



VOLUNTEER STORY - Hendrik Hämke at the conservation project in tecoman

INDEX

Editor's note

Volunteer story – Hendrik Hämke at the Conservation Project in Tecoman



Medical Outreach – Reaching those in need



Dirty day – Cleaning Ecological Park 'Las Peñas' in Ciudad Guzman



Care Workshop – Early Child Development



Editor's Note

Welcome to our April edition of the Projects Abroad Mexico newsletter. Since the arrival of spring on the 21st of last month, we have had great weather here. Although it has been a little bit too hot for some of us, fresh winds in the afternoons with a clear blue sky during the day and colorful trees have definitely made up for it. Adding to the joyfulness that this season brings, April is also the month for holidays and everyone is getting ready to get on the road and visit the beach from the 14th until the 20th. Naturally, sharing the holiday spirit, all our volunteers are also getting prepared for some road trip adventures of their own on the way to the sea coast.

Before departing to their sun-tanning voyages, the volunteers and local Projects Abroad staff have taken part in various activities in which they have been able to help clean protected ecological parks, assist doctors offering free medical check-ups in a marginalized community, attend a Care Workshop to better their understanding of how to improve their work in the care projects and help save baby turtles in our conservation project. That has meant lots of work but we have always been very proud of it and all the volunteers have been excited to take part in them.

Joining in the excitement that the season brings, this edition of the newsletter will revisit some of the most significant contributions that Projects Abroad Mexico alongside our volunteers have made in various communities. We begin by presenting you our Placement of the Month, where we talk about our conservation project in 'Tecoman'. Next, we show you the work done during our medical outreach in 'La Floresta'. Then we bring you the work done during the dirty day in Cd. Guzman, where our Projects Coordinator, 'Jous', organized the cleanup of ecological park 'LasPeñas'. Finally, we talk about the Care Workshop organized by Projects Coordinator, Jonatan Torres.

Hope you enjoy!

Juan Miguel Ruiz Flores

Information Manager

German volunteer, Hendrik Hämke, spends 8 weeks at the Conservation Project in Tecoman

Mexico is a country that is undoubtedly blessed with an abundance of natural beauty. From jungles, mangroves and deserts to mountains and volcano's, the country has a wide variety of ecosystems. However, rapid economic development in the last decades has jeopardized the future of these ecosystems and with them the future of various animal species that are fast becoming endangered.



The Conservation Project in Mexico, directly funded and managed by Projects Abroad, has undertaken the important task of protecting three species of

sea turtles that are nearing the brink of extinction. The camp is located near the town of Tecoman in the El Chupadero beach, in the state of Colima. Olive Ridley turtles, Green turtles and Leatherback sea turtles are being protected by volunteers and the Projects Abroad team.

On site, Oliver (Conservation Manager), Flora (Conservation Coordinator), and Rene (Conservation Camp Assistant), work hard not only to protect the sea turtles, but also to help defend a lagoon with crocodiles and a mangrove from pollution and overexploitation. Volunteer help is not only welcomed but also necessary for the continuity of the placement and the achievement of its goals. 18-year-old Hendrik Hämke from Germany wanted to be a part of such an important project; he signed up with Projects Abroad to spend 8 weeks volunteering at the Conservation Project. "When I saw the sea turtles scampering down the beach to the sea and I think how they would not survive without our help, I think of how

wrong the world sometimes can be; but also how there is a way for us to help”, says Hendrik.



“Our main goal is the preservation of three sea turtle species. We do so by patrolling twenty five kilometers of sea coast during the night, looking for turtle nests. We then collect the eggs and take them to our camp where we look after

them.” In the mornings, volunteers check the nests in the camp and, when they find hatchlings, they simply collect the baby turtles and release them onto the beach near the ocean: “Baby turtles need to be released close to the ocean, this way they remember their way back to the beach to lay their own eggs one day”.



Flora Blackett has been working with Projects Abroad for more than a year at the turtle camp. She mentions that the protection of sea turtles is not the only task of the team. They also look after a mangrove near the camp where they survey species of birds and collect

data about their migration patterns: “The point is to have a survey of all the species of birds that live within the mangrove. This will help us understand where they prefer to live and how they have been affected by human action.” Throughout his stay, Hendrik has had many good experiences but one stands as the most memorable: “Once, we released baby turtles from three nests, we needed to use a huge bucket to transport all of them to the beach. When I saw them scampering in the sand looking for the sea, with the sun setting, this is an image that will stay with me my whole life.”

The camp has the infrastructure needed to cover all the basic needs of those who live there. However, being near a typical coastal Mexican town, life here can be quite different from other environments: “Living in a big city in Germany is one thing, but here I have learned that there is another type of life somewhere else. Here, for example, where there is no internet or telephone connection, it is quite different from whatever else you have experienced and can deeply change your life”.



Reaching those in need: Medical Outreach at La Floresta in Guadalajara



Last Saturday the 22nd of March, volunteers working at the medical projects took part in a medical outreach which sought to bring medical aid to people living in a marginalized community known as La Floresta, located on the outskirts of Guadalajara. Apart from those volunteers who are already assisting in medical placements, volunteers from other projects joined in the effort.

Volunteers Thuy-Mai Nguyen (United States), Nando Lüdke and Rabea Lübke (Germany), all from our medical placements, worked alongside Laura Marker (Denmark), from our veterinary medicine placement; Andréanne Lessard (Canada), who works at the care project; and Stéphanie



Pelletier, as well as Daphne Piché (Canada), from our animal care placement. Their main tasks included assisting the medic staff funded by Projects Abroad working directly with the patients, organizing the people who were arriving at the medical outreach and help spread the word about our work.

