

COTAH NEWS

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

House Rehab

Inside the gate to the school is a dilapidated old house. The building has been used as a home, a dining hall, a guinea pig and rabbit shelter and general storage. Because of its current condition we have vacillated between tearing it down and restoring it. A recent engineering study convinced us that it could be restored and used as a permanent home for our caretaker Alex Vera Simbaña. The project is funded with great donations from the Ministeria Ambiental de Ecuador and our friends Aptive Environmental.



Aptive's on Their Way

Hooray! Aptive Environmental will be joining us again for an expedition to Ecuador. Remember last year they brought 32 volunteers and helped build the Aptive Way from the bottom of the hill up to our school on the top of the hill. This year they are coming with even more ambitious plans. There will be over 50 volunteers from Utah on the site to work on painting, laying pipe for the rain water catchment system, laying block for the Cheese Factory, refinishing the floors at the school, carpentry at the care taker's house and more. These guys are awesome. Their donation of time and money is helping us to be more effective and more efficient as we pursue our goal of sustainable education for the children of the Andes. Missy Webster with Eagle Condor has provided logistical planning and support. Without her involvement from the very beginning COTAH would not have been the beneficiary of so much great volunteer involvement.



Thanks again to Missy Webster, Eagle Condor and especially to APTIVE for your generous support!!!

Annual Christmas Pageant



Christmas is a wonderful time of the year for our students. Last Friday they presented the Christmas pageant, played games, and sang Christmas songs. Special thanks to Julio Cesar Moran, the director of the Ministry de Ambiente for providing candies and cookies to the students. The students had a wonderful Christmas celebration that produced lasting memories of good food, great friends and memorable gifts given and received. Thank you to one and all for supporting the students at this special time of the year.



The Big Cheese Building

The price of milk in Ecuador dropped in August. Unregulated milk from other countries reduced the price for our school milk. With perishable milk on our hands, our Projects manager, Edwin Vinueza made a bold decision to make cheese. In a makeshift setting, and purchasing a minimum of supplies, he crafted a soft white cheese that he sold to a few merchants. Early results were promising. With generous support from Aptive Environmental and their volunteers we will build a new cheese making facility. We will be able to improve the quality of our cheese and turn it into a profitable business for the school.



SEEDS for the Future

The Prefectura of Imbabura has been an important local partner in the development of our school farm. They provided the initial grant of \$30,000 to help us get started. Last week they demonstrated their continual interest in and support of COTAH by donating seed, fertilizer and technical assistance to seven of our students. They will work with these students for a year. Students will reproduce the processes they have learned at school and will use the Prefectura's help to increase milk production on their own land.



The Dream



Each year, eighth grade students come to the school from their remote mountain communities to solicit a place in the school. Students are carefully selected based on their attitude, parental support, and their ability to succeed. Edwin Alvarez, school counselor, told the following story:

“At the beginning of the year some of the twelve year old students told me that days before coming to the school to take the tests and have the interview for acceptance, they went and hid themselves in a cornfield and knelt down to pray and ask God that the interviews and tests would go well. When it was all over and they received word that they would have a place at the school, they returned to the corn field and going where no one would see him, prayed again to thank God for this favor for which they are very grateful. One student received word that he was not accepted. He went into the cornfield and cried. Education is a dream”



Even though we are in a cloud forest we have to be concerned about the efficient use and conservation of water. We have had a few dry years as well as problems with the infrastructure for our culinary water supply. Therefore we are taking measures to insure the conservation of the water available to us. A few weeks ago we finished lining our reservoir with a water proof membrane to stem the loss of water through percolation. We are developing a rain water catchment and storage system. We are also exploring the possibility of improving and developing the spring on the lower part of the site. Adequate water supply is essential to our future.



Olivia Rojas Van Soest New Board Member

Olivia has a lot of NGO, business, and professional experience. She was the founder and director of the



Casa de Esperanza, an orphanage in Anahuac, Chihuahua, Mexico. She introduced Habitat for Humanity in Mexico and under this program supervised the building of 150 houses for homeless and low-income people in Amahuac, Chih, Mexico. Olivia has been involved in many for profit business ventures including a translation company, granola company and two nursing homes. Olivia recently visited the school in Ecuador and fell in love with the beautiful students and breathtaking scenery. We look forward to her involvement in COTAH. Bienvenida Olivia!

Volunteers

COTAH is looking for motivated volunteers. We especially need people with entrepreneurial experience good computer skills, accounting experience, Spanish skills,, and non profit experience. If you would like to help, please contact us at:

[emailto:childrenoftheadshumanitarian@gmail.com](mailto:childrenoftheadshumanitarian@gmail.com)

Pigs Pigs and More Pigs

Our new pig business is sponsored and promoted by Huelva, a Spanish organization involved in the reestablishment of the Huelva pig in Ecuador. Huelva pigs are native to Iberia, but were introduced to



Ecuador by the Spaniards. They are a black pig known for their excellent flavor.

In November we built a maternity pig shed. The maternity shed is used to house sows during their pregnancy. It will protect sows from other animals. In group-housing situations, pregnant sows often fight for food and dominance, resulting in higher rates of injury to less dominant animals.

Research shows that stress hormone levels in sows are lower in maternity pens than in-group housing. Additionally, maternity pens provide for individual feeding and veterinary care. Our shed was finished just in time for a mother to take up residence before the birth of her seven piglets. We currently have 5 adult pigs and 13 piglets.



Special Thanks to the Asahel Thankful Putnam Educational Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for continued support of the Ecuadorian youth of Imbabura.