



CAE Executive Summary 2004

SUMMARY:

Both AYUDA's 2004 Ecuador Volunteer Program and its supported Campo Amigo Ecuador '04 (CAE '04) were the largest programs AYUDA has organized in its 10 year working history in Ecuador. AYUDA brought 25 volunteers (3 health professionals, 5 AYUDA staff members, and 17 other volunteers) to Ecuador to help the Ecuadorian diabetes community staff CAE'04, the fifth national annual diabetes camp for children living with diabetes in Ecuador which brought together 112 Ecuadorian staff and campers from 12 provinces. (Azuay, Bolívar, Charchi, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, El Oro, Guayas, Imbabura, Loja, Manabí, Pichincha, and Tungurahua). CAE '04 was AYUDA's largest and most successful program in Ecuador to date. This program can be broken down into two components: the volunteer exchange program and CAE'04.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING:

Throughout the winter and spring of 2004, the AYUDA staff put together a team of sixteen highly motivated high school, college, and medical school students to serve as the core volunteers for CAE '04. In mid July, this eager team arrived in Quito and was received in the homes of families associated with the Fundación de Diabetes Juvenil Ecuador in Quito to begin a three week home-stay program. It was our goal to place each volunteer into the home of an Ecuadorian family with a child living with diabetes.

Each day the volunteers had a demanding schedule which consisted of a morning of Spanish classes and an afternoon of diabetes education taught by the AYUDA staff and a CDE (Certified Diabetes Educator) volunteer from the U.S. Every few days the volunteers were offered activities such as city tours, museums, games in the park, salsa lessons (much needed), or simply an English speaking dinner. Return volunteer Steven Eidelman comments, "Not only did the extended homestay enable us to bond as a group, but it allowed us to adjust to speaking Spanish all day and acquaint ourselves with the local culture."

After two weeks in this schedule, the volunteers met the other half of the team, 24 Ecuadorian volunteers (including 5 medical students who were recruited from the Universidad Católica) in our staff training session, or "Precamp.". While many volunteers found Precamp to be a terrific opportunity to get to know members of the other half of our team, it was essentially a three day training session in which we focused on team building, leadership, diabetes education, and camp protocol. Each left not

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only knowing every other counselor's counselor, but also the appropriate way to treat a low or high blood sugar.

During the final week before camp, AYUDA volunteers were given time off to do a few days of traveling while the AYUDA staff made final arrangements for camp. In the days leading up to camp we were joined by the AYUDA all-stars: Barry Conrad, a CDE and nutritionist from Children's Hospital in Los Angeles, Mark Barone, a youth leader from Brazil who came to us directly from spending the summer at Joslin's camp, and Mark Rahming, a representative from Novo Nordisk in Los Angeles.

CAMPO AMIGO ECUADOR 2004 (CAE'04):

This year our camp enrollment increased to 84 campers. While the majority of the campers came from Quito and the surrounding towns, 8 other cities were represented (Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Loja, Portoviejo, Quevedo, Santo Domingo, Ambato, Ibarra, Tulcán, Riobamba, Chone, Tosagua, Machala and Latacunga). Fairly balanced, we had 45 girls and 39 boys. Our youngest camper, who came with his mother, was only 2 years-old and the eldest was 25 years-old. These two are the exceptions, for almost all of the campers were between the ages of 6-18.

Campo Amigo Ecuador (CAE) is an annual, national diabetes camp for children living with diabetes in Ecuador. The camp brings children and adolescents with diabetes together for a recreational, educational, and safe camping experience. . CAE is the highlight of the year for most of the underprivileged Ecuadorian youth with diabetes. CAE gives children living with diabetes in Ecuador hope and much needed support. It teaches them they are not alone with their disease, the skills needed to manage their disease, and how to get resources necessary to take care of themselves throughout the year. CAE enables children living with diabetes in Ecuador to live longer and more enriching lives, by providing them access to the necessary education and resources.

At camp, the campers were offered a variety of activities. While education was the primary focus of the camp, the campers were also offered sessions of arts and crafts, sports, and an all camp activity. During arts and crafts the campers each created bracelets, picture frames (around a camp picture), and painted t-shirts. While at sports they participated in a variety of activities ranging from soccer, to relay races, to a Brazilian martial-arts-styled dance instruction. In the all-camp activities, the campers enjoyed a gigantic game of capture the flag and a "blind" trust walk. Each night the campers had the opportunity to put on skits, participate in a dance, and on the final night there was a party which featured the music of a local Mariachi band. Unlike past years of camp on the beach, this year's site was a military base in the southern highlands, near Ecuador's third largest city, Cuenca. Much cooler, this new site offered the campers the unusual opportunities of riding horses and in a Humvee.

While it may seem like all the kids did was play, each camper had at least one hour and a half of formal diabetes education. However, it is not AYUDA's intent to focus on structured education but rather we try to make use of the "teachable moment" that occurs for each child. It is our belief that the children learn and retain more information that they encounter in informal exchanges between the counselors and the diabetes educators that we have on staff rather than in the structured setting. Some of the best teaching and learning opportunities come at mealtimes, on the sports fields and when we check blood sugars.

On the medical side of camp we received help from three Ecuadorian doctors, especially Miguel Pasquel, M.D. (endocrinologist, Quito, since named as the Medical Director of the Fundación Diabetes Juvenil Ecuador). Each child checked their own blood sugar at least 6 times a day while the camp staff checked again during the night. Every blood sugar number and insulin dose was kept in a journal for the medical staff while each camper noted this information for themselves in journal provided to them by the foundation. In addition to routine blood sugar tests, we were able to test each camper's hemoglobin and microalbumin levels. While the results were varied, these tests were an opportunity for each camper to see how well they are managing their condition, especially for those who do not usually have the opportunity to visit a doctor.

As the largest gathering of children with diabetes ever in Ecuador, it was an excellent opportunity to study the diabetes community in Ecuador. Available to the foundation were the results of the microalbumin tests, hemoglobin tests, and an entire weeks worth of blood sugar results and insulin doses. The members of the foundation, with the help of Dr. Pasquel, have taken advantage of this opportunity and are working on a study to more fully understand the level of treatment, education, and health of children in Ecuador living with diabetes.

All in all camp was a beautiful experience for all involved. Health professionals went and practiced in a beautiful foreign country. AYUDA volunteers got to see a new country, find their new Ecuadorian families, and understand the effect of diabetes on children and their families in the developing world. Ecuadorian volunteers had the opportunity to give back to the camp that once taught them the skills that allowed them to lead a more healthy life. Finally, the campers had the opportunity to have a fun filled week where they were able to make great friendships while learning the skills necessary for a happier, healthier life. For all involved, Campo Amigo Ecuador was a week that none of us will ever forget.

CONCLUSION

The last night of camp ended with a very emotional session between the campers and the staff. Both in tears, the campers thanked the staff for the interest they had taken and for what they had taught, and the staff thanked the campers for what they too had learned. Each of the 84 children returned to their homes with a fresh sense of confidence and new skills to help them better manage their lives with diabetes. Currently plans are being made so we can repeat this even for the sixth year, as Campo Amigo Ecuador 2005.