The community, 'La Floresta', is an irregular settlement ironically located right in front of one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. People started living here building their houses with whatever materials they could find (cardboard, aluminum and some pieces of wood), with no basic services provided privately or publicly. Their houses can hardly withstand wind and rain, getting too cold in winter and too hot in summer. However, with the



help of local NGOs this people have found a way to regularize their situation with the local government and have been able to build emergency houses with better materials, slightly improving their living conditions.

"Today we are working in a very poor community where people don't have any medical assistance or insurance", says 18-year-old Nando, who aspires to become a doctor in Germany. "We are giving free medical check-ups to the people of this community".

The main goal of this medical outreach has been precisely to reach as many people as possible living in poor conditions to give them access to medical assistance, which they rarely have. Due to their living conditions, illnesses such as cold and flu are unfortunately not rare. To achieve the goal, Projects Abroad Mexico partnered with a local NGO called TECHO, who have worked with this community for more than two years. Once patients were

checked and the doctors determined that a treatment was needed, Projects Abroad Mexico got the medication and distributed them according to doctor's notes.



Volunteers provided relevant help to patients and doctors alike. From assisting the medical staff, taking notes and checking the patients, to getting the medical camp ready and organizing those who were arriving for the check-up.

At the end of the day, after five hours of hard work under the sun, volunteers, doctors, and local Projects Abroad staff went back to the city to rest. For some volunteers this was a very impressive experience since they closely faced one of the saddest realities in Mexico. However, they felt happy for the effort in helping people in need.



Volunteers in Ciudad Guzman take upon themselves the Cleanup of Ecological Park 'Las Peñas'

On Friday the 28th of March, our volunteer coordinator in Guzman, 'Jous', organized a cleanup in a natural protected area known as Las Peñas with the help of our volunteers located at Guzman for their monthly dirty day.



Jous spoke of how lucky this town is due to the incredible nature that surrounds it: "Ciudad Guzman (Guzman City) is surrounded by great natural areas, one of them being Las Peñas, an interesting place with beautiful rock

formations", says Jous. During the rainy season, part of the ecological park becomes a river that goes down to the town which adds to the beauty of the place.

However, the beauty of the park is sadly challenged by visitors who leave lots of their rubbish behind: "People from Guzman get to enjoy their weekends here doing some rock climbing and family barbecues", shares Jous who, after his last visit before the cleanup, saw how the empty river was full of plastic bottles, bags, and some glass.





Unfortunately, according to Jous, there is not a lot of effort by local authorities to preserve the park in a clean condition which is why, after discussing this with the volunteers from Projects Abroad, got hands-on-work to clean the Las Peñas River: “After having a great meal with some local tortas that were shared

with the park guards, we went to clean the river with a good quantity of bags and tools to collect all the rubbish”.

Jous insists that: “Las Peñas River is a great and beautiful place that deserves to not have a trace of this kind of waste”. However, as seen by all volunteers during the dirty day, regular visitors do not seem to have the same opinion about the park since, after reaching the end of the river, a total of six huge bags were full of all kinds of bottles and objects including shoes, toys and much more.

Despite the fact that many visitors leave lots of rubbish, the dirty day showed also a bit of hope: “The people we found on our way got the message about the importance of keeping this place clean and some even thanked us for the cleaning and also said how our work was an example worth emulating”, says Jous.



By the end of the cleanup, all the volunteers were exhausted due to the physical effort. In spite of this, all of them are equally excited about the next dirty day organized by Projects Abroad which, they hope, has to do with cleaning a natural park.

Early Child Development: Care Workshop to improve the work we do in our care placements



Following the management plans for care projects, Projects Abroad Mexico organized a care workshop on Thursday the 10th of April. The workshop was directed to volunteers working on the care projects either in orphanages or in institutions focused on giving educational opportunities to children with disabilities. Attendees to the workshop were Harley Debeuc (United Kingdom), Anna Lundal (Norway), Andréanne Lessard (Canada), and Nando Lüedtke (Germany). Jonatan Torres, projects coordinator, was in charge of presenting the workshop.

The name of the workshop was 'Early Child Development'. The main objective, rather than give a lecture about the topic, was to present volunteers involved in care projects with tools that could help them impact their placements more positively and the lives of the children they look after.

Jonatan mentioned that Early Child Development is a concept that includes a series of techniques that aim to stimulate and develop skills and abilities during early childhood. It also aims to prevent actual or potential disorders, as well as to



stimulate compensatory skills. One of the most important things is to recognize is that the environment that surrounds the child deeply affects her/his development.

That is why, by learning some of these techniques, volunteers working in care projects can positively impact the lives of the babies and children they care for. For instance, during the workshop, Jonatan mentioned some of the actual benefits that come with early child stimulation such as the development of various types of intelligence, more social skills (since they become more self-sufficient individuals) and happier and less stressed lives due to the tools they possess to solve problems and difficult situations.

Attendees found this workshop not only interesting but also helpful for their work and hope to see more workshops like this one happening more regularly. Of course, as part of the care management plan, Projects Abroad Mexico will continue to create more and better workshops every month.



ProjectsAbroad



Facebook: Projects Abroad Mexico – The Official Group

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/projectsabroad.mexico/>



Twitter: @ Proj_AbroadMEXI

https://twitter.com/Proj_AbroadMEXI



Projects Abroad Blog – Mexico

<http://www.mytripblog.org/pg/groups/255/mexico/>



Read our monthly Newsletter

<http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-destinations/mexico/newsletters-from-mexico/>