

COTAH NEWS

Saminay-El Legado supported by the Asahel and Thankful Putnam Education Fund

Putnam Family Visits Saminay -El Legado

Members of the Putnam family traveled to Ecuador to visit Saminay-El Legado in June. The trip had been planned for months and then indigenous strikes in the country threatened the trip altogether. News reports said that all roads to the school would be closed. With some flexibility and determination the times to visit the school were slightly adjusted and the group made their visit to the school just before the roads were closed.

It was the first time the large family could see the school David and Elaine Putnam, their parents, established. They saw all the new facilities at the school, including a visit around the farm to see the baby cows and pigs, “The Happy Farm”, as David Putnam likes to call it.

True to their family values, the Putnams wanted to be useful during their visit, so they funded a project to build cupboards for Saminay and another nearby school. The cupboards were needed to store ancestral seed collections. The previous summer and fall, Saminay students planted and harvested ancestral seeds they had carefully researched and located. These seeds were gathered in jars, awaiting a more permanent home. The Putnams built beautiful, sturdy storage cupboards to preserve the seed collections for the future.

As part of their visit, the Putnam family also helped plant trees on the school property. The trees were donated to the school and were part of an ongoing government reforestation program at Saminay.

As a finale the Putnam’s spent time in Plaza de Ponchos, the world famous market in Otavalo. It was wonderful to have them visit!



New cupboards for ancestral seeds

Barter Fair 2022



More than 500 years ago, before the Spanish conquest, of the Inca's, the indigenous population in Ecuador traded products from the mountains, the amazon and coastal areas through CHASQUIS, or barter fairs.

Today commerce takes place through monetary transactions of goods and services at both rural and urban levels. However, communities far from the cities still exchange of products like bananas, camote, yucas, chickens, eggs, corn, barley, wheat, cheese, milk, beans, potatoes, limes, cane, and medicinal plants, among other commodities.

In 2016 Saminay initiated a barter fair at the school as a pilot project between the teachers and students and saw good results and satisfaction for both parties.

In 2017 we launched the first barter fair at a local level. Artists were invited, traditional games were organized, and traditional food prepared. Other countries have horse or dog races at their barter fairs, but in Saminay we created Guinea pig races called a CUYODROMO. These guinea pig races have become the icon of every fair and have turned into the principal attraction. For this first fair we rented guinea pigs because the visitors didn't have any, but now they come with their own guinea pigs. In this race you can test the ability of your guinea pig to run against others at the fair. But, most importantly, everyone has a great time and there are smiles from all.



Barter fair is held on new school sports court.



Guinea pig races held at the barter fair.

The barter fair has become a way to rescue the traditions of the Andean worldview, leaving aside the value of money, to put a more empathetic value on the products harvested and produced by the people of the area.

At the end of each event everyone leaves very happy because the people of the communities get clothing, household items, shoes, toys, etc.; while the invited people leave with organic products and the conviction that their things that they no longer use will serve other people who really need them. It is RANTY RANTY, which means to seek and achieve the common good.

Meet Two of Our Students

Lilliana Marble Guitar Panama

Lilliana is from Minus Chupa, a small village high in the Andes mountains. She is 16 and comes from a large family. Her parents sell milk every day to a truck that comes from Otavalo. They receive 25 cents a liter. To bring in a little more income, Lilliana and her sisters plant corn, beans and potatoes to sell at the market.



“I feel very happy to study in Saminay because it is very different from the others. The classes are very fun. We can be in contact with nature, animals, and above all we learn to sow and harvest various products that are of great importance to put into practice in the lands of our parents. I give a thousand thanks to the owner of the school who lives abroad and I hope that one day he will come to visit us because thanks to him we are training ourselves to be good professionals and someone in life.”

