



Hard Work and Generosity Inspire Students Volunteering Abroad

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A team of seven college students traveled to Peru and participated in three service projects benefiting local communities. Each service project helped the local community by fulfilling local needs.

PR9.NET September 20, 2004 - Billings, Montana -- When students Krystel Silva and Marty Lopez returned to college a few weeks ago, their month spent volunteering and traveling in Peru last May provides them with a new perspective on another culture and themselves.

Silva and Lope were part of a team of seven Rocky Mountain College students who traveled with Professor David Strong and his family to Peru in May.

While in Peru, the students participated in three service projects to help benefit the local communities around Urubamba, a mountain village located not far from Cuzco.

The first of the service projects was to build a greenhouse -- or "vivero." Rather than being composed of glass, the vivero involved a basic system of trenches dug into the ground. After mixing dirt, manure and compost, 4,000 saplings were collected, placed in bags and situated in the trenches of the vivero.

One of the problems encountered in the overpopulated valley was the cutting down of native trees. This project would help nurture native saplings and represented one step in a larger effort of encouraging the growth of native species.

The second project involved the students collaborating with local villagers to install clean-burning stoves. Cooking in tiny kitchens lacking proper ventilation is known to be a cause of health problems. Replacing older stoves which often lacked chimneys and proper stove doors, the new stoves aimed to help Peruvian women by bettering living conditions.

Building a small garden and park in the back of a hospital next to the vivero was the third project. The design consisted of steps and pathways which were built using rocks, while benches and natural vegetation were also included.

"The overall purpose of the projects was to take this community that's growing and allow them to live there and be compatible with the valley," Strong said.

Experiencing the sights, smells and sounds of poverty firsthand, Silva was inspired by the generosity of the impoverished people.

"They were always so concerned with you and your well-being. No matter how poor they were, or their lack of food, they were still so welcoming," Silva said.

For Lopez, the meaning of his time spent in Peru did not hit him until he watched the final Peruvian sunset in Lima. It was then that he reflected upon his time spent with the locals engaging in hard labor and seeing them laughing, joking and enjoying it.

"It kind of inspired me with my school work -- in admiration of their labor," Lopez said.

The trip was organized through ProPeru, a service corps operating under the auspices of ProWorld whose mission is to provide cross-cultural experiences by blending service, community development and academic study.

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About ProWorld Service Corps

ProWorld Service Corps is a company specializing in study abroad and volunteer work service projects in Peru (ProPeru), Belize (ProBelize), Mexico (ProMexico), India (ProIndia), and Thailand (ProThailand). Founded in 1998, ProWorld provides enriching experiences for volunteers while striving to make a difference in cooperative communities.

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