



PLACEMENT OF THE MONTH ANIMAL CARE CENTER

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EDITOR'S NOTE

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Welcome to a new edition of the Projects Abroad Mexico Newsletter!

Reflecting on the words above once spoken by the great civil rights advocate, Martin Luther King Jr., I cannot think otherwise but agree. The moment we stop working towards the things that matters most to us, to our communities, and our planet, that is the moment we should consider ourselves at the brink of defeat. However, the world is full of wonderful people who, on the contrary, can't stop doing great things that help to improve the living conditions in their communities or in other countries, as well as help to increase awareness about the environment.

At Projects Abroad we believe in these people, and in Mexico their help is more than welcome. That is why we dedicate this issue of our newsletter to those men and women who cannot be silent in the face of need.

We begin with the story of Davide Coraggio from Italy, who has joined a team of volunteers working at a local NGO focused on helping trans-migrants from Central America on their way to the United States. Then, we present a story about the Animal Care project and its volunteer supervisor, Tatjana Kotschenreuther (Germany), who is a former Projects Abroad volunteer. We also show what a pair of hands can do to improve the conditions of an orphanage during a 'Dirty day' organized by the local Projects Abroad staff. Finally, we want to encourage future volunteers into coming to Guadalajara by showing one cool way to spend your Sunday in our city.

Hope you enjoy!

Juan Miguel Ruiz Flores
Information Manager Mexico

International Development Project in Mexico: Davide Coraggio Working with FM4 to Help Transmigrants

The International Development Project with Projects Abroad focuses on working with local organisations concerned with community-based efforts to provide opportunities to vulnerable communities. In Guadalajara, one of the most marginalised communities is the immigrant population; these migrants come from all over Central America with a goal of reaching the United States in search of a better future; but who still have to travel across Mexico. In doing so, these people face tremendous challenges which include violations of their most basic human rights, harsh weather conditions and illness.



In the face of this situation, Projects Abroad Mexico has found the opportunity to partner with a local NGO called FM4 which supports immigrants to cross the country freely. 23-year-old Davide Coraggio, an International Relations graduate from Italy, has been collaborating as a Projects Abroad Volunteer with this organisation. “The best experience for me so far has been to work at the Migrant Care Centre which opened my eyes to a world that I didn’t know it existed.”

As part of his one month’s stay as an International Development volunteer, Davide helped with a range of tasks at the centre: “I would interview the immigrants and offer food, clothes, water, and a place to rest so that they can continue their journey.” In spite of how rewarding it is for Davide to work at the centre, he mentions that this has been one of his greatest

challenges so far: “The challenge was to face the conditions in which immigrants have to travel. It was very tough to see.”

At FM4, their main objective is to bring justice and dignity to immigrants in the journey through the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara. To achieve this goal, Davide mentions the necessity of volunteer work at the organisation: “FM4 helps immigrants thanks to the assistance of volunteers who give them food, water and take care of their human rights... volunteer work is essential for the success of the organisation.”



For Davide, a normal day of work would include arriving in the morning to the main office of the organisation located in the centre of the city. At the office, he assisted with contacting foundations that would be interested in funding FM4. Then, during the evenings

and weekends, he would spend time with other volunteers enjoying activities and outings through Guadalajara.

After one month in Mexico, the most important aspect of Davide’s volunteering experience has been the personal and professional growth he has experienced: “At a personal level, this experience has given me a lot. I met wonderful people and have lots of stories to tell to my friends and family. Under the professional profile, it has been important for me to face these issues and it has been an experience that will be beneficial to my career.” Finally, Davide advises future volunteers participating in the International Development Project in Mexico to learn some basic Spanish and to have some knowledge about humanitarian aid.

Tatjana Kotschenreuther: Project Partner at the Animal Care Project in Mexico



In 2003, German volunteer from Berlin, Tatjana Kotschenreuther decided that it was time to make a radical change in her life. With this in mind, she decided to travel to Mexico with Projects Abroad to work at the Conservation Project based in Tecoman, 6 hours' journey from Guadalajara. At the time Tatjana was working as a teacher back in Germany; little did she know that this experience would pave the way for her future interest in wildlife conservation.

Originally, when she first arrived in Mexico, Tatjana had signed up to volunteer at the Conservation Project; however, due to health complications, she was reassigned to the Animal Care Project in Guadalajara where she immediately fell in love with the project and the animals.



Now after more than ten years, Tatjana is still working at the Animal Care Project as a Projects Abroad partner. "I have always loved animals but I didn't want to become a veterinary doctor

because I didn't like the idea of having to open up animals. I also didn't want to work at a zoo because that goes against my principles of having animals in captivity so the Animal Care Project was a perfect fit for me."

The animal care centre with which Projects Abroad works offered Tatjana the opportunity to be close to all kinds of animals and, at the same time, work to save them for later release: "I loved the idea of rescuing animals that were in captivity and mistreated, then having to rehabilitate them and finally releasing them back into the nature. I loved the idea of helping the world, even if it is something small."

After spending 5 months as a volunteer with Projects Abroad, Tatjana went back to Germany to start preparing to once again return to Mexico to continue working at the animal care centre. Tatjana then spent the next 7 years working hard for the centre as a volunteer and 3 more years as a formal employee.