Romni Jadiel Avila Villagomez

Jadiel is 13 and in ninth grade. He is one of the best students in his class. Jadiel comes from a community called Kilometer 12. It is a 2 hour drive from the school. He and his school friends catch a ride with cement trucks that travel back and forth along the road. He waits for the trucks

at five o'clock in the morning to arrive at school by 7:00. On his free days he helps his father in his business which is repairing large trucks. “My dream



is to be part of the special forces of the Marines. My goal is to finish my studies at Saminay -El Legado and prepare myself to be a Marine and serve my country.”

Saminay and Choice Create Agreement



Edwin Alvarez principal of Saminay-El Legado and Raquel Tuston director of Choice Humanitarian in Ecuador, sign agreement

Choice Humanitarian and Saminay -El LEGado have recently initiated a cooperative agreement to benefit the graduates of Saminay. Choice Humanitarian has a newly completed skills training center in Intag, Ecuador. They will soon offer technical skills courses to high school graduates and adults in the surrounding areas. With the agreement, the courses will be available to our graduates. These courses are held on Saturdays, which makes them more accessible to participants. Inta Kara is about 60 kilometers from Saminay, so students will take a bus to and from the center.

Courses will be offered in gastronomy, food processing, art & sculpture, sports training, welding, electricity and security. The training is also available to parents who are interested. Skills training can help our graduates find lifetime employment with good wages. If they want to continue their education at a university, these skills will give them a way to support themselves and pay for their studies at a university. All students who successfully complete a course receive a certificate that is endorsed by the Ecuadorian government.

Recent Strike Creates Problems for Saminay



Nineteen days of indigenous strikes in June affected all of Ecuador, including Saminay -El Legado. The school was required to close its doors for two weeks and send students back to their communities. This came at a crucial time when students and teachers were preparing for their final exams and finishing end-of-term projects.

Roads to the school were blocked and vehicles were prevented from going to the school. Fortunately, there was some warning for the strike, so Saminay leaders stored extra food for the animals. Dedicated school employees who live close to the school were able to continue caring for the animals, including milking the cows twice daily.

Production continued at the cheese plant though it was impossible to deliver the cheese to market. Thankfully our innovative producers switched to hard cheese which has a longer shelf life. This cheese was then taken to market when the strike ended.

Graduation 2022

Ten students proudly donned their caps and gowns and received their graduation diplomas Friday, July 22. It was a great accomplishment during the difficult time of covid and recent political unrest. For the past two years they were in and out of school according to the direction of the Ministry of Education. Despite these challenges, and with student and faculty determination and creativity, they met the educational requirements and received their coveted high school diplomas. We look forward to great things from these dedicated students.



2022 Graduating Class



Students Return for 2022-2023 School Year

Beginning a new school year is always exciting. It's fun to be with friends again and anticipate new learning experiences. Saminay -El Legado students returned on August 29 to begin the new year. One hundred and two students were enrolled.

The day began with an assembly in the atrium of the new classroom building, built by Aptive Environmental. Teachers met with students and came to agreements about school norms and rules.

For Saminay students, returning to school also means they will now receive nutritious, regular meals. The breakfast and lunch served at school are very important to them. So many come from environments with inadequate food resources.

In the assembly, students suggested they needed more rice with their meals. They love their food and eat a lot!



First day meeting

Aptive is Coming!

Aptive has announced another project
this year with COTAH!

COTAH is delighted to have another project at the school with Aptive Environmental. This year they will be coming on November 12 and will spend three days working on three different projects. Two of the projects will be to rejuvenate two primary schools in the area. These schools are **Tangali** which has 300 students and is on the road to Saminay. The other school is **Kilometer 12** which is more than two hours from Saminay, but still sends almost 20 students to the school. The final project is at Saminay and involves redoing the soccer court so the students can use it. Most of the year it has standing water on it because of poor drainage. Aptive will lay drainage pipes under the soccer field to handle excessive rain and make it a usable resource for the school.

Donate to Saminay

You can help support a particular student, project, or area such as transportation, food, academic supplies, or class businesses.

childrenoftheandeshumanitarian@gmail.com