

ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad **Bolivia**



Editor's Letter



Carmen Herbas
Country Director

Hi all,

Welcome to the January edition of our Newsletter for Projects Abroad Bolivia. This newsletter aims to inform all our volunteers with news and information about the latest happenings in Projects Abroad Bolivia, and the country in general.

We encourage everyone to join us in making it interesting and exciting by sending in your own written articles and pictures of your experiences here with us. Your stories and pictures will help others to understand and learn about Bolivia.

Feel free to join us in our Facebook group so we can be in touch, before, during and after your trip to Bolivia!

If you have anything you'd like to contribute, suggest, or comment on, please contact: bolivia@projects-abroad.org

Best wishes from Bolivia!

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PRO - Social Work Program: Teaching how to deal with emotions

Mariel Torrez
Desk Officer, Bolivia

There is a special branch in Projects Abroad that works with PRO volunteers. The aim of this one is to promote the exchange of knowledge and skills in areas where PRO support is needed in country destinations.

This is the case of Jeanny Van Reuth, a social Work from Netherlands that decided to visit Bolivia for a second time, but this time as a volunteer.

Since she had specialized on working with addicts and borderline disorder patients, Jeanny was placed at San Juan de Dios Psychiatric Institute.

This institution offers psychiatric care, rehabilitation programs for alcohol and drug addicts, family counseling besides outpatient and inpatient service, and Jenny was sent to work at Social Work Unit from the very beginning.

However, her main contribution was the training of the local staff on new techniques for dealing with emotions in a healthy way. The main premise was: people, but mainly drug and alcohol addicts, don't know how to deal with daily life emotions, so they turn to negative and unhealthy behaviors that creates more problems in their lives.

She began translating documents from Dutch to Spanish, later write down a work paper, and finally organize a series of workshops to implement such contents. It wasn't easy at all, but pretty soon the staff of San Juan de Dios realized the benefits of the approach proposed and embraced the new concepts given.

Well done Jeanny!



Projects Updates

A musical encounter: the chronicle of a concert

Mariel Torrez
Desk Officer, Bolivia

The concert is about to start. The audience is a little bit agitated after thirty minutes of waiting. Nothing extraordinary in a country like Bolivia on which everything seems to be delayed and nobody seems to be bothered about it. Finally a group of blind children make their entrance on the stage. They are holding hands in a line not to fall down. They seem to be nervous, but the public welcomes them with a big applause that helps them to pull out one song after another.

What strikes the people in the audience from the very beginning is, that not all the songs performed belong to what could be called "traditional Bolivian music". There is a rock ensemble and some classic and modern music as well, but the children seem unaware of this detail and execute each song wonderfully alongside their teachers. One of them, a blond man holding an electric guitar, stands out on stage, not only by his evident music ability, but also by the way that the children follow him during their performance.

Soon the identity of the mysterious educator is revealed. The master of ceremony introduces him as a German volunteer from Projects Abroad, which came especially to teach music in an educational center for blind children in town (Manuela Gandarillas); and points out that the most of the songs performed that night were also taught to children by volunteers from the same organization that came here from different countries.

Once the concert finished, we manage to track down and interview some of the volunteers that helped to shape up the concert somehow, in order to understand their motivations better. The first one, Naidene Sartori, a young girl from Australia, tells us that she "came to volunteer for the experience of teaching music within a completely different community (...), but also to learn about a different culture".



She admits that at first it was quite overwhelming the responsibility, since she didn't have experience in dealing with blind children, but in time she learnt new teaching techniques that she hopes to use again in the future, since she is studying Music Education at Queensland University.

These children love to learn music, and, through teaching music, they are given "an opportunity to communicate within another language (...). I hopefully have introduced a number of musical numbers that students have never heard before", she concludes.

Frank Fojtik, the German volunteer that was spotted during the concert with the electric guitar, goes in the same line. "Every volunteer has his own personality and gives new life to the music classes" of the children, he says. He loves heavy metal and recalls as one of his favorite moments of his volunteering experience, when having private classes on charango, a native music instrument in Bolivia that resembles a small guitar, with a student that hardly spoke Spanish, but Quechua, an indigenous language of the Andes.

"A German and a Bolivian cannot communicate by means of common language, but you must find another language" which is music, Frank adds.

Talking about the same thing, Ellie Sherwood, a college student from UK that taught those children piano and recorder it, complements that "it isn't just making music though; chatting, playing and just being there as part of the project too". "It's a really relaxed atmosphere where the pupils come and go, so you never quite know what the day is going to be produce! Music is the best way to connect with them, and they are really, really talented at learning new pieces".

Frank and the others are right. Volunteers were fortunate to share what is special to them with children and in the process they give them an opportunity to play new music and find new ways of communication beyond their physical disabilities. On return, volunteers got a new understanding of their art, their music, and we were just lucky that night to witness that.



Projects Updates

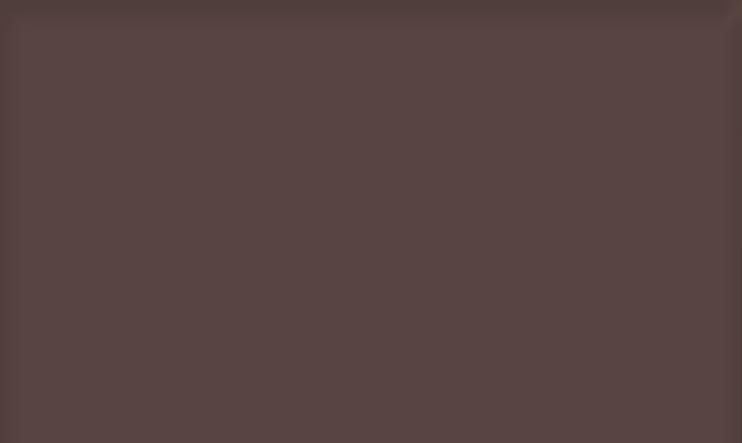
Visiting San Jose Nursing Home

Mariel Torrez
Desk Officer, Bolivia

We decided to visit San Jose Nursing Home as our first social activity of the year. We had so much fun singing, playing games and sharing with the grandfathers and grandmothers that we're looking forward to repeating this activity in the future.

Enjoy the pictures!





Photos of the month



“Never underestimate the difference YOU can make in the lives of others. Step forward, reach out and help. This week reach to someone that might need a lift”



Credits

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Thank you to everyone who has helped bring about this month's issue of the Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad Bolivia. If you would like to contribute your experiences, stories, photos or anything else to the next edition then please send them to:
bolivia@projects-abroad.org

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