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## Editor's notes

Hoping that you all have had a great year so far, I greet you all with pleasure to bring to you the 76th edition of this newsletter.

This season is great to thank for all the good things that happened and also to reflect about many aspects to improve and enjoy. Therefore in this edition we share with you the Christmas party that we had with our volunteers, we also have a volunteer story of Shizuko Tamura and the placement of the month, with FM4.

So it we have for you a good suggestion for your next trip and one very Mexican cuisine's recipe called "picadillo". Thank you for your comments that are always welcome.





22-year-old Shizuko Tamura, from Kuki, in Japan signed up to spend two and a half months volunteering at the Projects Abroad Conservation Project and Care Project in Guadalajara in Mexico to gain experience and learn more about Mexican culture. A student at Tsukuba University, Shizuko's major is American Studies and she chose to volunteer with Projects Abroad because she needed a break before graduating and starting her working career. "I had always wanted to do something for the environment." Shizuko was a very enthusiastic volunteer at the Turtle Camp in Tecoman Jalisco, which is a Biological Station working to conserve far more than just sea turtles. The camp was established around a local lagoon as a wildlife sanctuary, populated by many

birds. The camp also has a crocodile farm; crocodiles are endangered in Mexico and it is the aim of the Conservation Project to repopulate areas in the wild where their populations have decreased.

Volunteers like Shizuko also help with community beach cleanups and maintenance work around the camp.

Shizuko advises future volunteers to “Get out of your comfort zone, open your mind and be patient”. Shizuko had the opportunity when she was a child to live in Mexico with her family; having had such good memories from that time, Shizuko was motivated to travel to Mexico again. During her Care Project, Shizuko worked at a local day care centre that cares for babies between the ages of 6-18 months. The centre is short staffed so volunteers like Shizuko are needed to help in any way they can: “Four hands are always better than two,” she added.

At the beginning the babies did not approach her but in few days she knew all their names: “The fact that Panchito cried for 4 days in a row and today he was nice and affectionate has been my most memorable experience.” There was never a wasted moment, while some sleep, others want to play and others need their diapers to be changed and others were crying or trying to walk around, needing to be watched.

“What I found really interesting was that after a short time I was able to take care of more than 10 babies at the same time, I learned so much and I gained more of a sense of how to take care of them and what things to pay attention to.”

Shizuko’s daily tasks at the day care centre included taking care of more than 20 babies during busy mornings; giving them the breakfast, playing with them, changing their diapers and tidying up. She would help to prepare their lunch and help get them to sleep after their lunch.





After two and a half months in Mexico, Shizuko has gained worthwhile experience and learnt a lot about the culture: “This work experience has been very useful because I am thinking of becoming a teacher and this experience has made me pay attention to what makes every child individually special, this will really help me for my future.”

We hope that great stories like Shizuko’s will inspire others to help Projects Abroad to make a difference and, in doing so, to learn something themselves along the way.

## Christmas party



This year, the volunteer’s party was celebrated with piñatas, a ‘taco feast’ (taquiza), the traditional Christmas Mexican punch and buñuelos (which is yeast dough with a hint of anise that

is deep-fried, then drenched in brown sugar and a bit of cinnamon).

The party started with the traditional litany and the candlelit procession representing to Joseph leading Mary on her donkey winds through the streets, the volunteers (as pilgrims) knock on the doors simulating various houses. Singing the first stanza of the song, and the people behind the closed door replying with the second and so on, back and forth. The pilgrims are turned away several times before they reach the night's chosen house. Here, the householders realize who is really knocking. The final choruses are sung, the door swings wide, and the pilgrims are allowed inside.

Then all the volunteers hit two piñatas with stick; candy were the price for those who participated. The Mexican Catholic interpretation of the piñata rested on the struggle of man against temptation. The seven points represent the seven deadly sins. The pot represents evil and the seasonal fruit and candy inside the temptations of evil. The person with the stick is blindfolded to represent faith.



The turning and the singing and shouting represent the disorientation that temptation creates. In some traditions, the participant is turned thirty three times, one for each year of Christ's life. These interpretations were given to the piñata for catechism purposes. As the participant beats the piñata, it is supposed to represent the struggle against temptation and evil. When the piñata breaks, the treats inside then represent the rewards of keeping the faith.



## Placement of the month- FM4

"FM4 Paso Libre" is a non-profit organization made up of an interdisciplinary group of committed volunteers who, having worked closely with the migration phenomenon in different parts of the Republic of Mexico and possessing an awareness of its reality, have decided to undertake a comprehensive intervention project to aid undocumented migrants passing through the metropolitan area of Guadalajara.





FM4 Paso Libre, which loosely translated means "free passage," is comprised of permanent members who are in charge of the operation and the logistics of the organization; at the same time, it works in conjunction with people who live in the vicinity of the train tracks, educational institutions, research centers and a network of interested donors.



