



Whole Foods Market Team Member Volunteer Program

Volume 07

Newsletter

Welcome home Team Members!

The first group of the 2008 Whole Foods Market Team Member Volunteer Program really gave it their all and we look forward to this commitment and enthusiasm from Team Members in the months to come.

Alton Germain, our Country Director for Guatemala, had high praise for the group and I'd like to share it below:

"This group was very caring, loving and were very playful with the children. It's tough coming in here with little or no teaching experience or experience working with kids and we do what we can with the resources available. Of utmost importance is someone to tell the children that they are doing well, to praise them, to hug them. A hug, a "como estas" or a "bien hecho" goes a long way, maybe more than the Team Members know. What they have done here is monumental and I couldn't be more pleased with their development as volunteers and also with their Spanish skills. The desire and stamina of this group was on display as well. We know that they will be excellent ambassadors for this project and will raise awareness, educate and speak passionately about this project and the little mountain community of Pena Blanca."



CARNAVAL

Carnaval marked the arrival of the Team Members in January and the group was treated to some danzas folkloricas. Each grade had been practicing the previous week to prepare for their folkloric dance. The dances were a mixture of traditional Maya folklore and myths accompanied by Guatemalan music. In Guatemala as well as other Latin American countries, Carnaval can be a messy affair. Real eggs and egg shells filled with confetti, flour and water are evident on the clothes and in the hair of the Carnaval revelers. The TMs were all smiles during the dances and it was fantastic to see the children dressed up in traditional ceremonial clothing. After the dancing, the Team Members were presented to the community and assigned their classrooms and the local teachers they will be working with.

The children all brought in their comparsas, (Carnival dress) and were judged on different categories. Bartolo, the school principal asked Alex Agudelo, a TM from Florida, if she would like to help judge the contest as a part of the 5 person-judging panel. After the contest the children were awarded prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. By now it was almost lunch time and the community members invited us to stay and have lunch with them and the teachers. They prepared a special dish of pollo dorado, rice and a ton of tortillas! It was a very special day and we couldn't have dreamed of a better way to introduce the Team Members to the community.

When we asked "How has the loan changed your everyday life?"

A borrower immediately answered, "Freedom. Now I can feed my family, gather with friends, travel to the market, and take care of the elderly and disabled in my community."

Brenda Applehans, Team Member, Rocky Mountain Region

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STOVE PROJECT

Along with teaching in the school, the Team Members also spend time building a stove in one of the family's homes in the community. It's very satisfying work and always one of the best memories for the TMs.

Many of the families in the community don't have a working stove. The food is prepared on the ground with some cinder blocks to support the pot. This can be very hazardous and respiratory illness is rampant in third world countries because of this. The children are exposed to this harmful smoke from the time they are born and are constantly breathing in the smoke from these fires in a confined space.



The new "estufas mejoradas" eliminate this with an effective exhaust and chimney and a more efficient burner that utilizes less wood. Sara Engel from the North Atlantic region was our first "stover" and was excited to get started on the new stove. Ventura is the community mason and treasurer of the community. Ventura is also overseeing the construction of these new stoves. The addition of a new stove provided by the Whole Foods Team Members is the greatest gift these families can receive. The TMs also develop an emotional bond with these families and are doing something tangible and immediate to help this impoverished community. This first home was located near an "aldea" named "Tierra Linda", (Beautiful Land). It truly is beautiful and when Sara arrived, she couldn't believe the incredible view it afforded of the countryside and surrounding villages. This stove will be in the home for years to come and Sara has really made an impact on the lives of this family with her hard work and dedication to the project.

FOOD PROGRAM

One of the great things about this project is the food program. Before Whole Foods Market became involved with this community, the school didn't have any sort of nutritional program in place. With the support of the WFTMs we are able to fund a food program that consists of fruit every day and lunch. The children receive one piece of fruit in the morning, usually bananas, pineapples or oranges and they also receive lunch. We try to vary the lunch menu and have added pasta and eggs to the rotation. The staples are rice and beans and we always add a vegetable or two. The mothers also prepare pasta with tomato sauce and carrots, hard-boiled eggs with squash, beans with onions and salad and a whole host of other foods.



The children look forward to their morning snack of fruit and are always hungry when the lunch bell rings at noon. Many of these children come to school on an empty stomach and when school is finished they may go home to a meal of just tortillas and coffee. Malnutrition is higher here in Guatemala than any other Latin American country, the main reason being that the children do not get the vegetables and micronutrients that are needed for a balanced diet. With the support of the Whole Foods Team Members, we are able to give these children the vitamins, protein and nutrients that comprise a well-balanced diet. We've seen the difference in the children, they are healthier and more engaged in the lessons and on an almost daily basis a community member comes to me and says how grateful they are that we provide this food to their children.

TRIBAL GATHERING 2008

The weekend of March 8th and 9th included an array of activities to celebrate Whole Foods Market and the Whole Planet Foundation through Tribal Gathering 2008 in Austin, TX. GVI staff were honored to be a part of the weekend events and were warmly welcomed to Tribal by the TMs and WPF staff. Much of the weekend was spent speaking to past and future Team Members and WFM Team Leaders and reminding the TMs how they can participate. The WPF presentation was stunning and received a standing ovation, with Brenda and Mari, 2 past WFM TMVP participants brilliantly describing their experiences and how it benefited them and the communities they worked with. It was wonderful to see the excitement on the part of all Team Members to get involved and help. Many pay check contributions were received by WPF and the weekend was a categorical success.

Thank you and well done to the Whole Planet Team.

