

The FoE Quarterly

Contents:

February - April 2006

• From The Board.....1	• The Inimitable Encebollado..... 5
• Funding Request for Cristobal Colon Nursery.....2	• Delicious, Nutritious and Sustained Development..... 6
• FoE Actively Recruits PCVs.....2	• Quinoa Waldorf Salad..... 6
• FoE Grant Helps Projects in Ibarra.....3	• 2006 VAC Calendar Promo..... 7
• 2005 Girls' Leadership Conference.....3	• Special Events This Quarter..... 7

From The Board...

We are excited to bring you a new issue of the Friends of Ecuador newsletter. 2005 was a great year of firsts. We officially launched the website in May. In the first eight months, FOE was able to raise \$3000 for a young Ecuadorian women's high school scholarship fund and \$1500 for the first featured project – an eco-tourism NGO based in Tena that works with riverside indigenous communities to foster sustainable economic activity along the upper Ecuadorian Amazon watershed. We sold Peace Corps calendars to raise funds for the Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) project fund as well as helped to reconnect former Volunteers with their communities of service. Two other projects received funding in 2005: an HIV counseling and testing center in Guayas and an orphanage in Ibarra. In December, Friends of Ecuador was also able to support the social work of HumanityCorps.org in Guayaquil with cross-promotion that resulted in a \$600 donation for their scholarship program. We have many more plans to continue the Peace Corps spirit of service.

Two RPCVs volunteered this past year with Friends of Ecuador. Sean McGuckin, our new Database Manager, was in the Water and Sanitation Program 1983-85. John Varrieur, our Newsletter Editor, was in Cotacachi as a Sustainable Agriculture Volunteer until September 2005. More volunteers are welcome!

The website has more content to keep you coming back. With your help and contributions, we've begun building a photo archive of the Peace Corps experience in Ecuador. Using Flickr.com we can stream the pictures on the FoE site. We have photos from recent RPCV returns to Ecuador, pictures from service, scenes from the 2006 Napo river festival, and digital images of the memory book given to APCD Francisco Garces on his retirement. Music tracks in tribute to Francisco are also available on the FoE site. News feeds automatically stream to the FoE site with fresh daily headlines on Ecuador.

We are working closely with PC-Ecuador on the Young Women's Scholarship raffle in June, PCV calendars in December, contacting PC-Washington on behalf of former staff for justice in retirement pay, as well as creating COS and Welcome packet letters for new RPCVs/PCVs.

Lastly, in the National Peace Corps Association, the FoE leadership is an aggressive presence championing affiliates' needs to build stronger groups and improve the RPCV member experience. We appreciate your support, and we encourage your involvement in FoE to make 2006 even better!

Saludos,

Josh and Ben

Funding Request for Cristobal Colon Nursery

Another Chance for *You* to Help the Children of Ecuador

Friends of Ecuador is featuring a funding request to support a day care nursery. The request has come from PCV Cory Johnson who is currently serving in the town of Cristobal Colon in Ecuador's coastal Esmeraldas province. The request is for \$1,000 to help in outfitting a newly constructed day care facility after its move to a safer, healthier location.



The nursery, which opened in its old location in October 2004, serves 40 children in the community ages 6 months to 6 years. It is funded through the state and provides participating children with a nutritious breakfast, lunch and two snacks on a daily basis, Monday through Friday each week. The nursery also employs six women from the community full time. Currently the nursery is located under the house of another community family in a completely cemented in area. The association is searching for funding to help supply the nursery for its new location in Cristobal Colon that is safer, healthier and a positive learning environment for children now and in years to come.

The nursery is already functioning within the community and has state funding that supports nutritional programs. The nursery employs six women full time in Cristobal Colon. Also, it has freed up the time of mothers of children so that a new women's group has formed. The participating women are learning how to make income generating products such as *mermeladas*, candles and shampoo.

Your support would help provide money for paint, a refrigerator, chairs for seating, an industrial storage container, and a television for educational purposes.

