



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

November 2021

www.mfschool.org

It's Almost Here: Giving Tuesday!

We are excited that we just might be able to all of our students and all of our staff and teachers on a single campus for second semester! One of the richest parts of our school is the mingling of older and younger students. Similarly, teachers look forward to being all together on a regular basis -- something that hasn't happened for almost two years.

In order to do so, we need to supplement our classroom space with 2 tents at a cost of \$1,000 in order to fit on one campus. We hope that we can raise that on **Giving Tuesday, November 30th**, as people around the world pause from Christmas shopping to donate to causes that make a lasting difference in our world.

With all the extra use of computers during the pandemic -- all-virtual then hybrid classes, and now classroom assignments -- we find we need to replace 5 Chromebook computers for our colegio students. As each MFS student starts colegio (7th through 12th grade), they are issued a Chromebook that is theirs to use throughout their school years and to keep after graduation. Often, this is the only computer in their family, and younger siblings learn to use a computer as well.

If we are fortunate enough to raise more than we need for tents, we will use those proceeds to purchase replacement Chromebooks. Any funds beyond that will be used toward our scholarship funds for next year.

So please remember us on **Giving Tuesday, November 30th** (or any other time!) and make a tax-deductible contribution in Canada, the US, or Costa Rica.



Swedish Children and Monteverde's Children's Eternal Rainforest



Left picture, Marcus Haraldsson presents to our 7th through 10th graders. Right picture, Marcus (on the right) answers a 12th-grader's questions after class.

You don't have to be in Monteverde very long to learn that one of the most popular environmental reserves in the Monteverde area is the Children's Eternal Rainforest. With a little investigation, you can find out that it includes 55,000 acres (33,000 hectares) and offers fascinating hiking trails in small portions of its land. Tourists and locals flock to guided tours, day or night, to spot the incredible biodiversity.

But why the name "Children's Eternal Rainforest"? With a little more digging, you can learn that some of the initial funds to purchase the land came from Swedish schoolchildren. That begs another question: how did Swedish schoolchildren find out about Monteverde, half a world away, much less raise the kind of funds needed for the purchase?

We were lucky enough recently to get some of the answers to those questions when Marcus Haraldsson, a photographer and journalist, visited Monteverde, introduced himself at the Sunday Friends Meeting and joined a group of us for lunch. Since he was a young student himself when the funds were raised in 1988, he regaled us with the Swedish side of the story -- and we concluded that our students would enjoy his stories as well. We are grateful to Marcus for agreeing to make three presentations to different age groups.

Here's what he told us: In the late 1980's, environmental issues were coming to the forefront, prompted by the crash and horrendous oil spill from the Exxon Valdez off Alaska, disappearing Amazon rainforest due to fires and agriculture and so on. The children at a very small school in Sweden had seen some documentaries about this, and were deeply concerned.

One 9-year-old asked his teacher "Why don't we buy some rainforest and make sure it is protected?" Surely his teacher must have choked at how impractical that seemed. But that weekend, a biologist named Sharon Kinsman who had done some work in Monteverde visited near that school and mentioned that a nonprofit had recently been set up to build a fund that would do exactly what that 9-year-old had in mind -- buy and protect rainforest.

So the students got started on their little project with a first event -- a bunny hopping contest! Parents paid a gate fee and bought foods that were for sale, and the Swedish fund was started. Word got around about the effort, by word-of-mouth and with coverage in local newspapers, and other schools started adding to the project.

Along the way, students had another bright idea: The president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, was coming to Oslo, Norway in 1987 to accept the Nobel Peace Prize. The students figured if he was traveling that far, that he might as well come a little farther to visit them and talk about their fundraising effort. They sent an invitation. Arias wrote back that his schedule was too crowded and he could not come -- but he sent a very senior diplomat in his place

A visit of that sort gained all sorts of publicity in Sweden's national press, which led to efforts at schools all over the country. And that eventually built to international exposure that has raised funds not only for the initial purchase of the Children's Eternal Rainforest, but to cover ongoing maintenance and protection costs for the reserve. Over time, 44 nations around the world contributed to the effort.

Needless to say, our students were fascinated to hear this background. Our 11/12th graders were equally curious about Marcus' work as a photojournalist. They had so many questions that after one class period with Marcus, they went to the next teacher in their schedule and convinced him to let them use that period as well to talk with Marcus.

We look forward to hearing from Marcus about the in-depth article he is preparing for a Swedish publication, and later for a book. He has visited Monteverde multiple times starting in 1992 when he was a young teen. Now, almost 35 years later, he is here to evaluate the impact that the venture has had. It will be great to see what he concludes!

They're Back!

With in-person classes this semester, we'll be able to resurrect an annual tradition of having our students decorate the envelopes that go out with our annual appeal letters. We hope they give people little bits of joy upon opening a mailbox. Many of them carry our most important message for all of you: **thank you, thank you, for all you do to support our school.**

