

Volunteer Focus – Former Australian Care Volunteer, Heather Scott, reflects on her experience in Mexico



Monthly Dirty Day: Daycare Center, 'Divina Providencia', is renovated with the help of our volunteers



Placement Focus - Projects Abroad Mexico partners with a new Placement to start a Business and Sports Project: Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía



Dentistry Outreach at 'Grandes Chicos'



Volunteer focus – Heather Scott and her experience in Mexico



Editor's Note

Projects Abroad always looks forward to engaging in meaningful projects in all of the countries where we work. These projects should impact their communities and environments in a positive way by improving living conditions, protecting the environment and, in general, making the world a better place. All of this, while at the same time providing a life-long experience for those who volunteer their time and effort while expecting nothing in return.

Projects Abroad volunteers form a unique group of individuals who have flown, or will fly, far from their homes to work in wonderful destinations where they can do something meaningful. They are generous, energetic, curious and committed to making a better world for everyone.

At Projects Abroad, we believe in those people and their ideals. We also believe that through cross-cultural cooperation, we will be able to create a world with greater mutual respect and understanding.

With all of this in mind, we, at Projects Abroad Mexico, are very happy to share with you the May Newsletter. Here you will find the experience of former volunteer, Heather Scott, along with the great work done by our volunteers during our monthly Dirty Day. There is also information about our new project partner, Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía, and our Dentistry Outreach, which involved doing dental checkups on children living in an orphanage.

We hope you not only enjoy reading these stories but are also motivated by these experiences to do something important and positive for your community and your environment.

Cheers!

Juan Miguel Ruiz Flores

Communications Officer Mexico

Former Australian Care Volunteer, Heather Scott, reflects on her experience in Mexico

In the spring of 2010, Heather Scott (26) from Australia, decided to embark on an adventure to discover a country she had always wanted to visit while at the same time do productive work that could help others. Not only did she work for two months on a Care Project in Ciudad Guzman and a Teaching Project at a local university, she also joined the Turtle Conservation team in Tecoman, which lies right on the coast.



Heather arrived with many expectations about what she was going to encounter. However, Mexico turned out to be very different to what she had anticipated. Her initial project took her to an orphanage for young boys whose parents had been incarcerated. Heather

experienced being met initially with a mixture of hesitance and curiosity. However, this was soon replaced with genuine interest and friendliness.

“As I understood, the majority of volunteers who had worked at this orphanage had been girls. I will never forget the one afternoon when I introduced my friend, a fellow Australian, to the boys. They loved him!”

While working at the care placement, Heather had the chance to appreciate all the work done behind the scenes by the permanent staff there. “The support of volunteers is very valuable at this Care Project, even though it is still a relatively small portion of the work required to run an orphanage seven days a week”.

During her Teaching Project, Heather took on the task of leading an English conversation club at the local university. “This proved to be quite challenging for someone with little teaching experience but the mixture of students from 18 to 87 years old, all with a genuine hunger



to learn English, made it worthwhile”. Up to this day, Heather is still in contact with her star student, Josefina, an 87 year old woman who was studying Computer Studies and English at the university.



During her final days in the country, Heather visited the Turtle Camp, which is designed to protect the turtle eggs that are laid along the shoreline. Considering that she was told that it was not the best season, it really topped off the whole trip when she found nest after nest of fresh eggs. The midnight quad bike rides along the beach searching for turtle prints and new nests also just made it that much better.

For Heather, Mexico was a country full of surprises. The Mexican food, her host mother, Lesli, “who would put up with my attempts to improve my Spanish and, despite having a broken leg, was always full of energy and a friendly face to come home to every night”.

“I have a lot of respect for the friends that I made while I was in Mexico and a lot of that comes down to being involved with Projects Abroad.” Heather found a fascinating country in Mexico; a country you have to experience for yourself.

Monthly Dirty Day: Daycare Center, 'Divina Providencia', is renovated with the help of our volunteers

The day care center 'Divina Providencia' was founded by a catholic group of nuns with the objective to provide poor and single moms a place where they could leave their children while they go to work. These single moms are the foundations of their families



which most of the time depend entirely on their income to survive. A regular nursery is often not affordable for these families which in turn decide to make a living in the streets, taking their children with them, not allowing them to properly rest and sometimes putting their lives at risk. The 'Divina Providencia' day care center describes itself as a clean, safe and loving option for the children of those families living in marginalization.



