

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad **Bolivia**

January 2013



Editor's Letter

Hi all ,

Welcome to the January edition of our Newsletter for Projects Abroad Bolivia. This newsletter aims to inform all ur 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!



Carmen Herbas
Country Director

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Credits

Rhea Newman
Care, one month, UK

When I finished university in June, I decided that I wanted to do something a bit different before starting a job in October, so I decided to volunteer to do a Care Project in Bolivia. I only arranged the project a couple of months in advance and in reality had very little idea of what I was getting myself into, but it was without doubt one of the best experiences of my life! I spent September working at an orphanage called CATD (Centro de Acogida Temporal para personas con Discapacidad) which is a Bolivian state-run orphanage for children with physical and mental disabilities. The orphanage houses around 30 children, aged from 6 months to twenty years, cared for by a team of nurses and physiotherapists. Conditions in the orphanage are quite basic and the resources available are quite limited, but what the orphanage lacks in resources is definitely made up for by the care and dedication of the staff.

When I first arrived at CATD I cannot deny I felt completely overwhelmed by what I saw. I was initially struck by how many children there seemed to be, how few staff there seemed to be looking after them, and what limited resources the staff had at their disposal to care for these children. Despite setting out with ideas of trying to make a difference as I believe many volunteers do, leaving the orphanage after my first day I could not distract myself from a depressing feeling that in reality, given the short duration of my stay in Bolivia and my lack of any specialist skills, I would not be able to make a difference to the lives of these children.

However one thing I have learned from my time in Bolivia is that it does not take much to bring a smile to the face of a child and that in itself can make a difference. Working at CATD I found that in many ways the children were very similar to other children I had worked with in the UK: for example I encountered children who needed endless encouragement to eat a meal while others could never seem to have enough food; another child who would do anything to get attention such as swing dangerously high on the swings or throw anything, from shoes to dirty nappies, over the fence of the orphanage; and finally I encountered numerous children who did not understand the concept of sharing and any request to share toys or attention would be met with immediate tantrums. The children at CATD may have quite severe disabilities and they may be living in what to most people appear quite basic conditions, but ultimately they are just like any other children; looking for someone to teach them, play with them and above all show them love, care and attention.



So while at first I may have felt highly unqualified to be working in an orphanage such as CATD and may have questioned the impact that I could make in such a short time, in time I came to realise that I did have something, albeit seemingly insignificant, to offer these children. I may not have been able to do much to help the children with their disabilities or to provide the orphanage with the resources that it needed but during the month I worked at CATD I could play games with the children, teach them a few basic things and above all I could be one more person in the orphanage to give them love, care and attention. And that is exactly what I spent my month in Bolivia doing!



The work at CATD was quite varied but most days would involve pushing children on swings, trying to manoeuvre the broken roundabout, as well as doing exercises with specific children, under the supervision of the physiotherapists, to help them improve their balance or to strengthen certain parts of their body. Sometimes I would bring resources from home or from the Projects Abroad Office so that the children could draw, colour, or play card games (although they were generally more interested in looking at the cards than playing games!). As a volunteer, my primary role was to supervise and play with the children but I was also there to help support the staff, particularly during meal times and sometimes with dressing or washing the children. A couple of times a week the staff also take the children to a Sports Centre where they would do a variety of activities from expressive dance (while I was there they were working towards a performance of Snow White which was adorable), to throwing games and running races. These days were some of the highlights of my time at CATD because the children were always so excited about the prospect of going somewhere different to play.

Leaving CATD and saying goodbye to the children who, during the past month, had become such a part of my life was really difficult. I know that I have not significantly changed their lives, but they have certainly changed mine and I will miss them greatly. I hope that maybe one day I can return to CATD for another morning of pushing swings or playing on the broken (although I hope it will be fixed) roundabout. I also hope that more people will choose to volunteer for CATD and be able to give these children the love and care that they deserve. Sometimes people are reluctant to volunteer to work with children with disabilities because, like me, they do not feel qualified to do so. But if you have a heart for helping children, then in your own way you can make a small difference. As volunteers we are not going to be able to transform the lives of the children we work with but for children who have so little, just being there to make them laugh, play games with them and give them a hug from time to time, really means a lot. That is why volunteering at CATD is the most worthwhile thing I have ever done and I would highly recommend it to anyone else thinking about volunteering.

Laura Dall
3 months, Music, Denmark

Jeg har nu levet mit liv her i Bolivia i 2,5 måneder, og er fuldstændig forelsket i dette land. Inden min afrejse havde jeg mange forskellige tanker om denne tur, og hvilke problemer jeg ville have undervejs. Ville sproget være en stor hindring, ville jeg komme godt ud af det med min værtsfamilie, ville jeg kunne håndtere boernehjemsboern med en helt anden baggrund end de boernehjemsboern jeg har passeret i Danmark, ville jeg få venner her i Bolivia, osv? Alle disse tanker viste sig heldigvis at være unoendelige, og jeg er nu så glad af at skulle forlade dette land, at jeg ville blive nogle måneder mere hvis jeg havde pengene.

Inden jeg tog afsted havde jeg haft et sabbatar efter gymnasiet, hvor jeg har arbejdet og gået på MGK, musikalsk grundkursus, men jeg ønskede at lave noget mere inden studiestart. Jeg ville gerne rejse i Sydamerika, lære spansk, lave frivilligt arbejde, og lære noget om fremmede musikkulturer, og efter at have søgt igennem diverse internetsider, fandt jeg frem til Projects Abroads, som med musikprojektet i Bolivia kunne dække alle de ønsker. Jeg havde mulighed for både at arbejde på musikprojektet og careprojektet, og er glad for at jeg valgte begge.

