

COTAH NEWS



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

COVID19 Impacts



COVID19 has brought significant challenges as we have tried to provide services to our students. Indigenous peoples are isolated from medical services by long distances, unimproved mountain roads and very few transportation options. During the current pandemic the villagers have generally stayed in their communities. In the early months of COVID we sent basic food commodities to the communities. As the virus continued, other organizations helped with food donations. We also made and donated face masks. Thankfully, to date, there have been no cases of COVID in any of the indigenous communities where our students live.

Apptive Environmental to Build Cafeteria and Bathrooms

Last year Apptive constructed a beautiful and spacious classroom building for the school. It is a wonderful new learning and teaching space. Unfortunately, just as teachers and students were getting settled into the new building, COVID hit and everyone was sent home. The new school was vacant. Finally, after all these months, we anticipate being allowed to reopen again in December.



New Bathrooms

Now we are thrilled to be receiving help again from Apptive Environmental. In February they will build a cafeteria, restrooms, and a cistern for clean drinking water. This is an ambitious undertaking!! With the completion of construction, Saminay will have a fully functioning accessible campus. Students and staff will no longer

climb the steep hill for breakfast and lunch. The lunchroom and bathrooms will be right next to the classroom building. Apptive has provided COTAH with the resources and help to create this new workable campus! Thank you APPTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL!!!



Dining Hall

Equipment for the Cheese Plant Arrives

Our new cheese plant equipment has finally arrived. The pandemic slowed the process dramatically, but it is now here. Among the new pieces of equipment we received, is a new 1,000 liter refrigeration tank. Currently the school only produces 100 liters of milk per day, but in the future when we begin to buy milk from the communities, we will need the extra capacity.



Milk Refrigerator Tank

This Little Piggy Went to Market

The Iberian pig is a traditional breed, native to Portugal and Spain. It is a unique pig with black to gray coloring. In their



traditional environment they graze on fallen acorns. This acorn diet gives their meat a unique and subtle flavor. In the 1600's the Spanish conquerors introduced this pig to Ecuador. Through the centuries they interbred with other pigs and

gradually disappeared as a distinctive domestic breed.

There are strict restrictions in Spain and Portugal that make it illegal to export Iberian pigs. In the US there are only about 5,000. There are much fewer in Ecuador. Currently, only four places in the US raise them: a ranch in Texas, one in Florida, one in California, and one in New York. They never sell

their live pigs; they only sell to restaurants.



Two years ago Saminay received five black Iberian pigs as part of a cooperative project between Ecuador and a group from Huelva, Spain. The purpose of this cooperative project was to reintroduce the

Iberian pig to Ecuador and realize the economic benefits in the poorer areas of the country. Besides our school, two indigenous communities received pigs from this project, Ugsha and Sigsipampa.

Two of our original five pigs died because they couldn't acclimate to the altitude and temperature. The other three lived and have reproduced. Iberian pigs produce small litters, about half the size of other domesticated pigs. They also grow and develop slowly. It takes at least 16-18 months to get a pig ready for market at about 120 kilograms or 265 pounds. For marketing they are eviscerated and sold by the pound to restaurants. Currently we have 20 pigs. The goal is to have a group of 15 reproducing females, with 1 male and 30 pigs fattening.

The farmers in the area will be participants in our pig project by fattening them for the school. At two months we will give castrated male pigs to local farmers for fattening.

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The reproductive female pigs remain at the school. By controlling this process, we maintain the Iberian genetic line. After about fifteen months of fattening, the pigs will be ready to take to market. The profits from the sale will be shared with the farmer. In order for the local farmers to qualify to partner with us four workshops were required; one on sanitation, one on nutrition, another on grasslands, and the fourth one on reproduction.

**Our Intern
KATHERINE
ORELLANA**

Saminay extends a huge “thank you” to Katherine Orellana, who served at the school from mid-September until mid-March 2020, as an intern. Besides laying brick for the new school, Katherine’s work included



agricultural projects, planting and maintaining flower beds and a garden. She also assisted with the 8th grade math and literature programs.

Katherine recently graduated from high school in California and was participating in a gap year program between high school and college sponsored by Global Citizen Year. She immensely enjoyed her experiences during her internship, while living with a host family and learning about the rich culture of the area. She especially values the experience and perspective she received related to sustainable environmental issues.

We wish Katherine the best in her future endeavors!

Project-based Learning Flourishes

School was to start in September and our teachers were excited to return to the classroom. Unfortunately, due to the virus, we were still unable to hold in person classes. There were no computers nor internet in the communities and sending work to the communities was ineffective, so, when fall semester began, the school took advantage of the new curriculum flexibility due to the virus, and initiated a new and dynamic projects-based curriculum. **This approach fully supports our vision and mission and is more closely aligned to the educational needs of our students.**



Project-based learning is a pedagogy where students acquire knowledge through active exploration of real-world challenges and problems. Students work for an extended period of time investigating and responding to a complex question, challenge, or problem. The students, and sometimes community members, work together on a project. The projects are selected by the teachers in consultation with the students



and relate to the real needs of our students and their communities. The students assume leadership for these projects and work together in cooperative groups to accomplish their goals. The teachers travel to the communities twice a month to encourage and guide the students with their projects. Some of the projects this fall have included creating a seed bank in each community, working on nutritional improvement, improving animal husbandry practices, and exploring options to promote local tourism.

Students were very engaged in their learning activities and showed growth in leadership and communication skills. They work together in cooperative groups to accomplish their goals. The teachers travel to each community twice monthly to encourage and support the students. The pedagogy shows real promise as a way to increase student involvement, enthusiasm and growth.

New Board Member

Nate Wilcox



COTAH is very happy to have Nate Wilcox join us as a new board member. He is the current chief legal officer at Aptive Environmental. He is also Of Counsel with Clyde Snow & Sessions. Prior to joining Aptive Environmental, Nate served as Chief Compliance Officer for Vivint, Inc. He and his family visited Saminay last year with the Aptive Expedition. He loved what he saw and wanted to become more involved. It is wonderful to have Nate join the board!

BEETLE GATHERERS FENCED OUT

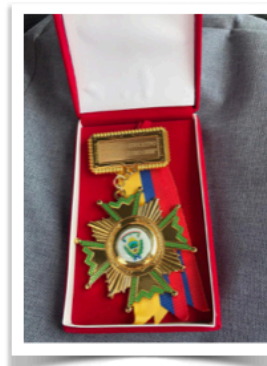
A recent entry in the school budget of \$150 for electric wire seemed rather curious and so upon inquiry we learned it was to protect our fields



from catzos hunters. In the last few weeks of the year, in the Andes mountains, there is a phenomenon that occurs with the seasonal rains.

SAMINAY RECEIVES AWARD

Saminay -El Legado recently received an award from the province of Imbabura as some board members witnessed remotely. The special award was given to schools recognized as distinctive in their contributions to instill respect for the history and traditions of the province. Edwin Vinueza, the CEO of the school, accepted the award for Saminay.



Edwin Vinueza Accepts Saminay Award

The catzos appear. Catzos are a type of dung beetle. In the early morning hours these beetles come out of the wet ground in large numbers and the indigenous people don't miss the opportunity to search for them in the fields. When they return home with their harvest, they wash them, pull off the legs and wings and fry them in hot oil then sprinkle with salt. They're supposed to be a delicious treat. Unfortunately, we must limit access to the cultivated fields to protect our crops.



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