Students Spend Their April Break Serving in Ecuador

Last April, 15 BLS students broke new ground by being the first group from Boston Latin School to travel to South America and participate in a service-oriented trip.

The group traveled to Ecuador for 10 days where they explored the concept of "voluntourism" while being immersed in Spanish. They were tourists in Quito, Otovalo and Baños and experienced things like eating cuy (roasted guinea pig) and llapingachos, standing on the equator, hiking to see waterfalls and volcanoes, and participating in traditional poncho-making.

They were volunteers in the Amazon rain forest where they spent three days helping build a new classroom in the village of Bella Vista Baja on the Napo River and staying at Me-to-We’s Minga Lodge.

Students helped Don Var-gas get water to run his farm and shucked bags of corn for his animals.

Soccer was a great way to meet the students in Bella Vista Baja, and some BLS students taught an English class to their Ecuadorian peers.

The BLS crew with their Ecuadorian friends ready to work

Life in the rain forest also included transportation by boat, huge amounts of sunscreen, bug spray, flying cockroaches, yellow wellies, bug bites and a large tarantula named Patrick who lived outside one of the huts.

Tour guide Victor and the staff at Minga Lodge emphasized that students needed to learn from the hosts, pay attention to their daily routines, and take note of how happy and grateful they seemed even though getting clean water every day was a struggle and they did not have modern amenities like Wi-Fi.

According to one student, "...unlike other trips you really got a sense of life in Ecuador in many different areas, and the service component is such a great experience for everyone to see another way of living and the hardships yet happiness that other people have."

You can learn more about the trip at www.blsecuador2014.blogspot.com.

Summer Service in Ghana

“I was looking to get out of my comfort zone.” That’s how Senior Victoria Kwong described her decision to travel to the West African country of Ghana as part of the Summer Search program.

And out of her comfort zone she was, living in an “authentic” community with a “host” mother, grandmother and brother in a house that had limited electricity and no running water.

Victoria was in Ghana for four weeks, dividing her time between a service learning project and a cultural exchange program, while living with a family in the city of Accra.

It was her second program with Summer Search, having traveled to Minnesota at the end of 10th grade.

Victoria with Ghana students

Victoria served at a K-12 school in Accra, working as a teacher’s aid, doing some painting and light carpentry and playing with the students. “The students liked getting to know me because I am a foreigner,” she said.

In addition, Victoria remarked that the people she met in Ghana are very religious and more globally aware than the typical American. “It is different than American society,” she commented.

Faculty Participate in Global PD

Twenty Boston Latin School faculty members recently participated in the school’s first Going Global Professional Development under the direction of Dr. William Bloomfield.

During the two day session, teachers worked in content area and interdisciplinary teams to develop curriculum unit modules that will help them further integrate global instruction into their classes.

The program, funded by the BLS Clough Center for Global Understanding, provided teachers with a framework and resources to brainstorm and outline their ideas. “This experience was exciting and very inspirational. It is difficult to dream big and then make a realistic opportunity, but the time with my colleagues has allowed us to get started. In a world that is pushing 21st century skills and global understanding, it is exceptional to have support and opportunity to do so, not just theory,” remarked one participant.