Inden min afrejse ville jeg gerne forberede mig på musikken, men det var svært da jeg ikke viste så meget om boliviansk musik, og hvilken slags der ville blive spillet på boernehjemmet. Det viste sig at være boliviansk folkløse (fx Los Kjarkas og Kalamarka), hvilket jeg er rigtig glad for, da jeg nu kender en masse boliviansk musik, og endda kan spille en smule panfløjte og charango (et lille, guitarlignende instrument). I Danmark er min hovedkompetence dog klaver, og jeg fik at vide at der ville være et keyboard på boernehjemmet, hvilket der også var, men det virkede ikke. Heldigvis kan jeg også spille en smule guitar, og dette var mere end nok til at lære boerne akkorder, så de kan spille med en større gruppe. Mine kompetencer kommer dog til kort når det gælder panfløjte, flauta dulce og trommer, men heldigvis er musiklæreren der 3 dage om ugen til at hjælpe med dette.

Min daglige arbejdsrutine er denne: jeg møder på boernehjemmet, Ciudadela Sedeges, kl 14.00, og arbejder indtil kl 18.00. Dette er kun 4 timer hver dag, men da jeg også har haft spanskundervisning, både gennem Projects Abroad og med en lærer udefra, og da der er mange andre ting man gerne vil nå i Cochabamba, er det tilstrækkeligt. Først er jeg i et casita, et lille hus med ca. 10 børn og



en "mor", i 2 timer. Mens jeg er her er de stoerste boern i skole, og jeg passer derfor 4-5 boern i alderen 3-6 aar. Jeg laeser historier for dem (selvom ens spanske ikke er godt nok til at forstaa alt, kan man faktisk sagtens laese hoejt), laver "lektier" med dem, dvs. Laerer dem om alfabetet og simple regnestykker, og leger med dem. Det er dejligt at vise dem en masse kaerlighed og saa meget overskud som muligt, da der kun er en "mor" i hvert casita, og hun umuligt har tid til at vise alle 10 boern nok opmaerksomhed, selvom hun er rigtig soed og god ved dem. Jeg er kommet til at holde rigtig meget af boernene, og det bliver haardt at sige farvel. De er alle sammen smaa charmetrolde paa deres egen maade, selvom de kan vaere nogle vaerre ballademagere.

Efter at have vaeret hos de smaa boern, gaar jeg over i musiklokalet omkring kl. 16. Her har jeg lavet forskellige ting. Det er svaert for mig at undervise i musik, da mit sprog ikke er det bedste, isaer i starten af mit ophold, hvor jeg stort set ikke kunne saette to ord sammen. Det er dog forbedret meget, og jeg nyder at kunne snakke med boernene nu. En ting man skal vaenne sig til i Bolivia er, at folk har et abstrakt forhold til tid, og at man derfor ikke skal regne med, at man noedvendigvis har nogle elever den foerste halve time. Men saa er det altsaa bare ud at finde dem! Det er ikke fordi de ikke gider have musik, men simpelthen fordi de ikke er klar over hvad klokken er, eller at de simpelthen har glemt det. Men naar de foerst er i lokalet, vil de meget gerne spille og synge. Musikaereren er ogsaa billedkunstlaerer, saa de sidste uger har vi arbejdet paa et stort vaegmaleri i musiklokalet, og da jeg ogsaa nyder at male, passer det mig fint. Dette er dog en anden ting man skal vaenne sig til i Bolivia – der er ikke noedvendigvis meget struktur og information om tingene, og pludselig en dag skulle vi aabenbart male vaeggen, uden jeg havde faaet noget at vide om det. Men en smule uforudsigelighed er en del af hverdagen her. Det kan ogsaa vaere, at det ikke er muligt at arbejde en dag pga. blokader og strejker af den offentlige transport, men dette er blot spaendende.

Udover arbejdet har jeg vaeret utrolig glad for mit sociale liv her. Jeg bor i et hus med en stor boliviansk familie, min danske veninde som ogsaa har arbejdet for Projects Abroad (journalistikprojektet),



og en del andre frivillige fra andre organisationer, og det har jeg vaeret rigtig glad for. Den eneste ulempe har vaeret, at vi har snakket meget engelsk. Der er ogsaa et godt sammenhold internt i Projets Abroad de frivillige imellem, og hvis man har lyst kan man spise ude og gaa i byen med folk herfra hver aften stort set. Min veninde fra Danmark og jeg ville gerne moede nogle bolivianere ogsaa for at deltage i den bolivianske kultur, og vi har derfor danset chacarela, en sydamerikansk dans, i en stor gruppe med mange unge bolivianere fra universitetet. Dette var en rigtig god maade at faa bolivianske venner paa, og giver en spaendende insigt i de unges kultur her. I weekenderne har jeg rejst en del, og ogsaa haft tid til fest- og afslapningsweekender i Cochabamba, hvor der ogsaa er mange ting at se.

Alt i alt har det vaeret en fantastisk oplevelse, og jeg kan kun anbefale at rejse til Bolivia! Dette har vaeret 3 maaneder af mit liv jeg meget noedigt ville have vaeret foruden.

Project Updates

Donation for Villa Esperanza

Mariel Torrez
Desk Officer, Bolivia

Even though Christmas time is over, Projects Abroad decided to make a donation to one of the orphanages that our volunteers in destination go to work: Villa Esperanza.

The donation consisted of a brick lot for rebuilding one the orphanage walls that was about to fall down putting the children's safety in jeopardy.

Enjoy the pics!





A picture is worth more than a thousand words just look at the following images that were chosen to be our Newsletter covers during 2012.

Thanks to all the people who were kind enough to share the images of their time in Bolivia with us!





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