

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Mexico 



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EDITORIAL

Hi there!

Welcome to the new edition of the Official Newsletter for Projects Abroad Mexico!

This month's edition shares with you stories that seek to show you a part of the work carried out by volunteers and project partners in Guadalajara, Mexico. Work that is positively impacting our local communities and steadily increasing the quality of the conditions in which a lot of people live in the city and its surroundings.

There is still a lot of work to be done. And there is a lot of people willing to do something. That is what we aim to show in this issue of our newsletter.

Our first story is about a new addition to our large community of project partners in Mexico. Vihas de Vida is a non for profit organization that defends the human rights of those who live with HIV/AIDS. Respect, inclusion and fair access to health services are some of the values held by this organization.

Next comes the story of sports volunteer Simon Hendrikse, Capoeira master who hopes to positively affect the lives of young girls and boys living in marginalization. By teaching his beloved sport, he is doing what he can to give something good to the world.

Finally, we want to show our readers some of the most important cultural events happening in Mexico. This month we bring you a quick glance at the first flower festival in the state of Jalisco.

We hope you enjoy it!

Juan Miguel Ruiz Flores

Communications Officer Mexico



PROJECT UPDATES

No person should ever be excluded: the ethos of our new project partner, Vihas de Vida

Vihas de Vida is our new project partner in Guadalajara. This organization was founded 15 years ago, in 1999, with the intention to start bringing public attention to the problems of exclusion and discrimination against the people living with HIV/AIDS. Its founder and president, Paul Van Scoit Carballo, is a committed man who, alongside his team and volunteers, has fought for the respect of human rights of those who live with HIV.



“Our main mission is to generate a culture of respect and inclusion for those who live with HIV in the city of Guadalajara and its surroundings”, explains Paul who also shares with us the different areas in which they work. Education and training, human development, promotion and respect of human rights, and institutional development. Volunteers coming from abroad are welcome to join in any of these areas.

“This organization has been working for 15 years and in all this time we have always been dependent on the work of amazing people who volunteer their time and effort. Their collaboration has been strategic for our continued work”.

Paul stresses the importance of volunteers at Vihas de Vida by sharing with us how, the seven people who work as permanent staff, could not undertake the huge task of changing social perceptions towards people with HIV/AIDS. Right now there are 50 people volunteering in different projects including in sexual education, prevention measures, fund raising events and more.

“Right now we have included Megan Lane to our team. She is our first volunteer coming with Projects Abroad. She is working in institutional development where she supports our fund raising efforts”. Business volunteer, Megan Lane (United States), is working since the beginning of June at this organization. She is helping to increase the contact with the American retiree community living in the Riviera of the Chapala Lake to look for donors among a community deeply concerned by the problem of HIV and AIDS.

“We are looking for volunteers and interns who are aware of the social problem posed by HIV and AIDS. They should be self-critical, respectful, open-minded to LGBT communities, proactive and creative.” During the month of June, Projects Abroad is assisting Vihas de Vida with a fundraising event to be held on the 21st June. As our dirty day, we are getting all our volunteers in Guadalajara together to participate in this event. We will keep you informed!

VOLUNTEER STORIES

Capoeira can change the lives of less fortunate children: Dutch volunteer, Simon Hendrikse and his experience at the sports placement

Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía is an organization that aims to help children and teenagers living in underprivileged conditions to have access to primary and secondary school education. It also provides psychological as well as nutritional support. However, one of the areas in which support could not advance due to lack of proper staff was the sports class.

Since the middle of May, Simon Hendrikse, a Dutch volunteer from Rotterdam, has been working hard with the children at this organization to teach them his most beloved sport: capoeira. "With capoeira, you not only learn how to fight, how to dance or how to play music. You also learn how to become stronger individually and as a team. Since the children here have so much energy and live surrounded by so much violence, capoeira helps them to channel all that energy positively and shows the children other realities outside of their everyday lives".

Simon firmly believes that learning a martial art such as capoeira can help children and teenagers living in difficult conditions to overcome some of the most terrible aspects of their reality, such as violence. That is why he chose to travel to Mexico with Projects Abroad to work at a project where his knowledge could be put to good use.

"I chose Mexico because I wanted to share some of my knowledge to try to make the world a little bit better for the kids here". For him, teaching capoeira is the best way to achieve this. It is a sport that has a special place in his heart. Simon also has plenty of experience of working with children from difficult backgrounds in his own country.

Young children attending Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía have already had the chance to see Simon doing what he does best: jumping spectacularly through the air, moving gracefully across the ground and dancing and kicking rhythmically and confidently, displaying a great knowledge of the Brazilian martial art. "What I feel most proud about are the smiles that children who attend my class have when they arrive and when they are leaving. I am also proud of how fast these children are learning, which shows how much they want to learn". Simon is very confident that when his project comes to an end in August, the children will continue to practice capoeira.

Even though Niños y Adolescentes en Armonía has permanent staff members, the work of the volunteers is vital for areas such as the sports class. "Without volunteers, the school would not be able to do anything. Without other volunteers, there would be no capoeira or other workshops on top of the regular classes", says Simon, stressing the importance of volunteer work and sharing how grateful he feels for such an experience.



COUNTRY FOCUS

Flowers in Guadalajara: the first flower festival in the state of Jalisco



According to government officials, the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area, which comprises 4.5 million inhabitants, is the second most important market for flowers in Mexico. Here, consumers buy flowers for all sorts of events from Mother's Day to the Day of the Death and other religious festivities. It is estimated that annually 750 million Mexican pesos (58 million US dollars) are spent in a market that has a lot of potential to become international.

At the beginning of June, Guadalajara became the center for the first flower festival ever held in the state of Jalisco. An estimated 100 thousand visitors attended the festival which took place right in the heart of the cultural life of the city: Chapultepec Cultural Corridor (Corredor Cultural de Chapultepec).

Flower cultivators from Guadalajara and the neighboring municipalities of Tonalá, Mazamitla, Zapotlanejo, Atemajac and Ixtlahuacán del Río were part of the show displaying impressive decorative abilities in huge sculptures resembling houses, birds and even the Beetle's Yellow Submarine.

