

THE PAULMAR PRENSA

DECEMBER 2013, VOLUME 2.2

NEWS IN BRIEF

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

We wish you and yours a very happy holiday season! We were fortunate to be able to spend Thanksgiving with our friend from NYC, Jason, who was a Peace Corps Volunteer years ago in the Philippines. He visited our site on the coast and also joined us for a traditional turkey dinner with 8 other Ecuadorian friends at our place. Since then, it seems we have been celebrating non-stop from Mari's work BBQ to traveling to the southern province of Loja to spend time with good friends and fellow PCVs Khayla and Jess for Christmas, New Year's and Clare's Birthday (yes, that's an official holiday). We'll continue the celebrating into 2014 when we unfortunately have to say good-bye to Ecuador and to Peace Corps life. Here's to an incredible 2014 and don't forget the Ecu traditions to put money in your shoe and to wear your yellow underwear for good luck!

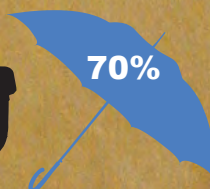


MOVING TO QUITO

With the amazing news that Mari is pregnant (she just passed the 6-month mark) came the sad news that we had to leave our coastal site for the capital city of Quito. While we are lucky that we can continue to complete our service, we miss Palmar and San Pablo where we had built strong connections to the communities. Paul has traveled back to the coast several times to continue our work with Mujeres: Cambia (p. 2) while Mari has been placed with the Quito office of The Nature Conservancy (p. 3), the world's largest conservation organization to help with marketing and communications. Though it has been an adjustment, moving to Quito does have its advantages. In addition to the variety of food options and services like reliable buses and supermarkets, we have made some new friends and are centrally located to host PCV guests at our 2-bedroom apartment. We live a block away from Parque Carolina and the Botanic Gardens and Max has even found his first girlfriend in the neighbor's dog, Peggy.



WEATHER
70°F



FEATURED PROJECTS



MUJERES: CAMBIA UPDATE

The past few months have been an exciting time for Mujeres: Cambia. In addition to reaching a total of **\$25,000 in sales** (!) we traveled to Cuenca for a large artisan fair; we were featured in a column that Mari wrote for the Peace Corps Times; we launched a new website with a shopping cart; we started a relationship with the successful recycled art business Fui Reciclado; and we inaugurated a new online inventory, order management, and accounting system that Paul built from scratch.

Paul has been teaching himself how to code in order to build websites and digital tools to meet the needs of Mujeres: Cambia as well as other projects we've been working on together. The new Mujeres: Cambia online system can even be accessed by texting from simple SMS phones!

After moving to Quito, we have been able to stay in touch with the group through Paul's visits, Skype video calls, the online system, and three of the group members recently made the over 20-hour round trip to Quito to visit us and to marvel at Mari's belly.

Thanks to Paul's hard work and to new contacts we have built with people who will represent the group in the US, we know that we will continue to be able to help the group even from afar. A new Peace Corps Volunteer will join the women in April and we know that they will continue to thrive until then.



PEACE CORPS Times

Volunteer Life
Spurring the 'Creation Corps' in Ecuador

By Maria Cristina Cava PCV Ecuador 2012-14

When I was younger, I remember people telling me things about myself to that say that parents and siblings do. "You're so creative," my sister would say. "You have a strong natural compass," my mother would tell me. I didn't always know what they meant, but I grew older I realized they were right. When I think about what guided me to join the Peace Corps and why I think service is important, the words of my mother and sister echo in my mind. I have come to realize that Peace Corps service is one of the most creative and meaningful experiences of my life.

While it would seem that creative ideas don't come from your work, working with Mujeres Cambia is anything but a routine, ordinary, or boring job. It's a challenge to find the creative solutions to a variety of problems. This is why Peace Corps means being creative. That's what Peace Corps means being creative.

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THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The mission of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. This translates into myriad programs in all 50 US states and over 30 different countries. Mari has been working on two main projects with TNC's Quito office. The first, a campaign with Supermaxi, the largest supermarket chain in Ecuador, to promote reusable bags; and the second, a series of presentations about TNC that can be used to educate various audiences including NGO partners and potential donors.

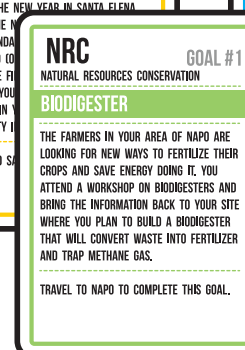
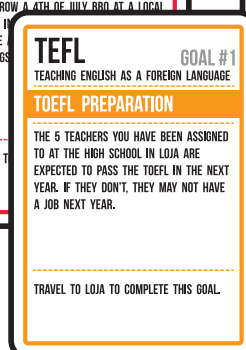
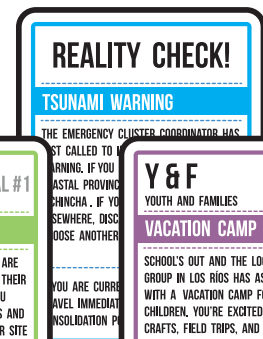
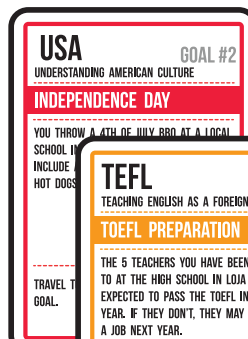


PALMAR TOURISM MAP & WEBSITE

In addition to completing www.palmar-ecuador.com with the interns from the Palmar Art & Design Center, we also worked with them to print a tourism map that features local businesses and tourist offerings from our site. Now, visitors can book a tour to see the province's mangrove swamp, rent kayaks, and visit the sanctuary on top of the hill. The interns we trained from the Art & Design Center will continue to teach their peers how to use the digital cameras, Photoshop, Illustrator, and iMovie.

PEACE CORPS ECUADOR: THE BOARD GAME

Ever since Paul made Mari a boardgame for their anniversary, we have been talking about making a game about our Peace Corps experience. For the holidays, we finally did it! The object of the Peace Corps Ecuador boardgame is to collect cards that represent the 3 goals of the Peace Corps. Each player must travel to different sites on the board as representatives of the 4 different programs of Peace Corps Ecuador. Look out for the game at a store near you...someday!





BABY

CASEY WILSON

