



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

February 2022

www.mfschool.org

Dare We Hope?



As February comes to a close, we are six weeks into our second semester with our whole school community back on one campus. Omicron infections countrywide are on the decline, but we maintain our safety protocols.

With high vaccination rates in Costa Rica, decreasing infections, and tourists returning, we are tentatively beginning to hope for a return to pre-pandemic normalcy. That hope is tempered, though, by the way this pandemic has taught us to expect and adjust to sudden turns.

There is one more hurdle for the school and for the Monteverde community to get over: returning to financial stability. For two years now, since more than 80% of local residents experienced either job loss or severe cutbacks on hours when tourists disappeared, we lowered our tuition. Thanks to our donors, greatly increased scholarships allowed all our students to continue.

We know that we have asked your help over and over and wish we didn't still have to. We have increased 2022-23 tuition to pre-pandemic levels to better cover our costs, but know that will increase our scholarship requests.

You, our supporters, have astounded us with your generosity. We look for your help as three of our wonderful donors have offered a \$15,000 match to top off our scholarship funds for next year. Hopefully, with your generosity, all our current students will be able to join us again in the new school year.

We do our best in these newsletters and on social media to demonstrate how special our school is -- its academic excellence, bilingual immersion and importantly, a set of values that helps our students grow into great adults. We hope that you feel some of the inspiration that we experience directly in the school.

**Double your donations by meeting a
\$15,000 challenge match by the end of March!**
Help us top off our scholarship funds so that every student can return next year.

Here's how to make tax-deductible donations:

United States	Donate Online	Send checks to: Jenny Rowe, Monteverde Friends, U.S., PO Box 2153, Campton, NH 03223
Canada	Donate Online	Send checks to: MEF, PO Box 21 Saturna, BC V0N 2Y0

Elections Costa Rica and MFS-Style

On February 6, 2022, Costa Rica held its national election for a new president, two vice-presidents and 57 seats for the Legislative Assembly. There were 25 candidates for president, from 25 different parties. As a result no one candidate exceeded the necessary 40% to be elected. In April there will be a run-off for the top two presidential candidates. Interestingly, Costa Rica law requires that parties in at least half of the country's 7 regions be led by a female.

In order for our students of all ages to understand both how the elections work and what their civic duty is, MFS held a mock election for president of the school. Three students volunteered to be the candidates. Being a candidate involved developing a platform and making the rounds of classrooms to present to all grades.

Each candidate selected an actual Costa Rican party that they wanted to represent and then developed their own platform of actions they would like to take:

- **Laura, an 11th grader**, selected a new Costa Rican party that goes by the motto " Access without Exclusion". Her platform included making improvements to the school's driveway and parking lot to make them more accessible, along with getting a better Internet connection to improve access for classes. Earlier this year, Laura completed a training for [Recycle Leaders](#) and she is now a trainer with them so she included some environmental initiatives in her platform.
- **Celimo, a 10th grader**, ran under the banner of the National Liberty Party, a party that dates back to 1948 when it overthrew Costa Rica's government. Once in power it made several important changes including limination of the country's military in favor of health and educational reforms. Celimo is quite a sportsman, so his platform focused on getting more sports equipment for recess.
- And the winner with 56%, is **Fabian, an 11th grader** who proposed changes in the school that could be done without a major expense. His recommendations included bringing back the "mini-courses" where local volunteers would share their expertise on a wide variety of topics and activities, from bicycling groups to talking about careers. That proposal was so popular that Fabian plans to work on it for real!

One of the most special parts about the mock election was that now that we are all on one campus again, students at every grade level, from early kindergarten to the 12th grade, had the opportunity to vote.

Even our youngest students had the chance to vote ...



... and as in many countries, voting involve waiting in lines.



Our Longstanding Volunteers



Don and Liz Tanner from Canada

If it is February, the volunteers must be here!

We have some returning volunteers who usually join us at this time each year. The four who are with us now all have backgrounds as teachers, which is most valuable to us as they know how to fit into a classroom or tutoring sessions with ease without needing much direction from our teachers. They join us from January to early April, which gives our students a sense of stability in seeing them most days for the full term.

Don and Liz are our newest of the four volunteers-- relatively speaking, that is, given that they have volunteered each year since 2011 with the exception of last year when the pandemic kept them in Canada. That year, however, Liz taught English language and poetry as an elective by Zoom. She enjoys working with the younger students. Don supports classroom teachers in math for students in grades five/six and the high school. He also tutors one on one.

Kenna Manos has volunteered with us since 2007, usually for about 6 months of the school year, with some intervals to be with her grandchildren in Nova Scotia. She previously taught at the university level, but now likes her ongoing stint as the assistant teacher for our 5/6 grade class.

Our longest term volunteer is Paul Angell, who started with MFS in 2003. He also spent the 2005-6 school year here as the MFS Special Education teacher, sharing the skills he has used throughout his career. Paul works with small groups of children at all ages when some special attention is needed.

With Monteverde such a popular travel destination -- especially when it is warmer here than in traveler's own countries -- we get many more offers of volunteer service than we can accept. Our priority is to provide a safe and stable school community for our students, while keeping teacher workloads manageable by only using volunteers with teaching experience for the classroom. We also require volunteers to be here for at least a full term (about 3 months).

If you feel you meet those criteria, we have a screening process that involves a written application, an interview via Zoom, a national background check from your home country, and proof that you have been vaccinated.



That's Kenna, also of Canada, on the left, and Paul from the US on the right

