



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

April 2022

www.mfschool.org

Reawakening

It feels like a reawakening. In April we have resumed several things that we haven't done in two years. COVID has fooled the world enough times, though, that it is both a little scary and truly exciting to resume things we used to take for granted.



A moment of serenity at the lunch spot for those who walked the 13.3 km of the Caminata.

Thankfully, Monteverde has had a strong tourist season since January that will support our economy throughout the year. Even as tourists dwindle and the first gentle rains begin (signaling the start of the rainy season), hope and caution remain strong as we try to recover from the past two years.

Scholarships totaling \$88,000 have been awarded and students' registration fees are due in the next two weeks. We expect that will confirm that our school is full once again. Should a family or two have a change in plans, we have a long waiting list of families eager to fill their spots. We have just one teacher to replace for next year, and recently filled that position.

With just four weeks remaining in this school year, we are wrapping up this year and preparing for year-end celebrations, meetings for gratitude, and graduations from kindergarten, 6th grade and high school. After a full year of in-person instruction, teachers look forward to the summer break just as much as their students do. At the same time, preparations are already underway for next year.

At this time, we want to pause, though, and celebrate the ways in which we have moved back to normalcy while we plan for a (hopefully) normal school year in 2022-23.

Back Together!

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We began April with our Caminata, the walkathon organized by school parents to raise funds for projects within the school. Our last one was in 2019, but this month more than 170 people, young and old, participated. The 13 km route ended in a glorious spot for lunch, with a view across mountains to the Arenal Volcano.

Before the pandemic, most weekdays started with an assembly of all students for 15 to 20 minutes. Sometimes there would be a game to allow students in different grades and classes to connect and spend time together. Sometimes it was a lesson on a special day or preparation for going out into the community to do service. At times it was an opportunity for a young student to snuggle up with an older student they admired. An absolute standard was everyone singing Happy Birthday to anyone who announced it was their day – in Spanish, English or both, and most often with “cha cha chas” after each line.

On Friday, April 22nd, we had our first full assembly much to everyone's delight!

The next day, we revived another tradition: having students help raise funds for class trips by offering events and selling food, giving them a sense of ownership for the project. Our 11th and 12th graders hope to take a trip around Costa Rica to visit some of the universities available to them. To support that, they organized a movie night with an early showing for younger children and a later one for teens and adults. Popcorn was de rigueur, and the room was close to full.

Twice a week, our recess times are no longer separated between primary and colegio, allowing students of all ages to play together. Our long tradition has been that students are to be inclusive in their play. They are not allowed to limit participation in games – most often soccer – by age or ability level. It is wonderful to see the patience of our older students as younger ones do their best!

The pandemic is a gift in one sense, as we now pause to consider which traditions to bring back for the 2022-23 school year and which might be improved upon. Mini-courses – a couple of hours in the week to explore everything from bicycle riding to a presentation from a community member on a new topic – are highly popular



Some younger students at the end of the Caminata (there were rides available for those who could not do the full 13 km.)



Older students joining the first assembly for all ages.



The early show for movie night. Clearly, the popcorn was popular!

and will definitely be part of the schedule. But our staff and teachers are always trying to improve the school as we design the new school year.

At Long Last!

“It has long been a dream of mine to travel to the United States, to learn new things, and to be in a new place.” said MFS 11th grader Laura Fonseca Brenes as we chatted by Zoom this week.

In 2020, she was just on the verge of realizing her dream. She had made all the arrangements to spend her fourth quarter of 9th grade as an exchange student at the Pomfret School in northeastern Connecticut, US. The trip had to be cancelled at the last moment when the pandemic hit.

While deeply disappointed, Laura didn't give up on her dream. Over the past two years, she has put her energy into other things. She completed a training with Recycle Leaders (www.recycleleaders.com), focusing on reducing personal food waste. Participants measure and track food waste in their home for a month, then design ways to reduce that waste. She did well enough that she is now a leader for trainings.

In addition, earlier this year she volunteered to be a candidate as MFS simulated an election to mirror Costa Rica's national presidential election. She prepared a platform and campaigned for it, making a presentation in each of our classrooms.

Now, she is finally living her dream. She is in Connecticut at the Pomfret School, living in their dorms and completing 11th grade along with their students. Pomfret is a small school by U.S. standards – 350 students for 9th through 12th grade – but several times larger than MFS. Laura is meeting lots of students and seeing what a larger school can offer.

While MFS students have the choice of completing high school after the 11th grade, Laura plans to complete 12th grade to keep open the option of attending college outside of Costa Rica. Her current experience of traveling, attending a larger school, and living in a dormitory is giving her a great opportunity to test whether she wants to attend college in another country. As this is her first trip outside Costa Rica, she admits it has been a challenge, especially being away from her family and trying to make new friends.

Overall, though, Laura said, “This has been a great experience, with lessons for life on independence and meeting new people.”

We are delighted to see a student like Laura learn and grow.





*A proud participant in our
Caminata/Walkathon.*

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