



Friends of Caracol Newsletter

October 2006

Students from Arenal-Guatemala join Caracol's Arenal- Belize Group

Since January 2005 twenty-four young Belizeans, aged between 11 and 16 years, have been participating in two image-based projects "Postcard from a Sanctuary" (Crooked Tree) and "Living on the Border Line" (Arenal). August of this year saw the integration of twelve new students into the Arenal Group.



Noel Corado (11), Arenal Guatemala takes his self portrait

Photography is the central activity for Caracol workshops and the young students use recycled materials to make **pinhole cameras** and **camera obscuras**. To explore their creativity they use paints, crayons, outdated magazines and newspapers to produce collages, an activity they really enjoy.

During the workshops there is always time for those with an interest in writing. They enjoy putting on paper tales told by village elders as well transcribing interviews carried out at village

events. However, everyone enjoys the festivals so much that the nominated reporters often forget to make interviews!



Arenal Guatemala Students produce their first collages

As often as possible visual artists, environmentalists and friends are invited to come to the monthly sessions to share their knowledge and life experience with the students. Special guests bring new information and present it in interesting and creative ways.

Environment

The latest guest was Grant Galland, a marine biologist and Peace Corps Volunteer. Grant spent a morning with the "original members" from Arenal Belize producing a book they named "The Belize We Want".



Arenal Belize Students show Grant Galland their beautiful Mopan River

Using a variety of media each student created a page, including their thoughts on the importance of water found in each of the Belizean eco-systems. They were all very excited with the idea of "making a book" and at the end of the day Aide (16) and Edwin (15) presented it to the Guatemalan members of the group.

History

Arenal was established at the end of the 19th or early 20th century when migrants from the Yucatan Peninsula (Southern Mexico) and the Itza Lake area (Northern Guatemala) settled in the area. This was a time of extensive exploitation of hard woods by the British Crown. Originally one village, Arenal was divided as the result of a dispute between the governments of Belize and Guatemala. This has created two villages without any evidence of an international border.

Belize & Guatemala

With the support of the Guatemala-Belize Language Exchange Project, funded through the British Government's Global Conflict Prevention Pool, Caracol brings together two groups of children from Arenal Belize and Arenal Guatemala.

These young people use photographic cameras to document their lives. Using a camera they have the opportunity to explore their surroundings and develop a wider sense of awareness of the uniqueness of their day to day lives. The group is now working on the production of "Tu Caracolito", a bilingual (English-Spanish) magazine for young people.

From Claudia & Jon

When we established Caracol in Belize in 2003 we realized there was a need to keep people in the UK informed about what was happening. Our network of friends and supporters has grown too large to rely on word of mouth or the odd brochure, so welcome to the first edition of the 'Friends of Caracol Newsletter'.

We send a big thank you to all those who have contributed to keeping Caracol working in Belize during the last four years.

Educational Sponsorship

Workshops delivered by Caracol take place outside of school hours. However, we are making links with schools seeking to diversify their extra-curricula activities. This contact with formal education has led us to become a bridge between young people needing financial support for school and people willing to help.

Caracol is seeking support for students including Gudiel Ruiz (15) who is back in school after a two-year absence. Gudiel's father is a farmer and due to economic restrictions has been unable to meet the school fees or the transport costs of sending Gudiel the six miles to school (there are no buses). Total costs for one year are £500. Gudiel is an enthusiastic and dedicated student in school and as a member of the Caracol group.

If you are interested in being a member of a scheme sponsoring Gudiel through school please contact Caracol

From the Caracol Trustees

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all Friends of Caracol for their support and interest over the past 4 years. With that support we have raised sufficient to fully fund Claudia and Jon and the projects which they have developed and run. Almost all of the funds have been raised locally through Private Donations, Quiz Nights, Plant Sales, Sale of Donated Goods etc. Current costs are in the region of £1100 per month. In September we were delighted to receive our first official grant - from the British High Commission in Belize - to fund the young people of Arenal Guatemala joining the "Living on the Border Line" project. This is a welcome boost to our funds. Just as important is the recognition by the authorities of Caracol's work with the young people of Belize. We believe that this recognition will hold us in good stead in future grant applications to other organisations.

We have recently formed a link with Amersham and Wycombe College BA (hons) Photography Students. On 4th November (for the whole 24 hour period) the students in Amersham and Arenal will photo-record the events in their communities. A joint exhibition will be held in both communities on the same day later in the year.

Dates for your diary

24th November 10.30 until 13.00

Coffee Morning and Bring and Buy Sale

26th November

Caracol Stall at Ley Hill School

1st December

Caracol Stall at Chesham Town Victorian Evening

In September 2007 Claudia and Jon will bring to the UK an exhibition of the work of Caracol students. The work will be exhibited on 1st September in Chesham Town Hall and for the rest of the month in the Dissenters Gallery, Kensal Rise.

Sponsor A Workshop

One of our Friends has suggested that we may be able to raise new funds by offering the opportunity to "Sponsor a Workshop". We have asked Claudia and Jon to give some thought as to how this may work in Belize. We will have an update in the next Newsletter.

Contact Us:

Caracol-ycd

Stuart Ottley, Chairman of the Trustees
14 Lye Green Road, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 3LN
Tel: 01494 782179 Email: s.ottley@tiscali.co.uk