unfortunately, after finally setting up an appointment with the embassy, they refused to give Angel a VISA because Volunteer Petén nor Turtle Island is a state certified international student hosting organization ([Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\) certified](#)). So, by the extremely rare chance that any of you have a direct contact with one of these SEVP organizations and think that you can convince them that this is an amazing idea that could potentially have groundbreaking long-term results in the Petén region, we could possibly still get a Visa for Angel. Otherwise, we'll just have to leave it as a great idea.

We are still just a couple of thousand of dollars short to ensure that we can make it through to the end of the year, and that there is enough funding to finish up the school year and get our third year students graduated, so any size donation would help greatly, as we cannot rely on volunteer donations to get us through for the next couple of months. We hope that the elections in Guatemala go smoothly and that some type of positive change and transitions takes place. Local elections will definitely have a huge impact on our plans for 2012, and we are refraining from making any decisions about 2012 projects till after the September 11<sup>th</sup> elections.

I truly thank each and every one of you for still giving our ideas a chance to grow and develop here in San Andres. The results so far have been incredibly positive, and we all feel

Afternoon soccer

Summer Volunteers Tyler and Ben  
[see more 2011 photos](#)

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**Angel and David vaccinating chickens**

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

### HELP RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

The Peten is still a rich and vibrant and safe region to visit, even with the negative news. So please help to spread the word and recruit volunteers for 2011 and 2012.

### CONTACT US

**Volunteer Petén**  
P.O. Box 157  
Mohnton, PA 19540  
[View donation information](#)

### PAST VOLUNTEERS

that the local students in our program will have a long lasting and far reaching positive influence on Guatemalan society.

Visit us at [www.volunteerpeten.org](http://www.volunteerpeten.org) for more information or contact us at [volunteerpeten@hotmail.com](mailto:volunteerpeten@hotmail.com)

[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

Please send us any photos you have of your experience in Guatemala to [volunteerpeten@hotmail.com](mailto:volunteerpeten@hotmail.com)

## Donate Today!

Help our program grow in 2011 by donating today or by joining the Volunteer PAYten club, which donates \$10 a month to our efforts. [Click here to donate](#), and all donations are fully tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Your donations made to Volunteer Peten in 2010 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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WE ARE A 501c3 NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATION

November 2011

**Dear Friends of Volunteer Petèn,**

**November 2011**

As many of you already know from our past newsletter, 2011 has been a difficult year both for Volunteer Petèn and for Guatemala in general. As the social integrity of Guatemala continues to decline and collapse, tourism, the major component of Volunteer Peten, has also declined greatly and, in the Peten region, has virtually collapsed. Earlier this year, we made a plea to friends and past volunteers from our program to donate so that we could make ends meet and finish our school program, as well as maintain programs in the ecological park and community library, and we received a great response and are deeply grateful for all your aid and assistance. Upon facing this crisis, both the decline in tourism and the increased violence in the region, only two decisions were available to continue with Volunteer Peten; one was to continue our projects based solely on donations from friends and family, or to find other

### FEATURE PHOTOS

Third year students training local teachers about medicinal plants

Volunteers and Students exploring the rainforest

sources of income to run the projects based on sustainable projects such as selling firewood, animals, plants, and produce. Since 2002, when our project first began, our philosophy has always been to manage our program more like a business than a charity and that our success would be based on the participation of international volunteers. With the volunteer program financially sustaining our program, we were able to put all extra donations towards some amazing projects such as the ecological park, the community library, and building schools for the community. Therefore, the option of having donations sustain the program is does not fit with our philosophy or goal as an organization. This past year, most of our efforts were put into projects for our students in the natural resource management school, where they participated in growing and selling produce, animals, animal products, plants, and firewood. And even though these activities are important and integral for the survival of any society, the market doesn't exist in the Petén to economically sustain these activities. Therefore, the second option is only viable to sustain one person or one family, but is unable to sustain any type of project or formal program. Also, since the lack of security and violence is growing in the region, right now it is not even feasible to sustain a project without investing in private security, which also goes against our goals and philosophy.

Having explained the current situation, we have decided to wrap up our project in the next few months and to end all programs in February or March of 2012. We apologize to those that have already made plans for 2012, and hope that you can make the necessary changes to your agendas.

Our project is completing its 10<sup>th</sup> year this January, and we still have some work to accomplish before we close our doors next year. We are soliciting donations for one last time to help us put some closure to our projects, as we will be working diligently during the next couple of months to pass our projects to local authorities in hopes that they can sustain the park, library, and school projects that we have created. Our goal is to raise \$6,000 during the next two months to help us with the following goals; continue to fund and organize the 2012 school year for 6 students (\$400 for each student for one full year, for a total of \$2400), training park personnel to continue running the park in coordination with the local authorities (\$2,000), training a community librarian and establishing a community fund to sustainably manage the library (\$1,600).

Visit us at [www.volunteerpeten.org](http://www.volunteerpeten.org) for more information or contact us at [volunteerpeten@hotmail.com](mailto:volunteerpeten@hotmail.com)

[Click here to donate.](#)

Thanks to all your help and support for our program, and we will keep you informed of our accomplishments during the next few months.

Matthew R. Peters  
Director

Part of our graduating class finishing up their senior project [see more 2011 photos](#)

## FEATURED EVENT

**Help Sponsor our Natural Resource School for San Andres.**

In January 2009, we started the Natural Resource Management School for the community of San Andres. In 2012, we will continue to sponsor 6 students in their final year of studies. We are looking for sponsors, and a full year of sponsorship costs \$400 per student.

On December 5th, we will celebrate the our first graduating class, the culmination of 3 years of work with these young men.

**School of natural resources students vaccinating chickens**

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

## HELP RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

The Peten is still a rich and vibrant region to visit, even with the negative news. So please help to spread the word and help the region increase its tourism.

## CONTACT US

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## PAST VOLUNTEERS

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## **Donate Today!**

**Your donations made to Volunteer Peten in 2011 went to the continuation of the School of Natural Resources in San Andres, scholarships to 16 students, park resources, and management of the community library.**

for more information, please visit [www.volunteerpeten.org](http://www.volunteerpeten.org)

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