This month our volunteers visited and collaborated with FM4 and arriving to the building, all the volunteers and Projects Abroad staff helped to organize everything in stock: medicines, clothes (hats, raincoats, jackets, sweaters, shirts, trousers, shorts, pants, shoes, sneakers, socks, underwear), personal items (toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, sunscreen, Vaseline, chapstick,

deodorant, disposable razors, pads, anti-bacterial gel, talcum powder, toilet paper), accessories for the journey (flashlights, matches, lighters, can openers, backpacks) and blankets.

The preparation for this work, started not only knowing about this organization through a guided chat, that was wonderful translated by Fiona, the host volunteer, nor by cleaning mentioned before, but cooking for the immigrants and take the food over there and serve it later. Everybody participated in this labor and it was a very productive day.



## Travel- Tapalpa, Magic Town of Jalisco



In the middle of a beautiful landscape of forestlands, Tapalpa appears with the beauty of the simple and natural. Its name, derived from Nahuatl, meaning "land of colors" or "place perched



high". One of the most important municipalities in southern Jalisco, Tapalpa maintains the appearance of ancient agricultural and pastoral communities. Its particular characteristics as outlined in an excellent destination for adventure, recreation and rest. Whether you like walks in the typical Mexican towns as are fond of paragliding, Tapalpa is a destination you cannot miss.

Tapalpa is distinguished by its white-washed houses and red gabled roofs, its provincial atmosphere and wonderful natural beauty, where the fragrant vegetation, encourage the enjoyment, contemplation and discovery.

The first thing suggested when visiting Tapalpa is their piles, which are former water containers. The oddest thing about them is that they still hold their original names, such as the Stack Snakes, Tecolote, the Dog and La Colorada. Each of these popular names is associated with local legends about love, hate, punishment and betrayal. Then, you must know the Parish of San Antonio de Padua. It was built in neoclassical style in 1650 by a group of Franciscans.

Next recommendation is Las Piedrotas (or the Valley of Enigmas) where are fascinating rock formations found there, in a setting of forests and streams. Los Frailes (the friers) meanwhile, are rock formations, somewhat higher than the above, which are located on top of a mountain elevation. This is a perfect place for those who like extreme sports.

Salto del Nogal is also a waterfall of 102 meters high surrounded by forests of pine and oak, on whose walls can practice various activities of climbing and mountaineering. It is 18 km south of Tapalpa.

## GETTING TO TOWN MAGIC TAPALPA

Tapalpa is located in the south of Jalisco, about 133 kilometers from the city of Guadalajara, in the heart of the Sierra Madre Occidental. To reach this village you must follow to Route 54 leading from Guadalajara to Ciudad Guzman and about 12 kilometers before reaching Sayula, follow the detour that leads to Tapalpa, about 35 miles ahead.

## Gastronomy

The main dish of the place is the sheep the shepherd, while sweets are so -called "borrachitos" and eggnog, among other sweets made from milk as jamoncillos, milk candy and the traditional "pegoste".

## Crafts

Tapalpa 's economy relies mainly on tourism, which is to set a unique repertoire of craft production, such as small furniture and wooden ornaments, textiles and handmade wool blankets, ponchos and backpacks in a diverse mix color; huaraches, articles and carved wooden ornaments, typical clay works, among others.

Currently, Tapalpa has also become home to one of the main stops of the Paragliding World Cup ( PWC) or Paragliding World Cup , it started in 2002 . Since then, Tapalpa has participated in international tournaments this activity, being home to some of the stages, along with Monte Grapple (Italy), Abtenau (Austria) ,Talloires (France) and Kayseri (Turkey).

In addition to acquiring clay crafts in the nearby town of Rosa de Castilla (just 20 minutes from Tapalpa), we recommend testing the traditional dish of the region: "Borrego al pastor" (sheep).

# Mexican Kitchen

**Picadillo** is a slightly spicy seasoned ground beef hash with tons of flavor. You can serve it over rice, or use it as a filling for tacos, burritos and enchiladas. The name Picadillo comes from the Spanish word "picar," which means "to mince" or "to chop." It is popular in many countries and each country has it's own unique seasonings. Mexican picadillo is a little sweet and adds lime juice and a little heat from the jalapeno called for in the recipe. If you prefer your picadillo on the milder side, you can reduce or omit the jalapeno.

#### Ingredients:

1/2 kilo of ground beef

one small onion

4-5 cloves of garlic

1 jalapenos seeded and diced (optional)

4 medium tomatoes

potatoes

carrots

veggies (pea, green beans)

1 cup beef broth or more (as much as you wish)

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1/4 teaspoon ground cloves (optional)

#### Preparation:

Cook the meat in a pot with water and salt, peel the onion into pieces and add it to the pot. Heat a saucepan over medium heat and begin to fry the beef a little. Remove the skin from the garlic and chop the garlic. Chop the tomatoes, potatoes and carrots. Bring it to a boil (uncovered) and then reduce it to a strong simmer. Let the mixture cook for 10-15 minutes or until the liquid is almost all evaporated, creating a thick sauce. Remove from the heat, and place in a dish for serving. Serve over white rice for a delicious main dish. Or you can use the picadillo as a filling for other dishes such as enchiladas, tacos or burritos.





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