What an exciting spring it is! We have just welcomed back our amazing team of Haiti volunteers who were instrumental to the successful launch of our 2014 Haiti Pilot Program. Our newsletter will feature a recap of this program and some stories from the volunteers who participated. You will also hear from a few of our Dominican Republic volunteers who’s programs begin May 24th.

HAITI UPDATE

Piloting a Pilot!
Merith Basey, Director of Haiti Program

On April 21st, five AYUDA volunteers journeyed to Port-au-Prince, Haiti in support of a diabetes education program for 68 children and youth living with diabetes. AYUDA was lucky to have along incredible volunteers with diverse skill sets. Four of the five are living with diabetes and four have prior experience in-country with AYUDA.

FHADIMAC, our local partner, selected a location for camp about an hour north of the capital in a coastal resort called Moulin-sur-Mer. The setting - one of the most beautiful locations AYUDA has ever co-hosted a camp in - turned out to be the first opportunity for many of the campers to enjoy a dip in the sea despite living on a Caribbean island.

Before taking the trip north, we spent the first two days in Port-au-Prince revising activities for camp, preparing materials and getting to know some of FHADIMAC’s young leaders. FHADIMAC is lead by the tireless Dr. Nancy Charles Larco, daughter of Dr. Rene Charles Larco who founded the organization more than 25 years ago. Keeping it in the family, experienced AYUDA volunteer and granddaughter of the founder, Vanessa Larco, took a leadership role in the camp and helped to merge the AYUDA and FHADIMAC teams into one.

Campers and camp staff were joined by AYUDA co-Founder, Dr. Nick Cuttriss to support Dr. Nancy in the medical team proceedings, as well as returning Drs. Fran and Neal Kaufman and CDE extraordinaire, Evelyne Fleury Milfort.

For many of the campers it was the first time that they had the opportunity to engage with other young people living with the same condition who weren’t from Haiti. “Do you have diabetes?” one of the campers asked AYUDA volunteer Chris Noble who has been living with diabetes for two decades, “How is that possible if you’re so big?!” These sorts of revelations, heard multiple times over the camp days, underline to the volunteers the importance of their presence at the camp.

During the camp, the AYUDA team worked tirelessly from the 7am morning blood sugar checks to the 1am night rounds. The night activities revealed an intensely competitive Haitian spirit for musical chairs and a constant desire to dance whenever possible. New friendships were formed and many talents were shared in the final evening’s talent show.

As the camp wrapped up on Sunday morning, an emphasis was made on the community aspect of the program and the feeling that everyone was connected, not just by diabetes but the shared experiences during the four days.

AYUDA and FHADIMAC were very appreciative of the visit from Helen Kim and Lydia Guterman from the Leona B. and Harry M. Helmsley Charitable Trust who paid a visit to see witness the empowerment of youth to be agents of change in diabetes communities around the world.
By Randy Perillo (Campo Amigo Ecuador 2009, Ganémosle 2013, Haiti 2014)

Having been involved with AYUDA since 2009, I have been fortunate to participate in Campo Amigo in Ecuador, Ganémosle in the Dominican Republic, and most recently in the Haiti Pilot Program. Each program has been challenging, unique, impactful and rewarding.

When I talk with people about international volunteerism, I find that while most are extremely interested, they are often reserved about whether they can actually make a difference. This is a fair question, and particularly because the work we do at AYUDA is not first-responder type emergency work. Our work is about long-term results that can only be observed over time. It isn’t easy, but few worthy endeavors are.

AYUDA’s expertise was on full display in the pilot program of Haiti, which was a figurative and literal new frontier for the organization. In many ways it mirrored some of AYUDA’s classic traits: an intense focus on understanding the local context, a round-the-clock care approach to working with campers, and the can-do mentality to providing an incredible life experience to everyone involved.

Working with our partner FHADIMAC in this capacity for the first time meant giving up control of some of the planning, and trusting our partner to fill the gaps. As with any pilot program, there is a lot to learn. The great news is that the program was a success; FHADIMAC is extremely pleased with our work and the campers were thrilled! It can’t be said enough how important it is to have a strong local partner in country. Without FHADIMAC we would be unable to do our work, which is what makes AYUDA’s team building expertise so important.

