

April 2012 Newsletter

Spotlight on Cindy Kroll, ProPeru, Parramos, Guatemala

Parramos is a pueblo where pick-up trucks dodge farmers walking with their cows and goats in the streets; people wake up in the middle of the night to start working in the fields before dawn; buses rush up the main road; and everyone greets one another with a smile and “buenos días”.

I have had the opportunity to volunteer as a teachers’ assistant in Math and English classes in the Básico program (junior high) in Centro Educativo Trilingüe Nuevo Amanecer (CETNA), formerly known as Centro Educativo Valle de los Pinos. The school’s approach to education is immensely different from that to which I am accustomed. Classes are held for just five hours per day, and there is a strong emphasis on soccer and cultural activities. At first, I struggled to understand why more time is not spent studying. However, I have come to realize that the school takes this approach in attempts to teach students values and cultural pride. As Guatemalans try to maintain safety and order in the face of growing violence, strong values and pride in traditions could be ways to protect the beautiful aspects of the culture.

A highlight of working in CETNA was the support I received from the school’s director and interest in the community for El Programa de Vacaciones, a free and optional reading, math, and English program during the equivalent of summer break that I created and ran with my host-mom, Doña Ofelia Jiménez. Each weekday for four weeks, students ranging from rising second to ninth graders came to the school for two hours. We studied a wide range of topics—from writing and illustrating fables and short stories; to studying multiplication, division, and algebra; to playing games to learn English vocabulary. The students were extremely enthusiastic, staying late to keep learning, asking for homework problems and bringing them in the following day to be corrected. Their enthusiasm was contagious, and working with them was an incredible experience.



The Guatemalan school day is only half a day, which has enabled me to volunteer in CETNA in the afternoons and in El Centro de Salud de Parramos (the local health center) in the mornings. Working in El Centro I have learned a wide range of skills, including how to vaccinate patients, give patients consultations, and remove stitches. I have come to understand the importance of respecting people’s opinions and finding ways to work within the bounds of the local culture, as vaccines and educating students about health in schools are controversial topics.

I have experienced the difficulties of incorporating new technology into an existing system, and learned how to use available resources to create effective bandages and treatments. As an aspiring physician, these experiences have been eye-opening and have greatly influenced my perceptions of public health.



In my free time, I volunteer with El Proyecto de Atención y Promoción del Adulto Mayor (In English, The Program for Attention Toward and Advancement of Seniors (PATAS)). The group meets once per month to do some exercise, have a discussion about a value or theme, do an arts and crafts project, and enjoy a snack and lunch. The program is the highlight of the month for the program's members and leaders. Many senior citizens are neglected in their homes and often feel invisible. PATAS gives them the chance to socialize and to feel a sense

of camaraderie. For the other group leaders and me, it is truly a joy to listen to the members' tell stories about events in their lives and to see them enjoying taking part in the activities. I have had the honor of working with one group member, Doña Vicenta, every Saturday. Doña Vicenta is teaching me the traditional sewing technique. Over the last seven months, I have slowly but surely come to understand the basics and am well on my way to finishing making a tortilla towel.



I am thankful that my host-family, co-workers, and the other residents of Parramos have welcomed me with open arms and been so willing to share their knowledge and culture. Although I came as a volunteer looking to contribute to the pueblo, within a few days of living here and continuing to today, I became a student learning from their wisdom, values, and strong sense of community.

Laura Marrin, Endeavor, Santiago, Chile

Where do I begin to describe my PiLA year since arriving last July to work with Endeavor in Santiago, Chile? Boy does time fly! During my time as a PiLA with Endeavor Chile I have had a truly amazing experience. My time here has not only taught me a ton about the importance of supporting high impact entrepreneurs in international development work, but I have also had the opportunity to grow personally through traveling around South America and meeting many interesting people, including my fabulous Endeavor Chile colleagues.

From day one, I was directly immersed into Endeavor's work and this hands on learning is what has enabled me to really understand Endeavor's work and become even more passionate about it. Endeavor is a non-profit organization that finds, selects, and supports high impact entrepreneurs from emerging market countries in order to help foster sustainable economic growth and development. So what exactly do I do at Endeavor Chile? Through my PiLA position I have worked primarily in the Search & Selection department, searching for and interviewing local high-impact entrepreneurs as potential Endeavor candidates.



