

# ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad **Bolivia**



## Editor's Letter



Carmen Herbas  
Country Director

Hi all ,

Welcome to the September 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](mailto:bolivia@projects-abroad.org)

Best wishes from Bolivia!

## Contents

<b>Volunteer Stories</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Projects Updates</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Photos in Month</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Credits</b>	<b>10</b>

## Volunteer Stories

## A work of the heart: Art and dance to change lives

Mariel Torrez  
Desk Officer, Bolivia

There are always some people that leave their mark wherever they go. This was the case of Nacera Assas, a dance teacher from France that decided to swap Paris for Cochabamba for one month to work as a care volunteer in Bolivia.

I still remember the first time I spotted her at the airport. There was something special about her that made her stand out in the crowd and it was impossible not to be surprised by her tremendous energy after meeting her.

“What do you do? Do you like dancing? How far are from the downtown? How is the center where I’m going to work?” She began to ask all these questions as soon as we got into the airport taxi despite having spent more than 13 hours travelling to get to our country.

I was not the only one to be surprised by Nacera’s vitality. The same happened to the people with whom she worked at Sayari Warmi, a local institution that shelters teen girls that had been forced into prostitution.

Nacera’s goal was simple: To help those girls to reconnect with their bodies in a positive way after having survived the difficult experience of child prostitution, so she came up with a tight working plan that combined yoga lessons with physical exercises and Latin dance sessions.

Nacera explains that she just wanted to “give the girls confidence through the activities” that she was able to plan. “I hoped”, she adds, “to bring a bit of joy and love by sharing my passion”.





In fact, the girls with whom she worked were so happy with this novelty introduced within their social reinsertion programs and were eager to learn anything that she proposed to them.

The director of the institution, Lidia Chavez, tell us about it that “Nas,” as she was fondly called there, “was able to introduce us to something as simple as it is dancing” as a tool to help these girls to overcome their difficult past.

The girls, she acknowledges, “have been much better with her presence,” and Sayari Warmi is looking forward to receiving more volunteers for the Dance therapy Program started by Nacera.

We went back to Sayari Warmi once more after this amazing volunteer went back to France. The girls keep asking about her. They miss her, of course, but most important is that they seem to be willing now to give the world another chance.

If you ask me what was the key of this change. I made mine the words said by many people involved in this story: “To be able to work with your heart and approach the others without judging them.”

Thanks for everything Nas!



## Volunteer Stories

## Teaching music at Centro de Rehabilitación Manuela Gandarillas for a month

Ximena Noya  
Journalism Supervisor, Bolivia

Ellie Sherwood, a 20-year-old British citizen, decided to come to Bolivia to support Centro de Rehabilitación Manuela Gandarillas with the Music Project.

Ellie was involve with music since the age of 4, and now she studies music at the University of Manchester; "It has always been a massive part of my life."

"I came to Bolivia with Projects Abroad because it offered a great music programme that particularly emphasizes the therapeutic benefits of making music. Back in the UK, I work with a lot of children with disabilities, so using music to help improve the lives of others is really something."

Ellie is very passionate about the music project in Bolivia; once she returns to university, she plans to complete the last year of her music degree and then do a post-graduate course in either music teaching or music therapy.

At the Music Project at Manuela Gandarillas, she had so much fun working especially with Christian, a music professor who is also blind like his students, and thanks to him her relationship with the pupils became amazing. Every person at the Centro de Rehabilitación Manuela Gandarillas is either completely or mostly blind, and their ages range from 6 - 50 years old. As a volunteer, Ellie teaches piano to individuals or the recorder to larger groups, or generally helps Christian with singing and guitar playing. It's a really relaxed atmosphere where the pupils come and go, so you never quite know what the day is going to be like! Music is the best way to connect with them, and they are really, really talented at learning new pieces.





"I feel like I've made a difference there because I have taught them new songs and skills and when Christian isn't there, I've taken a more forward role and which has built a really strong relationship between me and the children."

Every day Ellie teaches piano and recorder with a bit of guitar-playing and singing. Students love learning new songs, and she tries to teach them as many as possible and either help Christian with big groups, or work with smaller groups by herself.

"It isn't just making music though; chatting, playing and just being with the beginners is part of the project too. I work from 8-12 every morning, because the pupils go to a different school in the afternoons. The girls especially love Western music like One Direction!"

She told us that the chance to work with blind people has been an incredible experience; "They are so lively and positive, and love learning things and having fun. It definitely brings a new perspective on life!"

"Things are incredibly different in Bolivia. Things are a lot more relaxed than back home, which takes some time getting used to. It makes you put a lot of effort into things, because you don't always get told what to do and when! I couldn't ask for anything more from my host mum, my project or the volunteers that I have met here - everything has been an amazing experience where I have learnt a lot and had the best time!"



## Projects Updates

## A new volunteering opportunity --San Jose Nursing Home

Mariel Torrez  
Desk Officer

Joy has made its way into San Jose Nursing Home again thanks to the work done by two French volunteers, Maylis Marshall and Charlotte Marguery.

These volunteers arrived a couple of days ago to work on a new care placement of ours as they wanted to use their holiday time to do something else for others while travelling across South America.

It didn't take too long to Charlotte and Mailys to realize that the elderly people that live at the Nursing Home appreciated very much their small gestures of affection more than anything, so they decided to organize a party with balloons, music and candy to commemorate our city's anniversary.

The grandpas and grandmas sang, clapped, and even danced following the songs played by our two Freddys -one of them our care supervisor and the other the music teacher of Ciudadela Orphanage - and Juliane Lund, a volunteer from Denmark who kindly helped us to liven up the celebration.

There is no need to say that the event was such a success that we cannot wait to repeat this activity, and hope that the next time there will be more volunteers to help us to put a smile on the faces of San Jose's residents.





## Projects Updates

Projects Abroad Bolivia has been a constant presence in many local orphanages and education centers in our town thanks to the volunteering work done in the last 11 years.

It could be said that there is a piece of us in all the places where we have worked and because of that we were really glad when one of the special needs orphanages that we work with, CATD, was able to finish the renovation work of its building started some while ago.

To celebrate this, it was organized an event where several institutions, among them ours, were recognized by the Bolivian Social Services because of support given to this center.

We wanted to share this with you because this is an important recognition not only for Projects Abroad, but also for all the volunteers that have worked there.

We couldn't have accomplished this without you former volunteers of CATD.

Congratulations!



## Care program: Good news about CATD Orphanage!

Mariel Torrez  
Desk Officer





## Photos of the month

One of the things that volunteers appreciated the most about our country is the diversity of cultures that may be found here, so every time that we have opportunity to give volunteers a taste of this, we organize social activities where they can experience this other Bolivia.

Therefore, we wanted to share you the pictures of the last social activity organized on which an Afro Bolivian group dance and sing for all our volunteers in destination.

The saya, the Afro Bolivians' catchy rhythm, warmed up pretty soon the hearts of the people present, and the party started off.



## *Credits*

Editor: Mariel Torrez

Design: Ximena Noya

Articles: Mariel Torrez

Ximena Noya

Photos: Rocío Triveño - Cover: Care volunteer at  
San Jose Nursing Home

Rocío Triveño

Davied Meerstra

Freddy Mita

Ximena Noya

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](mailto:bolivia@projects-abroad.org)

Layout designed by Ximena Noya Journalist Supervisor | Projects Abroad Bolivia