Working with over 60 young people, the majority of whom spoke mainly or only Creole, was a challenge. We will work on how to manage the language barrier moving forward, but it didn’t stop us from teaching and learning from the campers. Haiti, with all its beauty, amazing food, kind people and warm climate, was a wonderful host country. I couldn’t have left more impressed with this nation that is far more compelling than the media might portray.

I am extremely proud to have been a part of this program and am energetic about engaging other volunteers to participate in the future. There is a great need for the work we do with AYUDA in Haiti. Through the work of the organization and Merith Basey in particular, the stage is now set for a long and prosperous camp program for next year and beyond.

Firsts
by Catherine Karlik (Haiti 2014)

My recent trip to Haiti as an AYUDA volunteer involved a lot of “firsts” for me:

• First program with AYUDA;
• First trip to Haiti;
• First time I’ve met other young people also living with diabetes;
• First experience with a diabetes camp;
• First time I’ve given a glucose test or insulin injection other than my own; and
• First time I’ve felt a part of a larger diabetes community.

[Image of Randy Perillo (far right) and Catherine Karlik (center) with the rest of AYUDA crew in Haiti, April 2014]
I was so excited to get to Haiti that I barely slept at all during the nights leading up to my trip. I arrived in Port-au-Prince exhausted but eager to get started. We spent our first few days learning about Haiti and the diabetes community in the country, meeting with FHADIMAC youth leaders, planning camp activities, and visiting the capital’s university hospital.

After three days in Port-au-Prince, we headed to camp for a whirlwind few days of nutrition trivia games, 1am blood glucose checks, and a few very competitive rounds of musical chairs. Camp was equal parts fun and educational, with just a dash of exhaustion thrown in for good measure. Some moments were hectic and some were hilarious.

My favorite experiences at camp were seeing the campers supporting and learning from each other. When we invited campers to talk about their experiences living with diabetes, more than one camper began with “When I was diagnosed, I thought I was completely alone,” or “When I was diagnosed, I thought I was going to die.”

They now know that they are not alone and that they can live happy, healthy lives with diabetes. That’s a pretty powerful change. Watching campers realize that there are people all over Haiti, and all over the world, living and thriving with diabetes was one of the highlights of my trip.

I am so thankful for both AYUDA and FHADIMAC. I can’t imagine sharing this experience with a better group of people – I spent my week in Haiti laughing and dancing and learning, and I can’t wait to go back.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC UPDATE

As our two Dominican Republic programs get underway, we asked a few of our volunteers to put into words some of their experiences thus far with AYUDA. Please check out their first essays on the following pages. These four volunteers will continue to post online updates on their experiences in-country so please check our website for more information!
Embracing What’s Next
Jessica Lynam (Technical Volunteer, Campo Amigo DR 2014)

So there I was, staring down the possibility of leaving a career I thought I’d stay in for the rest of my life, wondering whether my life choices and skill set have painted me into this weird corner, where the only thing I could ever be good at is expounding on obscure Latin American authors in the ivory tower of a university. How did I get here? Is this even what I signed up for?

And then I found AYUDA, and AYUDA said, “Wow, we could really use someone like you!” And although I wasn’t quite sure what they meant, what the heck: I played along by filling out my application to volunteer. The application questions were tough, thoughtful; the sort of questions I’ve become accustomed to asking more than answering these days. By the time I finished, I felt uncertain whether I would pass muster… and desperately hopeful that I’d be chosen. I also felt alive in a way I hadn’t in a long time.

Getting denied tenure at the university where I’ve been teaching for six years forced me to confront all these questions about who I am today and what it is I want. Already, AYUDA has provided at least a partial answer. Lately, I’ve been accessing all kinds of skills that I haven’t used in a while. I’ve channeled the long-dormant waitress inside me as a means of keeping many plates spinning at once as I attend a weekly on-line course, rally friends and family to my cause and teach college and grade papers. I’ve tapped into my previous self as a catering manager, who can tell how much arroz con pollo will feed twenty people at a fundraising event. And I’ve roused my old rabble-rousing self, using my skills as a former union organizer to move people from caring about an idea such as diabetes education to acting on it.

Who am I? I’m a fundraiser, an educator, an organizer, a volunteer. I’m an inspiration, that’s who. What do I want? To embrace what’s next, to surprise myself again with who I have been and who I am becoming. AYUDA thinks I’m helping their organization. In fact, AYUDA is healing me.

