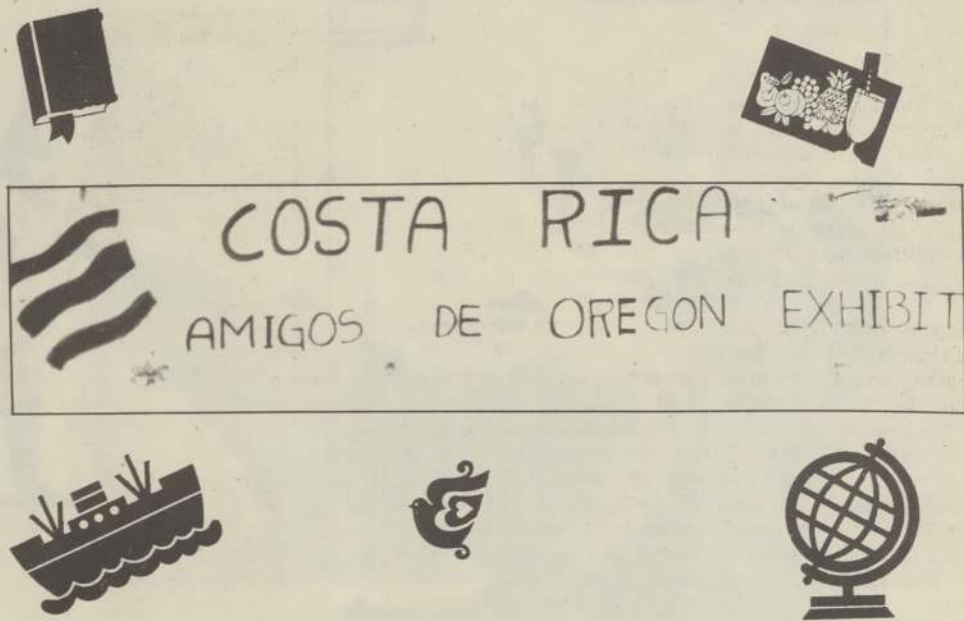
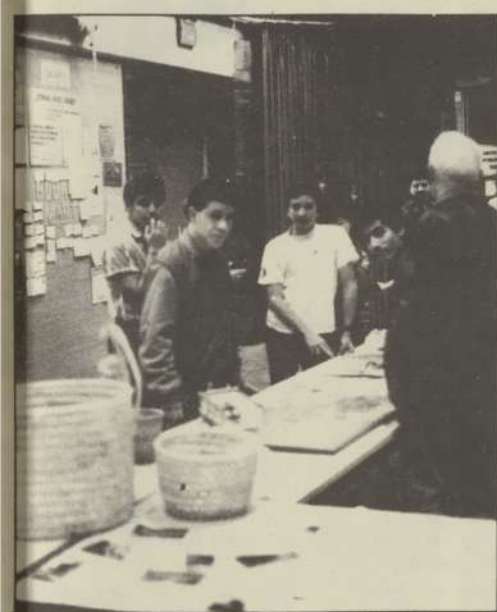


Feature

Costa Rica, Oregon partnered in program



by Dean Grey
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Costa Rica, located down in Central America, was discovered in 1502 by Christopher Columbus on his fourth voyage to the New World. He named the place "Costa Rica" or "Rich Coast" because of the lush vegetation and the gold jewelry worn by the native Indians.

This last week Clackamas Community College hosted a presentation dealing with the customs and culture of Costa Rica. The presentation was put on by some of the exchange students from there.

The following is an interview with three exchange students, Randall, Roberto, and Francisco, who are involved with the program, and know from first hand experience what Costa Rica is really like.

So, where is Costa Rica?

It is located in Central America. We are the southern most country in Central America, exactly between Panama and Nicaragua.

What is this program you are involved with?

It's a program that involves high school students from Costa Rica and Oregon. It involves students that are between the ages of 16 and 18. We choose certain amounts of students to come here and stay with two different host families. They stay with one family in the city, then they switch and stay with a family in the country. The Americans do the same in Costa Rica.

The whole program is a part of Partners of the Americas. This organization was founded by President Kennedy. It deals with several fields such as community education, culture, health and other different areas. We are just one program of this whole organization.

Is Oregon the only state involved with this program?

Partners works this way: They assign a country in Latin America to each one of the

states. Costa Rica and Oregon were chosen to work together. This was done in 1964. Ever since then, they have been working together and developing the program. The reason they were picked to work together, is because of some of the geographical similarities and that their economies are fairly similar. Our country is basically an agricultural country and, so it seems, is Oregon. We also have approximately the same population, about 3.5 million.

Did you get to go to any city in Oregon?

Right now there are students in Portland, there are students in Eugene, in Salem, in Springfield, and in Roseburg. We are all over.

Did you get a choice of what city you got to go to?