In terms of work specifics, I have used local business and entrepreneurship events in addition to Chilean newspapers and business journals, to find potential Endeavor candidates. I then reach out to the candidates and have a First Opinion Review, in which I meet with the entrepreneur and learn all about their story and business, explain Endeavor Chile's work and see if there is a potential fit with the entrepreneur and Endeavor Chile based on our selection criteria. Next, I accompany Endeavor candidates throughout the search & selection process, which involves a series of meetings that I set up with Endeavor Chile entrepreneurs and volunteers to see if they think that we should select this entrepreneur into the Endeavor network. As part of my search & selection work I write business profiles on candidate companies for when we have local Endeavor Chile selection panels and then I write a very detailed 14 page business profile for entrepreneurs going to an Endeavor international selection panel. Through writing these profiles I now understand much better how a company designs its business model, how it thinks of its client base, how it conceptualizes its value proposition, and how it plans for the short term and long term success of its organization. Through my work, I have also helped plan these local Endeavor Chile selection panels, international selection panel training sessions for candidates, and arranged one-on-one Endeavor network mentoring meetings with candidates.



Through working for Endeavor Chile I have learned a number of important lessons about entrepreneurs, businesses, economic growth and development in Latin America, and how important a passionate group of colleagues are for an organization to be successful. With my search & selection work I have had the opportunity to visit two of our regional offices in Antofagasta and Puerto Varas in order to help interview potential candidates.

Through working for Endeavor Chile I have learned a number of important lessons about entrepreneurs, businesses, economic growth and development in Latin America, and how important a passionate group of colleagues are for an organization to be successful. With my search & selection work I have had the opportunity to visit two of our regional offices in Antofagasta and Puerto Varas in order to help interview potential candidates. Through these trips, not only have I discovered other fascinating parts of Chile, but I have also learned about the different types of challenges that entrepreneurs face in the regions versus in Santiago. Some of the challenges that entrepreneurs in Chile face involve: raising capital, getting loans, developing a concrete business pitch, creating a shareholder's agreement, receiving legal advice as they expand their companies internationally, and how to conceptualize short and long term strategic growth plans. While the entrepreneurs that we find in Santiago normally have more consolidated businesses, only supporting entrepreneurs in the capital, will not help Chile's economic growth and development throughout the nation. This is why Endeavor Chile is committed to finding and supporting high-impact entrepreneurs in the regions, as seen by its four regional offices.



Working at Endeavor Chile has also shown me the importance that the work environment and the attitude of its employees has on an organization's success. In my opinion, one of the reasons that Endeavor Chile is so successful is because it has built a wonderful team and work atmosphere. My time as a PiLA with Endeavor Chile has also reinforced for me the importance of teamwork and having a strong and caring group of colleagues. At Endeavor Chile everyone in the team brings different skills and experiences to the table and there is a work environment that supports constant collaboration and learning.

When I look back on my last 8 months down here in Chile, the first thing that comes to my mind is how grateful I am for receiving a PiLA fellowship and having the opportunity to spend my first year after graduating from college working in Latin America with an amazing non-profit. The people that I have had the pleasure to meet and work with are what have had the greatest influence on my wonderful experience here in Chile. From day one, my colleagues at Endeavor Chile welcomed me into the team, not just as some new intern fresh out of college, but as a team member with important ideas to share. Every Monday we also have weekly coordination meetings in which we all have breakfast together and skype chat with all of our regional office staff. These meetings are a time in which we all discuss our weekends and projects for the week. At Endeavor Chile we celebrate birthdays, weddings, and good-byes together, which has made my Endeavor Chile colleagues my family away from home. I have developed a deep respect and appreciation for both the caring and amazing people that I have met in Chile as well as the awe-inspiring diversity and beauty of this country which spans deserts in the North, to lush green areas and lakes in the central valley, to glaciers in southern Patagonia. No matter what adventure awaits me next, I know that my time here in Chile will always be one of the highlights of my life.



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