Finding Who I Am
Shashi Mostafa (Ganémosle 2014)

What am I going to do for the rest of my life? This is the question that haunts any junior in high school. There are so many factors that key into the making of this type of decision. I sit and I search and I search and I find the word “help” sitting right in front of me; this was exactly what I was searching for. AYUDA opened the door for me to a new feeling of knowing.

How did I know this? I know I like to motivate, I like to meet new people, I like to volunteer, I like to help people, I like to learn, I like to travel, and I like to exercise. AYUDA is all of these things I like combined, so I was very interested. I applied, and I got accepted to be an AYUDA volunteer.

My experience with AYUDA so far has been phenomenal. I got to experience traveling alone for the first time when I flew across the country to meet all the volunteers at the Volunteer Training Program Summit. This is where I learned all about diabetes and how to take care of it. I also learned how to efficiently fundraise and how to talk about AYUDA. I was introduced to a culture I was previously unfamiliar with; I learned about the traditions, food and dances of the Dominican Republic.

My fundraising efforts have gotten me more involved in my community. I have met many people who love to donate to organizations like AYUDA, and I have made many long-lasting friendships with people who have been interested in supporting me. I cannot wait to go to the Dominican Republic in one week to volunteer in the Ganémosle program. I am looking forward to promoting exercise by encouraging people to participate in Ganémosle la Carerra a la Diabetes.
May 11th
By Ashley Morse (Campo Amigo DR 2013 and 2014)

On May 11th I celebrated ten full years of living with diabetes. If you talked to me on May 11th of any other year, I would not have been so celebratory. In fact, I use to regard diabetes as a hindrance. It made every aspect of my life—sports, class and friends—more difficult. May 11th merely served to remind me of how much more challenging my life had to be as a result of diabetes. However, May 11th, 2014 was different. After finding my place last year as an AYUDA volunteer and spending three weeks in the Dominican Republic to support others with this same condition, my mindset changed completely. Diabetes is still a huge day-to-day commitment with a plethora of emotional and physical ups and downs, but for me, it has been a blessing in disguise.

Last summer was the first summer I volunteered with AYUDA, and I’ll be returning this year for the Campo Amigo program in the Dominican Republic. It was an incredibly sobering experience to witness the poverty some Dominicans face on top of managing such an expensive condition. The experience showed me how lucky I am to have access to such great resources and to be supported by such a wonderful community. In this way, my experience with diabetes challenged me to take full advantage of the resources and knowledge I have and to bring them into communities that are less fortunate. AYUDA became the first experience in my life for which I felt I could personally make a difference. I learned that there are few things in life that bring as much happiness as assisting another to improve his or her life.

So, thanks to AYUDA, this year and every year, I’ll be celebrating on May 11th.

Can’t Wait
Peninah Benjamin (Campo Amigo DR 2014)

I was first introduced to AYUDA when I was 12 years old. At the time, I chose AYUDA as my Bat-Mitzvah project. My family and I went to Ecuador and volunteered with Campo Amigo. I wasn’t really old enough to be a counselor, but I loved helping the little kids with their diabetes and also making new friends who were my age.

I remember the last night we were in Ecuador; I realized I wanted to return to AYUDA as a counselor. Their mission helped me realize how lucky I am to have all the resources and education to manage my diabetes and I want to try and support other young people and families. I can’t wait to volunteer this summer. The first night at dinner during the Volunteer Training Program (VTP) Summit in DC this March is when it all clicked for me. As I heard other returning volunteers’ stories about their experiences with AYUDA and at Campo Amigo, I became excited to get to know the other volunteers and be a role model. The one thing that I think I am most nervous about is speaking Spanish. So far I have had an amazing experience with AYUDA. I loved the VTP Summit: when we got to learn more about AYUDA, what we will be doing this summer, and meeting the other volunteers for the first time. I learned so much and met so many amazing people that weekend!
Interested in volunteering with AYUDA this fall?

We are currently recruiting for the 2014 World Diabetes Day DR Volunteer Program which runs November 7th – 16th. During this program volunteers will work closely with our partners in Santo Domingo, Aprendiendo a Vivir, to provide health education sessions to Dominican students on the subject of diabetes and healthy living (in both English and Spanish). Last year we reached over 1,000 students. Learn more about the program on our website.