No, you fill out an application and from the basic information they try to find a family that will suit you and your interests.

What are some of the major differences you see between the people of Oregon and Costa Rica?

Well, first of all, up here everything is advanced. Everything is new and modern.

Family life is very different. We are a very small country, maybe one-fourth the size of Oregon. So, when we go to a school or a university, we really don't have to leave our family. We can stay with our families and we don't look forward to leaving them like a lot of American teenagers do. We have no reason to do so.

Not everyone works. A lot of students don't work so they may spend more time studying and doing other things. We get a lot of support from our families and parents. That, I think, is the big difference.

Also there is a different feeling of life, we are not in so much of a hurry all the time. We do a lot of things with the family. Our family group is not just parents, it's daughter and cousins and everybody, because it's a real close family. Everyone gets

together to celebrate, something you don't see much of in America.

What do you like least about America?

Personally, I think it's kind of hard to make friends. If I didn't know you here, it would be hard because everyone keeps to themselves. We've noticed that people from smaller towns are more friendly than those from larger ones. We came here first five years ago as exchange students, now we are chaperones. We stayed in Springfield, and the first time in Tigard we noticed a big change, people were very, very friendly.

The language also makes it hard to make friends and understand what they're saying, especially when you want to tell them you would like to be friends. The language really does make a big difference.

So you do run into language barriers?

I had a chance to study English when I came here five years ago, so it's easier for me. It's always a little hard, at least at the beginning. The first couple of weeks is really hard. For anyone who doesn't have basic English, it's really hard. Most of the problems happen because they can't communicate sometimes. Sometimes the families we live with don't have a lot of patience.

What do you miss most about Costa Rica?

The weather. It's our summer and we're actually supposed to be on the beach right now.

What kind of sports do you like to get involved in?

In regards to the beach, I just began surfing about five years ago, other than that, the most popular sport is soccer.

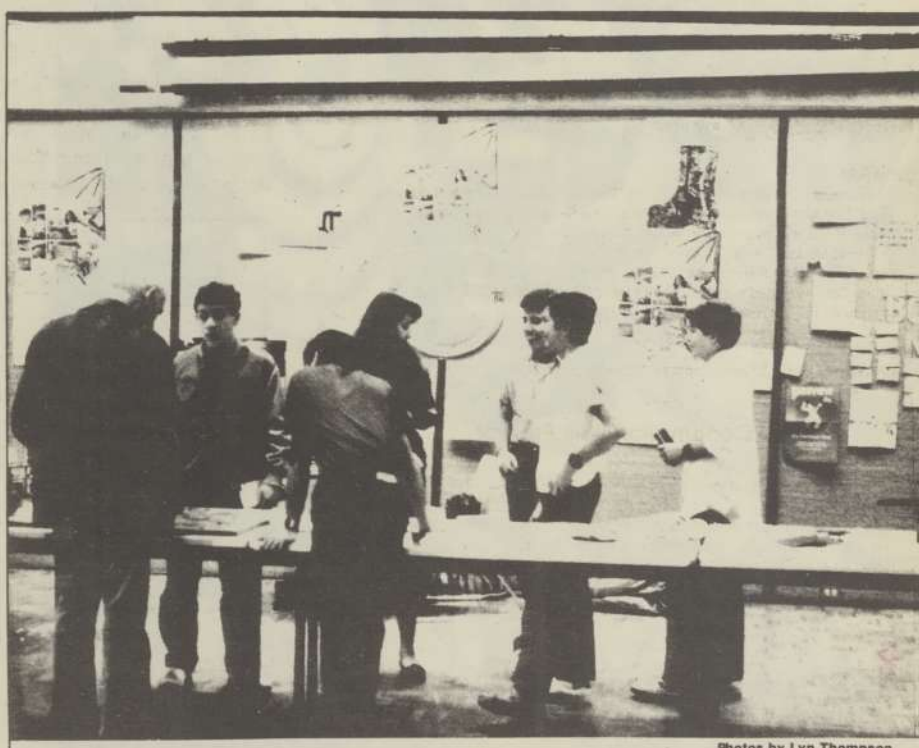
What do you do on a Costa Rican weekend?

We can go to the beach, movies, and go dancing, among other things. Dancing is very

popular. It's something we grew up with. This is a big difference. At your parties you sit around drinking and talking, where we mostly dance.

What is the exchange programs main objective?

I would say the objective of the program is you have the chance to meet all different kinds of people, live their lives, find out what they're like and make an exchange of ideas. Also, to find out the differences between the two cultures. Basically we get your T.V., your movies, and music, so America has a very big influence on us. The idea of the exchange program is to find out what it's really like and what the difference is really like. Most people here don't know much about our country. They don't know where it is or what language we speak.



Photos by Lyn Thompson

Exchange students work at the information table during their presentation on Costa Rica

