

PLANTING SEEDS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

By Belen Amezcua



Before Puerto Rico

I decided to participate in the Puerto Rico trip not only to learn about a beautiful culture but also to donate my time in life changing projects. In works of planning our projects I was honored to have worked along side with three other students to develop the health project. This project was a huge success we were able to take about 50 first aid kits that allowed families to plan for natural disasters. This is a great opportunity to grow and learn as an individual. I have never been to Puerto Rico so the experience of traveling there, is an experience. Volunteering and helping other is something I enjoy doing. However, this was my first time ever volunteering outside of Oregon.

Reflection on trip

Reflecting on this trip I realized that the opportunity I had to interact with others and learn. I Learned that we don't always appreciate all that we have. Today I value and acknowledge how many things we take for granted. Puerto Rico gave me the opportunity to appreciate the overwhelming number of things and resources we have here in Oregon. People in Puerto Rico are kind genuine welcoming, and they have a spirit like no other. They do their best with the resources they have. After seeing the way, the lived as well as their resilience I realized I had much learning to do from that. I came home with a broader view of life as well as a spirit of being thankful and applicative of what we have. I am more aware of our resources, and I am keeping an eye out for ways to conserve those resources, so we aren't as wasteful. After this trip I have reflected in our ways of living, and I concluded that there is so much we can do for others even if we aren't rich. Lending a hand is the seed people need to get other standing on their feet. A lending hand might just be, what they need to bloom.



School Project

The School Project was a garden project as you can see the in the pictures above. Before starting these raised beds, I had no experience with gardening. It was a process that I had to learn about as I worked. This project took place in the Escuela Especializada en Tecnologia Gerardo Selles Sola ubicada en Caguas, Puerto Rico a beautiful school in which we were able to come together and turn an empty space into a resourceful garden. This project involved teamwork, communication and most importantly resilience. At the beginning of the project everyone was eager to start we were all full of energy and ready to start planting plants. It only took me about one hour to realize that the creation of raised beds takes more than just the planting of plants. I was surrounded by a group of people that had hope and were eager and passionate about this change that was about to happen. We started out by removing the grass, a process that doesn't sound hard until you are doing the same motion over and over to complete the job. We used shovels, pickaxes and other hand tools to complete this whole project. Once we removed all the grass, we leveled out the ground and made sure it was leveled enough to start the next step that got us closer to the finish line. As we evened the ground, we used pencils to layout our plan and start with the following steps of placing down bricks and agricultural fabric. Reflecting on this project I am beyond grateful to have been a part of project in which I know will have a great impact on the lives of many. nevertheless, I am glad to be able to say that I have a worked with a great group of students, teachers and staff to create a garden that will not only be used for educational purposes, but it also serves purpose for a better future.

Coconut Farm

The coconut farm was a part of trip that I found to be very informative. As a group we received a detailed and very exclusive tour of a coconut farm that on top of growing a variety of coconuts they also produced pineapple mangos. In this tour we were introduced to the world of growing and maintaining coconuts a process in which takes up to one year to fully ripen. The person that we received our tour from was a farmer himself, his company name was *The Coconut Route*. I am very thankful to have been a part of this experience in which I learned a lot from. On top of being able to sightsee the land, we drank fresh water from newly picked coconuts, eat juicy mangos and eat the meat of a coconut. This experience was one that I wont ever forget, the firsthand experience will be one that I share as a main memory from this overall trip. After receiving a detailed tour filled with questions, our tour guide ended with an amazing performance in which he demonstrated how he personally climbed up a coconut tree to pick them. On each tree there was carvings in which we found out were remarks of the spikes of the shoes that were used for climbing the tree. This is yet another example of how Puerto Ricans strive and and fight to over obstacles.



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Picture credit to Wanda Crannell