Please support this project generously:
<http://www.friendsofecuador.org>

FoE Actively Recruits Current PCVs

Friends of Ecuador's ability to raise funds for grass roots development in Ecuador is limited by the number of its members and how much they contribute to the cause.

In an attempt to assure strong membership growth in the coming years, Friends of Ecuador is now actively reaching out to current Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) when their active service starts and when it begins wrapping up. By informing PCVs twice during their service about its activities and roles, Friends of Ecuador hopes to aggressively recruit PCVs as new members, all of whom will have close ties to the communities and projects that Friends of Ecuador supports.

Peace Corps-Ecuador has agreed to assist Friends of Ecuador in this goal by passing out a Friends of Ecuador information brochure to PCVs at the dates of their Swearing-In and their Close of Service. PCVs can choose to visit the Friends of Ecuador website at those times or any other time during their service to sign on as active members, free of charge.

Please keep sending us your photos!



Thanks go out to RPCV Ela Kakde ('03-'05) for submitting the above photos for this newsletter. Check out her full-sized shots and many others from RPCVs who have uploaded their photos at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/85242607@N00/>

FoE Grant Helps Projects in Ibarra

RPCV Karla Campbell
(Youth & Families, 02-04)

In my last year of service, 2004, I served not only as a Youth and Families Volunteer in Ibarra, but also as Editor of the PCV magazine, *El Clima*. While soliciting articles from volunteers one quarter, I began receiving exuberant emails, forwarded to me by various volunteers, from two guys with email handles from Berkeley and Harvard. As I looked out the window of the internet café onto the dusty, cobblestone streets, I wondered what Harvard and Berkeley could possibly have to do with my life in Ecuador.

As it turned out, Josh and Ben, the President and Vice-President of Friends of Ecuador, had a lot to offer. Our next issue of *El Clima* was the first to promote working relationships between current PCVs and Friends of Ecuador, and I myself was one of the first PCVs to take advantage of the small grant program that FoE offers.

USAID and its progeny, though wonderful opportunities for those volunteers seeking grants for large, long-term projects, offer little to volunteers seeking funding for short-term or small-scale projects. There is an uneasy balance between what USAID will fund on the larger end, and what a community can realistically invest, which tends to be on



Karla Campbell with children who benefited from the library project in Ibarra (04)

the smaller end, and FoE finds its niche in filling that void.

My grant was for \$600, far too much for my community and agency partners to raise, and too small an amount to invest the time and energy into applying for a USAID grant. I used the money to expand three separate projects that were already up and running in Ibarra: a library project at a homeless shelter for youth, a similar literacy project for smaller children in a *comedor*, and various small

projects at the *Casa de la Juventud* in Ibarra. I even had a little money left over in the end to buy toys and candy for children in a rural *estimulacion temprana* program at Christmas time.

Now I'm back in the states, with my own graduate school email handle, promoting FoE from the donor side. No matter where I go, I will always be grateful for what the FoE grant meant for me and my community.

Gender and Development (GAD) Committee, Peace Corps-Ecuador

Highlights from GAD's 2005 Girls' Leadership Conference



Activities like shampoo-making (above) were among last year's conference highlights. See more highlights on the next page.

In Ecuador, it's not rare for girls in high school to drop out early. Unlike the United States, Ecuador does not have minimum requirements for high school attendance. Students can drop out at any age. If a family of limited means has both daughters and sons, the sons are more likely to get priority in finishing their education.

The driving force behind Gender and Development (GAD) Ecuador is to help give Ecuadorian girls the boost they need to finish high school and continue with their careers. The country's Kiwanis-supported, Peace Corps-run chapter of GAD selects girls twice a year from a country-wide pool of applicants and provides them with the financial support to buy uniforms, books, and transportation to complete their last three years of high school.