The program application is processed on a rolling basis with volunteer selections happening June 16th, July 16th and August 31st. Earlier applications receive precedence so apply today before all the spots fill up! Don’t forget many campuses will recognize the importance of this program and give students excused absences and/or credit for service learning and field work!

VOLUNTEER UPDATE

AYUDA Volunteers heading to America’s top colleges and universities!
We are proud to share with you a few updates from present AYUDA volunteers:

Hailey Blain (Campo Amigo DR 2013 and 2014)
Hailey will be attending Bowdoin College in Brunswick, ME in the fall.

Julia Gordon (Campo Amigo DR 2013 and 2014)
Julia will be attending Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT in the fall.

Corey Greenblatt (Campo Amigo Ecuador 2009-2012 and Campo Amigo DR 2014)
Corey is graduating from University of Miami this spring.

Ashley Morse (Campo Amigo DR 2013 and 2014)
Ashley will be attending Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH in the fall.

Chris Noble (Ganémosle 2013, WDD 2013, Haiti 2014, Campo Amigo DR 2014)
Chris will be attending Boston University’s School of Public Health for an MPH in Global Health with a specialization in Pharmaceutical production and development in the fall.

Julie Sklar (Campo Amigo DR 2013 and 2014)
Julie will be attending Washington & Lee University in Lexington, VA in the fall.

Ruby Steinberg (Campo Amigo DR 2014)
Will be attending University of Delaware in Newark, DE in the fall.
Where are they now?

We recently asked our AYUDA Alumni to check in with us and share their recent accomplishments. We are so proud of everyone in our AYUDA family! We look forward to sharing more updates in upcoming newsletters.

**Chris Capron (Campo Amigo Ecuador 2011 and 2012, Ganémosle Volunteer Mentor 2013)**

I became a Lang Opportunity Scholar at Swarthmore College. Sponsored and supported by AYUDA, I am currently pursuing an independent social action and research project to identify and address barriers to adherence with diabetes treatment in Quito, Ecuador.

**Kristen Mitchell (Campo Amigo Ecuador 2009)**

I am currently in school to be a Physician Assistant. I am in my second year and living in New York City doing my ER rotation at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx. I completed a 2nd medical mission in Guatemala this past December. It was an amazing experience. I delivered babies, treated patients with a variety of medical problems and did house visits.


I recently started my Residency in Pediatrics and Child-Psychiatry at Brown University.

**Aida Taye, MD (Campo Amigo Ecuador 2004 and 2005)**

I am very appreciative of my experience with AYUDA way before medical school. I’m am about to start my last year of General Surgery training at Albert Einstein School of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center.

**Alicia Vail (Campo Amigo Ecuador 2012)**

I have been accepted into 11 universities for nursing and will be going off to school in September. I did some work with Omnipod as a pump ambassador and worked at a diabetes camp for two summers and will be returning again this summer.

**Rachel Wilson (Campo Amigo DR 2011)**

I’ve had a very blessed, life-changing few years. I moved to New Zealand with my husband. I am currently working in a hospital in the South of Auckland in the special care baby unit for children with special needs. I’ve been really loving it. However I’m not working at the moment as we’ve just had a beautiful baby girl Emmeline Rose.
Maximize Your Impact!
When making a donation consider maximizing it through our matching gift challenge from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust. The Trust will match, dollar for dollar, every gift or pledge of $2,500 or above by June 30th, up to $75,000! We need just ten more Leadership Gifts at the $2,500 level to create a double impact for a total of $150,000. Empower youth to serve as agents of social change through AYUDA’s local diabetes projects in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador through your donation. Donate now on our website: www.ayudainc.net/give.

Please Consider a Recurring Gift Today!
Financial sustainability is critically important for AYUDA to plan for future growth and relieve our dedicated volunteers of some of the costs of their training and outreach program placement. In addition to the generous support we receive from corporate and foundation grants, we respectfully ask our individual donors to consider an annually recurring gift over a three year period. Please consider this option when completing the form below, and we will send you a pledge reminder each year.

Please mail your donations to:
AYUDA, 1700 N. Moore Street, Suite #2000
Arlington, VA 22209.

Or make an online donation at www.ayudainc.net/give
Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) # 39207

YES, I want to support AYUDA. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation in the amount of:

___ $2,500 Match Qualifying Gift  ___ $1,000  ___ $500  ___ $250  ___ $100  ___ Other

___ Yes, I would like to give annually at this level for a 3-year pledge

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