



¡Pura Vida! ¡Tuanis! ¡Mae! Peace Corps Costa Rica | Youth Development Volunteer

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Why Peace Corps?



Copal, Costa Rica

Costa Rica has a population of approximately 4.8 million. Copal is a small quaint rural town with a population of about 600. Copal is located in the “armpit” of the Nicoya Peninsula in the province of Guanacaste.

Youth of Costa Rica

While known as a top tourist destination there are many rural and underdeveloped parts of Costa Rica. For the last 20 years, Costa Rica’s poverty rate has been around 20%. Around 9% of the rural population does not have access to clean drinking water and plumbing (CIA World Factbook, 2015).

For years Costa Rica’s literacy rate has been above 90%. However, in 2011 the graduation rate was only 46%, 41% of youth live in homes with parents who did study past elementary school and 60% live within that 20% of poverty or close to it (State of the Nation, 2012).

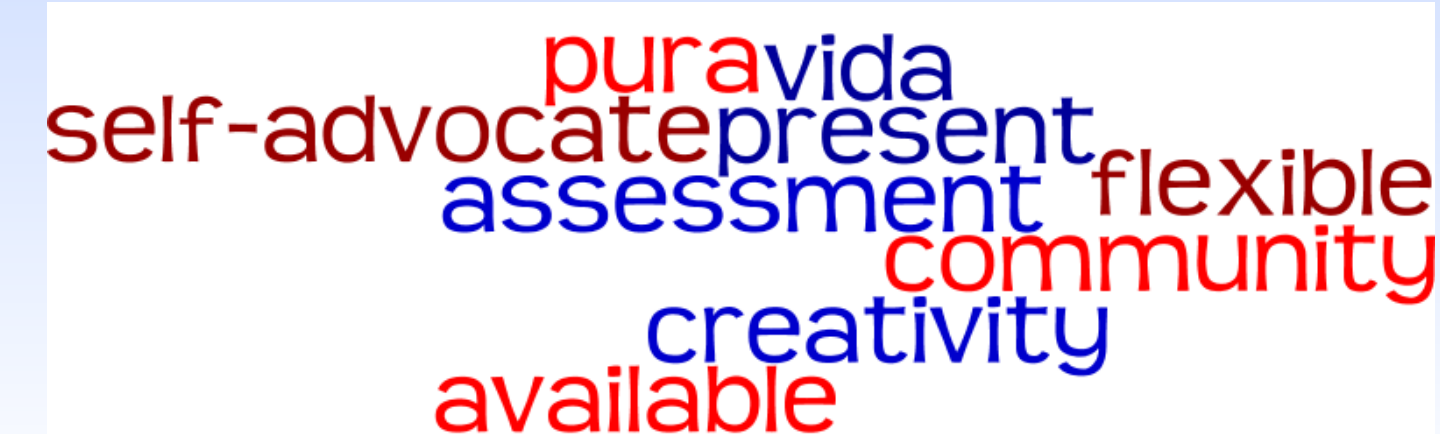


My Purpose

Primarily I supported Copal in providing positive recreational and art activities for the youth. Some projects included summer day camps, painting a world map mural, Zumba community class, and integrating art into elementary teacher’s primary lessons. I also collaborated with teachers to help develop youth’s life-skills (goal setting, leadership, communication, etc.). With two high school teachers we implemented workshops for the 11th and 12th graders to create their resumes and attend a job fair.

Secondary projects, included supporting the English teachers in the classroom and tutoring students for tests, spelling bee, and impromptu speech competition

Utilized & Developed Skills



Classroom Connections

My Global Social Work class helped me think of my identify as a Black American female preparing to represent and serve for The United States abroad. This class tied with my interpersonal practice classes, especially Afrocentric Approach to Interpersonal Practice, helped me think about the importance of cultural context when interacting with Ticos. This was invaluable when youth or adults confided in me. Lastly, Adventure-Based Social Work taught me the importance of being intentional, present, and creative when working with youth.



Lessons Learned

The unofficial Peace Corps saying is, “It’s the toughest job you’ll ever love” and it’s SO true! Having so many hopes and goals for your community can be very frustrating and disappointing when projects are not going well or happening at all. But through all of this I learned my service was not about the projects, but rather the priceless relationships. A project was or was not going to happen for various reasons. Me simply being present and becoming part of the community is what created the most sustainable change.

Career Connections

Peace Corps reaffirmed I want to pursue school social work. School social work allows me to advocate for my biggest passions, a youth’s education and mental health. Personally I’ve always enjoyed art and Peace Corps inspired me to incorporate it in my work with youth to help develop self-esteem, ownership, creativity, and more.

Words of Insight

Some advice my group mates and I gave the next group:

- Always celebrate your small successes! Be humble, enjoy, and be yourself!
- Breathe and reach out for support because you are your biggest advocate.
- Find comfort in the discomfort and embrace your two years learning about yourself and community, it goes by fast.

Muchísimas Gracias

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