Peace Corps volunteers in their sites recommend scholarship applicants based on leadership skills, academic performance, and economic necessity. GAD's scholarship recipients come from sites as diverse as those of the volunteers themselves: tiny Sierran villages, bustling coastal cities, and Kichwa-speaking jungle towns. These girls have no contact with each other. Each recipient applies and receives

2005 Girls' Leadership Conference continued....

her scholarship independently. However, as motivated, bright, and hard-working young women, these girls have much to learn from and share with each other. Once a year the GAD Scholarship Committee together with the Quito Kiwanis Club hosts a leadership conference for all school-ship girls in their last two years of high school.

In August of 2005, 57 young women met in a center in South Quito for a four day conference. Entitled *El Camino de la Vida: Salud, Amor y Dinero*, or The Path of Life: Health, Love and Money, the conference was funded by a PL-480 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture, by Kiwanis Club Quito, and by the generous participants in GAD's annual raffle. Peace Corps members of GAD organized workshops and discussions on agriculture, traditional medicine and family planning; relationships, self-esteem and friendship; and financial planning and small income generation projects. The organizers wanted to impress on the girls that their lives are their own and that their decisions form their own life paths. To that end, the organizers presented the various themes of the conference as pieces of a puzzle, with each theme – health, love, and money – forming part of the important life decisions that young women in Ecuador must make.

The conference began on the afternoon of August 11th with an address by Mae Montaña, a prominent Afro-Ecuadorian leader who has held several political posts and who once campaigned for Vice-President of Ecuador. Her story of an impoverished childhood and her

and fulfilling work awaiting them.

Over the next three days, there was hardly a chance to stop for breath. The conference participants set up mock businesses and talked in groups about money management. They learned ancient cures and customs from a collective of midwives, experts in natural medicine, from the northern Oriente jungle. They explored Quito –a complete unknown for many girls– at night on a guided living history tour of brilliantly lit churches and plazas. They spent one afternoon rotating among different folk craft activities, learning how to make recycled paper, candles, and shampoo and hearing from one women's group who started their own successful recycled-

GAD's 2005 Girls' Leadership Conference Alumnae and Leaders



determination to find a way out made a dramatic impression on the recently-arrived girls, still a nervous and reserved group. During those opening talks, the PCV organizers of the conference felt that no matter how the next few days proceeded, the conference would be worth it, if only for the astonishment on the faces of the girls when told that a Vice Presidential candidate had come specifically to talk to them. And even better, the pride on their faces when Montaña commented on the bright future

paper and card-making business. The girls spent almost an entire day learning directly from each other –older girls who had attended the previous year's conference took charge of four workshops on self-esteem, decision-making and family planning. Their professionalism, dynamic leadership, and organizational skills made an impression on all who participated, especially their peers. One uproarious night was spent around a bonfire as the PCVs staffing the conference answered

More photo highlights of last year's conference activities...



Paper-making

Special night tour of Quito



Cultural exchanges

2005 Girls' Leadership Conference continued....

questions (placed anonymously in a bag by the girls over the course of two days) about love, relationships, and sex. Finally, a moving closing ceremony allowed the participants –by now very close friends– to share their thoughts on what they had learned and what they were taking away from their 4 days together. The scene as the young women packed up to go was very different from that of the first afternoon. Instead of shy glances and uncertain smiles, the room was filled with shouts, tears as newfound best-friends-for-life said goodbye, and real, big, confident grins.

The PCVs staffing the conference were left with an empty conference center. Reading the girls' evaluations of

the conference in a room cluttered with poster paper and markers, candle-making molds, paper cups and scribbled notes, they found a series of rave reviews. "Thanks for giving me one of the best experiences in my life," wrote one girl. Another said that her favorite thing about the conference was "sharing with new friends," and for another the best part was "the relationship between the facilitators and the girls...with their support we felt more confident in ourselves." Confident that the participants went back to their communities with new friends and new ideas about their futures, the GAD Scholarship Committee looks forward to planning next year's conference.

*Interested in learning more about what GAD is up to?
Check out their website! <http://www.projectsforpeace.org>*

The Inimitable *Encebollado*

PCV Caleb Varner shares with us a popular coastal recipe, often kept secret by its more protective Ecuadorian owners. Caleb's culinary know-how comes from participating in a lucrative community fundraiser involving this breakfast soup.

