

Dartmouth Alumni & Students for Honduras Newsletter May 2015

This past March, nine Dartmouth alumni and undergraduate students traveled to El Rosario, Honduras to run the seventh annual “Fuerza para el Futuro” leadership development camp. Since 2009, members of the Dartmouth community have traveled to the rural village of El Rosario to run this camp for local teens. In partnership with ACTS, a non-profit that has focused on sustainable development in this community for the last 30 years, Juliana Ortego '13 and Christine Averill '13 founded Dartmouth Alumni & Students for Honduras to continue bringing Dartmouth students to work with these teens as they learn the spirit of volunteerism and develop skills to become leaders in their community.

This year’s team included six wonderful Dartmouth undergraduates, all from different backgrounds. They boasted a wide variety of interests, ranging from economics to Ghanaian funeral customs, from traditional Mexican ballet folklórico to street pop dancing. All of our team members shared a passion for social justice and mentorship. The primary focus of our program this year was dental education, as ACTS has recently built a new dental clinic in the community scheduled to open in June. Additionally, we taught unique curricula to reinforce skills in public speaking, letter writing and teamwork.



*Christine Averill '13, Gricelda Ramos '18, Josefina Ruiz '17, Louise Barrias '18,
Nana Adjeiwaa-Manu '16, Angie Lee '17, Juliana Ortego '13, Daniel Lee '18*

Dental Education

A critical focus in El Rosario over recent months has been the establishment of a dental clinic. This project has demanded great community collaboration, and the Fuerza students were excited to contribute as well. The teens worked together to paint the exterior and interior of the clinic and stenciled pictures of teeth along the interior walls. After painting the dental clinic, students transformed two underutilized rooms of the neighboring medical clinic into living quarters for the dentist that will be working at the dental clinic for a yearlong residency.

José Caraccioli and Oscar Saavedra, two dentists from San Pedro Sula, joined us in El Rosario for the dental education component of the Fuerza program. They instructed the teens on how to teach dental hygiene and tooth-brushing skills. With their guidance, Fuerza students ran a two-day program of comprehensive dental education for families in El Rosario and the nearby villages of Los Planes and Carrezelitos. Some Fuerza students presented the dental hygiene and tooth-brushing lesson, some created file cards of the patients' demographic information and others guided patients in filling out WHO surveys about their present dental health and habits. Finally, José and Oscar did basic evaluations and noted the oral health of each patient. Every attendee left with a toothbrush, toothpaste and floss for each member of his or her family. The file cards and surveys are now data resources for the incoming resident dentist.



Fuerza students survey community members on their current dental health and habits

Fuerza students painting the interior of the newly constructed dental clinic



While ACTS operates primarily out of El Rosario, we have increasingly been traveling the roads radiating outward from the village in order to work with neighboring communities. Each village has a unique story and set of challenges.

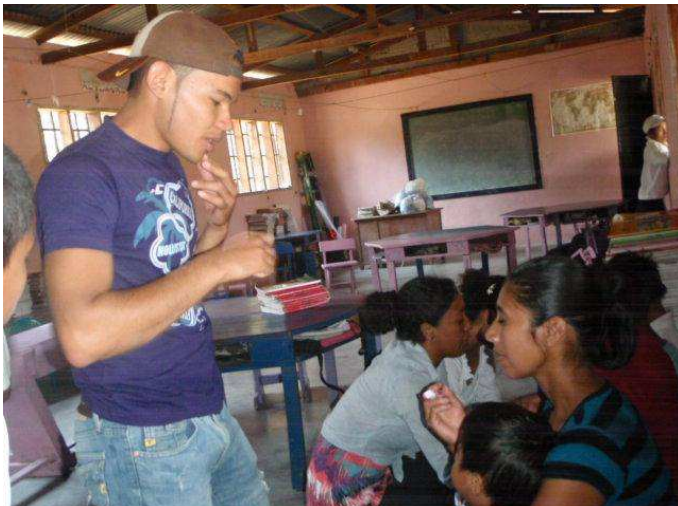
Carrezelitos

Carrezelito is a village accessible by a one-hour hike up a mountain from El Rosario. There, water access had always been limited to one source further down the mountain. Many times a day, parents and their children would travel to this source to bring water back to their homes. Over the last 3 years, we have worked with Engineers Without Borders, to develop a system that could pull water, against gravity, up to the village. A few months ago, the project was completed, providing each home with running water. This improved water access fortuitously coincided with the establishment of the dental clinic. The dentists gave an educational presentation to each family as we distributed new toothbrushes, toothpastes, floss and towels to members of the Carrezelitos community.



Los Planes

The village of Los Planes is a forty minute drive into the mountains from El Rosario. The people of Los Planes do not own fertile farmland; they earn money almost exclusively by producing and transporting charcoal. Middlemen that sell this charcoal in cities reward the laborious work with pennies. There is great poverty and need in Los Planes. In an effort to improve their situation, community leaders from Los Planes are collaborating with leaders from El Rosario on development strategies while ACTS helps supply them with clothing and food staples. Fuerza students traveled to this community to teach tooth-brushing and dental hygiene lessons and distribute toothbrushes, toothpastes and floss to each person in Los Planes, most of whom had never before owned a toothbrush. Our Fuerza students are always enthusiastic about helping their neighbors.



Curriculum

In the group led by Angie, Daniel and Gricelda, Fuerza students crafted composition notebooks. They designed the covers to represent their identities. Through a period of self-reflection, they proceeded to journal in their notebooks about their life aspirations and goals, many of which included wishes to become nurses, doctors, teachers and police officers. The curriculum also incorporated the



idea of selfless community activism. Students formed small groups to brainstorm pertinent issues in their communities. The groups then designed a plan of action to confront those issues and presented their plans on poster paper. Topics included barriers to education, local deforestation, poverty and youth alcohol and cigarette consumption. Ultimately, the idea was to empower the students, demonstrating that they were capable of making an impact on the issues at large in El Rosario.



Nana and Josefina guided their group of students in a discussion about what makes each of them unique. Fuerza students did a project in which they found creative ways to present what is important to them and how they like to express themselves. One student wrote a wonderful poem in addition to her poster on self-expression. Next, students learned about the democratic process and thought about how they could make Honduras better. They were asked to prepare a campaign to run for president of

Honduras. Students prepared speeches, slogans, and plans for implementing changes in their country. The day ended with an election, in which each member of the group gave a speech before the other group of Fuerza students. Those observers submitted ballots and elected two co-presidents. It was a joy to see students' ability to not only identify problems, but to come up with possible solutions.



Fuerza Olympics

Finally, during one morning of La Fuerza, we enjoyed a mini-Olympics activity. Split into two teams, students named their teams (the Beasts and the Dragons) and designed their team uniforms. Then the two teams participated in various teambuilding events including, tug-of-war, relay races, limbo, human pyramids and a water balloon toss.



We are committed to the teens of El Rosario. We have watched them develop into passionate leaders through their ongoing engagement with La Fuerza. We want to thank you for your generous contribution to Dartmouth Alumni & Students for Honduras. Your support helps us develop and sustain important projects within the Fuerza leadership camp, allowing us to continue working with these wonderful teens each year.

Warmest regards,

Christine Averill '13 and Juliana Ortego '13
Co-Chairs of Dartmouth Alumni and Students for Honduras



Daniel Lee '18
Gricelda Ramos '18
Josefina Ruiz '17
Angie Lee '17
Nana Adjeiwaa-Manu '16
Louise Barias '18

*Members of Dartmouth
Alumni and Students for
Honduras*

