

Feature

Costa Rican Cultural Exchange

by Stephani Veff

Opinions Editor

"I want to go again. I'd go tomorrow if I could," said Ellen Burbridge, an instructor in the Tri-City Alternative Program about a trip she took recently to Costa Rica. Burbridge was able to take the trip through a program called Partners of America which is an organization that links countries up with states in the United States for the purpose of cultural exchange, educational exchange and being a sister state or sister country. The program sends people back and forth to offer technical assistance. Oregon is matched with Costa Rica who, a few months ago, sent several Costa Rican professionals to Clackamas Community College to see how things are operated here.

Burbridge used to be a community development coordinator for the college and she received a call when "CCC needed someone to go to Costa Rica and do some research and educational assistance to see what kind of projects and need that they had and so I was chosen and I agreed to go and I spent three weeks (April 18-May 9) in Costa Rica traveling around the entire country," said Burbridge when asked how she was chosen to take the trip.

"The purpose of my trip was to look at existing projects that were already going in both schools, private industries (and) public industry," explained Burbridge. "(I was) to talk to people about the needs that they had as far as other projects and then to develop some training plans and more referrals and recommendations of who we'd send back in the summer to assist (them)."

Burbridge's trip consisted of traveling thousands of miles in buses, taxis, canoes, on horseback, and walking 15



Ellen Burbridge recalls traditions and excitement of Costa Rica.

Photo by Von Daniel

miles through a jungle. She visited many high schools, technical/vocational schools, universities, factories, jungles, indian villages, city governments and "basically I got to see the entire country." She also "probably attended over 30 meetings...met 7500 people (and) established many professional relationships and personal relationships."

Burbridge and a woman from Portland Community College who is also a member of Partners of America went as a team and stayed with Costa Rican families who spoke only Spanish, "so we learned Spanish quickly. We ate traditional food, we traveled in a traditional way (and) we lived with traditional families," said Burbridge about her experience with living in a typical Costa Rican home. The Costa Rican members do the same thing when they come to Oregon. "When they come up here they come up for technical assistance and so if

they're just looking at community colleges, then they'll live with families from community colleges and they'll come to work every day and they'll observe and they'll participate," said Burbridge.

One of the most unusual things that Burbridge had the chance to participate in during her trip was to go to three villages in the Talamanca Mountains. "These villages were very, very remote and removed - beyond National Geographic specials, and we traveled for three days up rivers in dug-out cedar canoes with two indian guides who spoke no English. They spoke an indian language, not even a Spanish language. We had one translator and when I first saw the canoes, I was excited. I thought I was going on a 20 minute ride up the river, but little did I know that I would be in the jungle for two and a half days," said Burbridge about the experience. "It was very, very amazing," continued

Burbridge, "some of them had never seen white women before."

Burbridge noted that the "most exciting part of the trip was the whole awareness of our commonalities and our differences - looking at their educational systems, being part of the family, learning about just how their system works, and just being right in the middle of it, not being a tourist."

Some of the effect the experience had on Burbridge was that it "made me very committed to international education...I think we have a lot to offer other countries. I think they have a lot to offer us." It also made her realize how simply people in other countries live compared to the United States and it gave her a great appreciation for the College and the vocational programs it has because Costa Rica has none.

While the trip was very exciting it was also very tiring, as Burbridge explains how she lasted through the entire trip, "My energy carried me for about two weeks. We only got one day off in three weeks. We worked ten hours a day, seven days a week. I was exhausted...I was so excited because I knew the experience was very unique and I knew that I was getting something that couldn't be repeated." She was very "touched" by the people she met and felt very "privileged" to be there and "now that I'm back, I'm having a little bit of a hard time getting focused." She'd like to be in both Costa Rica and Oregon at the same

time.

She continues to keep in touch with the family she stayed with in Costa Rica and says that they are her "special family" and that they have "kind of adopted each other." "In fact, next Christmas, we'll (Burbridge and her husband and two children) go spend Christmas with them."

"One of the things that really struck me in Costa Rica that I don't think we realize is that how simply they do run their country," Burbridge pointed out. "Like in some of the rural areas, in the schools, they're lucky if they have a tablet of paper and a pencil." Most of the lessons are taught verbally because there are so few books and supplies. Rural communities use motor boats for emergency transportation, but when the motors on the boats break down no one knows how to fix them so they go without emergency vehicles for months at a time when they are miles away from help.

"I really respect Partners of America organization," said Burbridge, "I like how they're working with educational institutions. I like how they really follow through and send technical assistance." From this statement it is obvious that Burbridge made the right choice in accepting the proposal for her to go to Costa Rica. In conclusion Burbridge expressed that, "I think Clackamas Community College could play a real key role in learning from them and sending people down there."

Final Exam Schedule

Exam time	Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
8-10		8 M	7:30 T	9 M
10-12		10 M	9 T	11 M
12-2		12 M	10:30 T	1 M
2-4		2 M	1 T	3 M
4-6		Conflicts	2:30 T	Conflicts

The party begins.

I can drive when I drink.

2 drinks later.

I can drive when I drink.

After 4 drinks.

I can drive when I drink.

After 5 drinks.

I can drive when I drink.

7 drinks in all.

I can drive when I drink.

The more you drink, the more coordination you lose. That's not plain and simple. It's also not that 12 ounces of beer, 12 ounces of wine and 12 ounces of spirits all have the same alcohol content. And, once alcohol is in your system, it stays there. So, if you drink too much, and then try to drive, it's not just a matter of time. When you drink too much, you could be in a real bind.

A public service message from **Will Rogers Institute**

Norm's

Summer Hours

7am - 3pm, Monday - Thursday

Have a Great Summer

Look Forward to Seeing You

Next Year

Clackamas Community College