As Tatjana explains, the mission of the animal care centre, which depends on the federal Mexican government, is to rescue and rehabilitate

animals kept in captivity to be then reintroduced into their natural habitats. "However, this is not always the case as not all animals can be sent back to the wild because the damage done

to them is so grave.” In those cases, the centre has to decide whether to put them to sleep, to send them to a zoo, or to send them to an animal sanctuary in the United States.



With only 2 permanent staff members and six hundred animals cared for at the centre, this project appreciates all the help they can receive: “From 2009 to 2013 we received more than 1800 animals. In that same period, we released approximately 1599 animals,” shares Tatjana, who is not only in charge of rescuing, rehabilitating, cleaning and feeding the animals, but is also in charge of coordinating the volunteers. This last role has made her aware of how much help the centre needs: “Volunteers from Projects Abroad are a huge help to the centre, without them I doubt the centre could still be up and running - Imagine having only two people as

permanent staff. They cannot do everything. Having the volunteers working closely with the animals helps us to know the specific needs of each animal.”

Tatjana thanks the support that Projects Abroad has offered not only to her but also to the Animal Care Project: “Whenever we need something, the Projects Abroad Country Director offers her help and without the volunteers this centre could not function. Even if the volunteers don’t speak the language, they become part of our family.”

Hands on work! – Dirty day in Guadalajara at “Grandes Chicos”

At Projects Abroad Mexico we like to get dirty for an important cause and on the 27th of February we did just that. Volunteers from various countries along with the staff of Projects Abroad took on the task of painting five rooms where the children of this center sleep. Ten volunteers, armed with paint, brushes, paint rollers and lots of energy, took around five hours to finish the work.



A multicultural group of volunteers coming from various parts of the world were part of this important work. The following volunteers took part in this dirty day: Laura and Sophia from Denmark (them being volunteers who works regularly at this care center); Matthieu from Germany; Joseph from the United Kingdom; Anna from Norway; H el ene from France; Rita from Belgium; Satoe from Japan; Mai from the United States; and Rafaela from Switzerland. Volunteers met at the Projects Abroad office at nine o'clock and from there departed to the care center. After a short travel by taxi, they arrived to Grandes chicos where they put hands on work. The material used for the painting was provided by Projects Abroad, whose staff had already observed the need for renewing the paint at the children's rooms.



Volunteers met at the Projects Abroad office at nine o'clock and from there departed to the care center. After a short travel by taxi, they arrived at Grandes Chicos where they started work. The material used for the painting was provided by Projects Abroad, whose staff

had already observed the need for renewing the paint at the children's rooms.

The supervisor of the center, Julio García, referred that Grandes Chicos was founded during the 80s as a place to offer free food to children living on the streets, mostly near parks and churches. In 1988, Grandes Chicos was officially opened as a care center for children and its main objective was to cover the basic



needs of shelter, food, and the education of the children. Now they cover more than that as Grandes Chicos is now an orphanage that receives orphans or mistreated children.

By four in the afternoon, all volunteers had finished their work at the care center and were ready to enjoy a well-deserved meal which consisted of steamed tacos and sodas, all very much appropriate after a day full of hard work.

Sunday pedestrian and biking route in Guadalajara: the 'Vía RecreActiva'



A visitor in Guadalajara, eager to experience the diversity of the city, would find it attractive to spend time at its plazas, churches, museums and theaters as well as at its broad avenues, parks and music halls. Visitors may find it difficult to see all these attractions as they are some distances from each other. There is however one fun and attractive way to experience the city in one morning: the 'Vía RecreActiva', a free zone for pedestrians, bikers, skaters, and anyone who wants to take over the streets.



The 'Vía' is a free zone that covers approximately twenty kilometers of streets and avenues inside the metropolitan area. It takes place every Sunday and holiday from eight in the morning until two in the afternoon and is well attended by locals as well as visitors. The

local government of the city estimated that, during the last weekend of the past year, two

hundred and four thousand people had visited the free zone, using it to do exercise, jogging, biking, skating or walking. The idea behind this project was first promoted by local NGOs whose main goal has been to defend the rights of pedestrians in front of motorized vehicles, as well as the promotion of public spaces. In 2004, with the support of the government of Guadalajara, the first eleven kilometers were inaugurated and by 2011, the governments of the neighboring cities Tlaquepaque, Tonalá and Zapopan incorporated another fourteen



kilometers, to make the largest area in Mexico without cars.

Spending one sunny Sunday morning at the 'Vía' will not only involve exercise, but there are various activities offered in different locations scattered along the streets. One can start in between the old and new buildings of the public university where activities such as Capoeira and mini tennis are offered. From there, the historic center of the city can be found east from there, plus routes to go to Tlaquepaque (locally known for its mariachi and crafts) and further along Tonalá (which has a big crafts market). To the west, is the modern part of town and Zapopan, which has the options of lots of cafés and shopping centers. For those without a bike, near the university, bikes can be rented for free; just leave an identification document and make sure to return the bike on time. There are also guided tours, free nutritional counseling, and yoga as well as areas to play chess, checkers, domino, dance classes and more.

For volunteers coming to Guadalajara with Projects Abroad, visiting the 'Vía' is not only experiencing a nice way to spend your Sunday morning; it is also a great opportunity to experience the city and everything that it has to offer. So, put on your sneakers, get some water and a cap, and enjoy the city.



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