Ingredients (for 5 servings)

1.5lb albacore tuna
3lbs. yucca
Several stalks of fresh cilantro
A handful of fresh *hierba buena* (mint)
A handful of fresh oregano
0.5 lb. *cebolla colorada* (red onion)
3 *cebollas blancas* (white onion)
6oz. of *aji peruano* (red chili powder, available in latin grocery stores)
white flour (equal portion to *aji peruano*)
A few tablespoons of *aliño*- a mixture of minced garlic, salt and spices
Lime
Mustard and ketchup
Salt to taste

Preparation

- 1) In one pot, boil the skinned and chopped yucca. Remember to remove fibrous inner part of the yucca.
- 2) In another pot, put enough water to cover fish. Cook the fish with whole stems of cilantro (keep leaves for later), whole stems and minced leaves of *hierba buena*, whole stems and minced leaves of oregano; also include one red and one white onion with a couple tablespoons of *aliño completo*. White onion goes in whole, while red onion goes in eight parts.
- 3) When fish is done, take the fish out and put it aside; strain broth.
- 4) Mix equal parts flour y aji; put in separate bowl with a cup of broth and mix well, pour through colander into the rest of the broth. To your taste and thickness/consistency, add more flour to make more thick.
- 5) De-bone albacore and then DISCARD dark meat of fish. Leave fish to one side. (Leave broth warm without fish to prevent further cooking.)
- 6) Chop the boiled yucca into pieces; don't mash it like taters.
- 7) Prepare *ensalada*: finely slice red onion, wash it, add lime and salt; finely slice white onion; finely chop and add PLENTY of cilantro leaves.
- 8) Pile in bowl in this order: yucca, fish, sauce/broth and then *ensalada*.
- 9) Then add directly into the hot soup all of your extras (i.e., the lime, mustard and ketchup) so it tastes just right.

Note: This soup is typically served with *chifles* (salted banana chips).



PCV Caleb Varner

Caleb began his work as an Agriculture Volunteer in Luz de América (near Santo Domingo) in May of 2003. After having success with community banks and other small business ventures in his site, Caleb moved to Quito to be the Coordinator of Small Business and Community Banks. There, he helped to disseminate the strategies behind successful community banking to volunteers, their counterparts and to NGO's across Ecuador.

When Caleb's time in Ecuador and in the Peace Corps looked like it was coming to an end, he gained the opportunity to serve a year in the Dominican Republic, working yet again with community banks.

In the DR, Caleb has been working for about 5 months on a project with PLAN International, developing a community bank program with a countrywide focus. Caleb is in the initial pilot stages of the first model of its kind to be launched in the Dominican Republic, with hope of a full-scale project launch by May.

Wish him luck!
caleb.varner@gmail.com

Delicious, Nutritious and Sustained Development

After 30 years in business and professions, Bob and Maggi Leventry felt they could give a lot of technical help to the Ecuadorians when they entered the Peace Corps in 1993. Bob had been President of an insurance company and Maggi was a Registered Dietician. But after serving in the Peace Corps for almost 3 years, they discovered the experience was a two way street. And now 10 years after their service they have even stronger ties with the people of Ecuador. They are the owners of Inca Organics that imports Ecuadorian organic heirloom quinoa to the US, the UK, Hong Kong, and Australia.

When they returned to the US after their service, Bob had many business contacts in Ecuador from his work as a small business volunteer. Maggi, a health volunteer, had learned that the grain-based Ecuadorian diet was much healthier than the American one and was very enthusiastic about quinoa. With the help of another volunteer, Josh Busby, who was stationed near Ambato, they connected with ERPE (Escuelas Radiofonicas Publicas del Ecuador), a foundation working with the indigenous population in Chimborazo province. ERPE ran a public radio station that has taught literacy to the indigenous since 1962. They had furthered their work with the indigenous in organic gardening to counteract the wide use of dangerous pesticides in the country.