Since 2012, Projects Abroad Mexico has partnered with this center, providing enthusiastic and empathetic international volunteers who seek to leave a positive mark in the lives of those



children and their families. As is the tradition in Projects Abroad, every month in Mexico we gather all volunteers in our destination and team up towards a specific cause to help one of our project partners.

This month it was the turn of 'Divina Providencia' where volunteers and staff helped decorate the walls of the dormitories to make them more fun and friendly for the children.

This month, our team was formed by Anna Lundal (Norway), Matthieu Schöne (Germany), Frederik Bendz (Denmark), Andréanne Lessard (Canada), Harley Debeuc (UK), and Carmen Meuffels (Netherlands).

As it is our tradition at Projects Abroad Mexico, in all our Dirty Days we seek to create small changes that lead to better environments. In this case, we chose to decorate the walls with friendly images for the children. However, the real impact of this activity was not just in the decoration. The activity also had the advantage of getting together volunteers and the children who were curious about what was happening and got close to volunteers to chat. Of course, the children then went to sleep!

Projects Abroad Mexico partners with a new Placement to start a Business and Sports

Project: Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía



The city of Guadalajara, like many other smaller Mexican cities, is rapidly becoming urbanized and moving more and more towards an industrialized society; with access to a wide variety of technologies, information, education, entertainment, and more.

However, despite this rapid growth, there still exists a large part of Mexican society that does not have access to the advantages of industrialized development. A huge part of the population does not have access to basic services such as education, health care, proper nourishment and running water. Children living under these conditions rarely go to school or have the chance to visit a doctor.

Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía A.C. (Children and Teenagers in Harmony) is one of an increasing number of institutions trying to cope with such problems. During the month of April, Projects Abroad Mexico partnered with this institution; in order to work together to improve the living conditions of underprivileged children and teenagers living in Guadalajara.





Lic. Sarahí Estrada Ramírez, who decided to form a team of committed individuals with whom she would later found Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía.

“Volunteers at this institution are always welcome. They always bring their experience, knowledge and skills with them, which adds enormously to our work. They are always generous and willing to help with all they can.”

Maria Cristina also mentions that not only do the children benefit from the presence of international and local volunteers, but the permanent staff are always eager to learn all they can from others that come to help at the centre.

Projects Abroad is currently working with Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía on two fronts: A Business and Sports Project. At the Business Project, the institution seeks to gain financial sustainability for which they need volunteers willing to undertake projects to raise funds and initiate a small business to sell purified water.

At the Sports Project, Projects Abroad is providing enthusiastic and energetic volunteers to give various workshops to the children such as Tae Kwon Do, Capoeira, and other forms of Martial Arts. The institution already has material and a proper classroom to be used for this purpose.

With these two projects it is expected that Projects Abroad Mexico and its volunteers can positively impact the lives of children and teenagers who, without a centre like the Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía, would have few opportunities to strive for a better and brighter future.

Dentistry Outreach at 'Grandes Chicos'



Dentistry Outreaches, like Medical Outreaches, are special activities in which we gather all volunteers working on dentistry and medical projects and go to a community or a placement and

perform examinations with the help of dentists and doctors.

Last Tuesday, May 13, a special team from Projects Abroad Mexico went to our project partner Grandes Chicos, an orphanage for children and teenagers, to perform dentistry checkups on the children. Dentistry volunteer, Karolina Jamroz (25), from Poland, helped the dentist during the whole activity. She assisted in the checkup and gave a presentation to the children about oral hygiene in which she mentioned the proper way to brush the teeth, the proper use of dental floss and, to incentive the children to take care of their teeth, showed how bacteria look when they live for a long time in their mouths.

The main objective of the activity was to check the children's teeth to detect any type of problem that might have, mainly caries. By making sure about the children's oral hygiene needs, the dentist moved on to create a clinic history so that they could be later



referred to a clinic for the proper procedure. A second objective has been to teach the children about how to prevent any problem by brushing their teeth every time after they eat, using the dental floss and avoiding eating many candies. Though this last one might be difficult to achieve!

At the end of the outreach the children were very happy to have been visited by the volunteer and the dentist, and really took advantage by asking lots of interesting questions such as why is it that bacteria grow in your mouth? And, how does brushing your teeth actually get rid of the bacteria? All questions were answered by the volunteer and the dentist and now the children can take care of their smiles.



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