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Comunicarte: Campamento de Arte, Lectura, y Creatividad Para Nuestra Comunidad: Program Goals and Description of Activities

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Comunicarte began five years ago in response to security conflicts afflicting several states in Mexico and lack of educational alternatives in the state of Michoacán. The premise was that we can better understand and address social problems in our community through education and culture. As a group, we were looking for activities for children and teenagers during the summer season when young people are out of school and become most vulnerable. We started this program with volunteer teachers from the United States and local teachers. During the Summer of 2014, we celebrate our fifth anniversary and we would to share the goals of this program with a wider audience. We are providing brief description of the events and a summary of the excellent results. These results would not be have been possible without the involvement of the local community, and support from local and state authorities. One goal for sharing the information about the Comunicarte program is to assist other communities at risk with ideas that they may want to replicate.

Program Goals

Comunicarte provides cultural and educational activities for the community of Tingambato, Michoacán, Mexico, as well as for the nearby towns El Mesón, La Escondida, and Pichátaro. Since the continuation of the program requires community support, we encourage residents to become involved and invested in the activities. The program integrates high school students into the planning and then relies on their volunteer efforts to carry out the activities. These young people learn about the benefits of literacy, art, and education and then share their experiences with the community. We emphasize volunteering because we believe that we can better understand and address the difficulties facing our communities through education and a commitment to the places where we live.
Target Audience: Youth, children, local and foreign teachers, migrant children

The program works with children and young people. High school students receive training and materials in order to work as teachers and teachers’ assistants with elementary-school children. In exchange, they receive credits toward the social service requirements of high school. Local teachers also volunteer part of their summer to participate in the program. We have also been fortunate to have volunteer English teachers from the United States who are interesting in learning about culture and education in Mexico. We have also been able to benefit from the experiences of migrant children who were raised in the U.S. but now live in Mexico. Their participation has contributed to their integration into the community.

Description of Activities

English Camp: August 4-15

The camp teaches basic English skills to elementary school children through fun, dynamic activities. Participants interact in a cross-cultural and rich artistic panorama. American teachers live with host families, immersed in the daily life and culture of Tingambato. Their experiences enrich understanding and respect between teachers and Hispanic students in the United States.

Face painting activity.

English classes are held every day (9:00 to 12:30) for two weeks and coordinated by Francisco Javier Hernández. Volunteers from the United States are responsible for airfare and other transportation costs. Community families provide room and meals.

Literacy and Writing Workshop for Migrant Children

For the increasing number of children of migrant workers who have been deported from the United States, Mexico is a foreign country and Spanish is a second language. This workshop gives children tools to write about their experiences with culture, language, and education.

Literacy Festivals in Tingambato, Pichátaro, and La Escondida

These public, outdoor festivals encourage reading as something fun and creative. Festivals feature storytelling, read-ins, art activities, reading spaces, and book donations.

Reading Strategies Workshop

This workshop is for high school students, local teachers, and other volunteers. It teaches reading strategies that participants can share with children in the community.

Traditional Toy Making

Led by toymaker Mario Vázquez, this workshop teaches children how to build wooden toys.

Outdoor Movies

Children can enjoy movies in the town plaza.

Volunteer Day Celebration

In this activity, volunteers offer services to the many members of our communities who need some help with leaky roofs, squeaky doors, warm meals, tutoring, and cleaning.
**Body Expression and Domestic Violence Prevention Workshop**

This workshop is a forum in which women in our communities who suffer domestic violence can share experiences. The workshop addresses self-esteem issues and connects women and children to support groups.

**Summary**

During the Summer of 2014, the *Comunicarte* program will offer activities to approximately 852 participants that include children, adolescents, and parents. The work will be accomplished through the efforts of 51 permanent volunteers, and the partnerships we have established with local, state, and federal authorities. Overall, there will be ten different activities available for the participants.

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**Special Education: Family Literacy with Parents and Teachers**

This workshop encourages parents’ participation in their children’s education, strengthens respect and support between schools and families, and highlights the particular needs of special-needs children.

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*A literacy circle.*