Photo, recipe and article courtesy of RPCV's Bob and Maggi Leventry

In the late 1990's ERPE decided to establish a quinoa-growing project using fields of the indigenous that had been abandoned. The indigenous were not growing or eating quinoa because wealthy Ecuadorians told them it was only fit for animals to eat and their nutrition had suffered. Child malnutrition in the Chimborazo area was at 74%. It was at this time that Bob and Maggi Leventry of Inca Organics met the people of ERPE. With the help of BCS, a German organic certification agency, DED, a German technical assistance agency, and the Canadian Development Fund, a post harvest facility was constructed for the cleaning and packing of the quinoa and the Heirloom Quinoa Project was formed.

Beginning in 1998, 127 indigenous farm families cultivated the first organic quinoa – 81,622 pounds sent to the US to be sold by the Leventrys. Every year since then the exportation of organic quinoa from the project has doubled. Now 4025 families are participating. In 2005 they produced 794,160 pounds of quinoa, for which \$540,000 was sent to Ecuador as payment. To date their total payment is \$1,634,000. In 2005 the indigenous farmers' cooperative was certified "Fair Trade" by FLO, the international fair trade agency. They are producing the only Fair Trade quinoa in the world. The farmer's income has more than doubled as well as their self-esteem. They are now "international exporters" and the use of quinoa as a staple has increased. ERPE has each farm family keep a third of their harvest to eat or sell on the national market. Child nutrition has improved greatly.

Meanwhile outside Ecuador the interest in quinoa is increasing as people recognize the importance of healthy, easy to cook, whole grains. Inca Organics' quinoa is sold in bulk by food distributors and co-ops to health food stores. Check out the web site: www.incaorganics.com for locations. Bob's Red Mill, Now Food, and Seeds of Change also package their quinoa in retail sizes. It's becoming popular as a food ingredient in crackers and cereals. Most importantly it is widely agreed that the Ecuadorian organic quinoa from Inca Organics is the finest, cleanest, and the tastiest quinoa available in the world today. It was awarded the International Slow Food award for biodiversity in 2002.

*The recipe on the left was taken from Incaorganics.com
Visit the site for more great quinoa recipes and online ordering!*

QUINOA WALDORF SALAD

-A truly healthy and delicious combination of textures

- 1/2 cup "washed and ready" Quinoa
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon cloves
- 1 large red delicious apple, chopped
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 cup chopped celery

Directions:

1) In a medium covered saucepan bring water, apple juice, and spices to a boil. Add "washed and ready" Quinoa. Return to a boil and cook over low heat for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and cool.

2) When chilled, add apple tossed with lemon juice, raisins, and celery.

Makes 4 servings

** 1/2 cup plain low fat or fat free yogurt may be added to create a unique salad which may be topped with chopped nuts.

Peace Corps Ecuador's 2006 VAC Calendar

Get a rare glimpse into
The everyday moments of
Ecuador and its people

Fund project grants for
Peace Corps Volunteers

*The 2006 Wall Calendar
Includes...*

- Regional Country Info
- Twelve 12 x 14 Inch Photos
- Snapshots of PCVs at work
- American, Ecuadorian and International Holidays



Order your calendar easily and securely online at: www.friendsofecuador.org

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Special Events This Quarter...

FEBRUARY

2nd

Groundhog's Day

12th

Anniversary of the discovery of the Amazon River

24th - 28th

La Carnaval

MARCH

1st

45th Anniversary of the Peace Corps

8th

International Women's Day

17th

St. Patrick's Day

20th

First day of Spring

31st

Deposit deadline for NPCA trip to Indonesia

APRIL

2nd

Daylight Savings Time begins

9th - 15th

Semana Santa (Holy Week)

Contact us at:

foe@friendsofecuador.org



Friends of Ecuador is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership organization. Anyone who has an interest in supporting grassroots development in Ecuador, (e.g., Ecuadorians, North Americans, parents, Volunteers, travelers, and students) is eligible to join. We provide web space to reconnect RPCVs as well as continue the legacy of service through promotion of screened community projects in Ecuador.

For more information visit: <http://www.friendsofecuador.org>