

The Rainforest Review

March 20, 2010

Preserving the rainforest, one child at a time.

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Notes from Dr. Linnea

When I came to Explorama as a tourist in February, 1990, I had no intention of staying for the next twenty years. That is exactly what happened, however, and the Clinica Yanamono has now been in existence for that long.

Also for that long, I have been nagging at people to boil the Amazon before drinking it. Child mortality is far higher here than in developed countries, and diarrhea leading to dehydration is a frequent cause of child death. Nonetheless, people are very much accustomed to the taste of the water that they, their parents and grandparents and ancestors for hundreds of years, have been drinking. Even in August and September when the stream drops so low that the water turns green and stagnant, there are people who continue to drink it that way.

Late in 2009, the CONAPAC program constructed a water treatment plant in Las Palmeras, the Yagua village closest to the clinic. I knew that, sort of, but was surprised when I was going through our weekly patient registers, and there just did not seem to be many cases of diarrhea, at least not from Las Palmeras. I asked Edemita (my longtime nurse-assistant) about this, since she not only works at the clinic but also lives in Las Palmeras, and she informed me that virtually everyone in the village is now drinking the treated water, even the most traditional people who never, ever boiled or chlorinated their water in the past.



We are still seeing patients with diarrhea, sometimes with sad results, but not many cases are now coming from the villages with water treatment plants (and those that do are often adults, who have indulged in a good draft of river water when out working in their fields or when visiting a neighboring village for a weekend soccer game).

How nice it is to find that my insistence on trying to purify the drinking water, for all these years, may actually have been correct. Go, CONAPAC, go!

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Dr. Smith is the author of the book "La Doctora," An American Doctor in the Amazon. Available at www.amazon.com for purchase.



Strength in Numbers

Next month, we will begin the 17th year of providing books and school supplies to children and teachers who live along the Amazon and Napo Rivers. In the last few years we've seen tremendous growth in the program as our donor base has committed more and more resources to our efforts. This year, our regular donor base which is primarily made up of individuals, families, churches, schools and civic groups, continued their support of our program, though at reduced levels. Due to this reduction, we decided to let our corporate donor partners know the status of this year's funding. We were thrilled to receive notice from *International Expeditions* and the *Detroit Zoological Society* they could help with some much-needed donations to fund textbooks and teacher workshops which might otherwise have been cut. In addition, the *Madeleine Berman Academy for Humane Education* contributed substantially to the cost of our custom-printed notebooks which bear environmental and animal welfare messages. Through original artwork and written captions, the notebooks are an important method to reach our students, teachers and community leaders about the importance of the rainforest--to their lives and to the world.

Thank you, International Expeditions, Detroit Zoological Society and the Academy for Humane Education, for your generous and timely gifts to the 2010 Adopt-A-School program!

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Academy for
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Preparing for the Expeditions

Spring is always welcome at the Detroit Zoo, not only to mark the end of a Michigan winter, but to serve as a reminder that a visit to the Amazon Jungle is just around the corner. This year, like the past three, I am coordinating pre-trip meetings and donations to make sure our volunteers know what to expect and are ready to make the trip across the equator to deliver school supplies.

The 20 hour journey to get to Iquitos, Peru, can be exhausting, especially as many of us will "sleep" a night on a plane or an airport bench. It's all worth it to step through the Explorama Offices and out onto the dock to board the Amazon Queen and travel down the river for a week of camaraderie and sharing the importance of conservation and education with the people who call the rainforest home.

As an educator and botanist at heart, I find there is no equal to the beauty and peace of the rainforest, regardless of the flurry of activity the organization of the deliveries commands. The journey never ceases to amaze me and I end up with as many pictures of smiling children holding books as I do flowers and trees.

This year we have many longtime supporters of the program traveling down to deliver supplies and work on a conservation project, along with a few new faces eager to depart on this life-changing experience. Many of our participants become life-long friends as a result of the time spent together on the muddy waters of the Amazon and Napo Rivers.

Soon after I return in May, I will be recruiting volunteers for the April 2011 delivery of supplies. I would encourage any of you, regardless if you've visited the rainforest before, to consider joining us on these expeditions. The rewards are simply immeasurable.

A huge thanks to all our supporters who continue to make the program such a great success. Through your generosity, communities will continue to receive vital

school supplies and the opportunity to earn an education while living sustainably with the amazing natural resources that surround them. You are "preserving the rainforest, one child at a time".

By: *Claire Lannoye*
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Village pathway after a few days of rain!



Victoria Regia Giant Lily Pads

Current Funding Progress for the 2010 Adopt-A-School Delivery

In 2009, the Adopt-A-School program received \$112,000 from generous supporters, like you, to purchase and deliver school supplies to the rural villages along the Amazon and Napo Rivers. We're looking forward to another successful year with your continued help!

