



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

August, 2023

www.mfschool.org



This young man's shirt has a great message: Future Leader! Wonderful to see siblings like these arrive together.

We're back! Teachers gathered in the first week of August for some training and organizing for the new school year. Then, on August 9th, we welcomed our students back.

It is so wonderful to see how much our students grow and change in just a couple of months. In some cases, that's the inches that some grow physically -- especially our teen boys! In other cases, it is a visible change in maturity. Kindergartners start looking like young children rather than little kids. Tweens start looking more like teens. And once we get into classrooms, the growth shows in knowledge and behavior.

We also get to hear of summer adventures. We share below a description of the wonderful summer internships that two of our colegio students completed as part of efforts to encourage young women to pursue STEM careers, especially those that focus on the environment.

MFS is experiencing a lot of stability, with international teachers staying for more than the minimum two years. We have a couple of new faces, and those are introduced below.

We hope you will enjoy our stories!

A Summer of Sampling Environmental STEM



Nati (left) and Yerica during their bird netting experience.

Monteverde is famous for its biodiversity – 425 species of birds, 180 mammals and reptiles, 658 species of butterflies, and over 3,000 plants and trees. Many of those have been preserved or restored thanks to the efforts of environmental scientists. That attracts about 200,000 ecotourism visitors each year, and many academicians come here for research projects or sabbaticals.

It makes sense that our students at MFS would be encouraged toward STEM careers that focus on the environment (E-STEM). At MFS we want to ensure that such careers, though traditionally dominated by men, are open to all students.

Recent measures **indicate that 24%** of those working in STEM fields in Costa Rica are women, close to the **28% reported for the U.S.** Both measures are far from equality. Recognizing the gender gap for STEM careers, MFS secured donations from individuals and a grant from **Quaker Earthcare Witness** for a special project to encourage young women in our MFS high school grades to explore E-STEM careers.

The project includes some activities throughout 2023 including the six years of science and math classes our collegio students complete. In addition, students participate in an extracurricular Robotics Club, tutoring in Calculus for college credit, and starting this semester, AP Biology. From those ongoing activities, 11th-grade students Natalia Chinchilla Moreno and Yerica Arias Jimenez were selected to complete an 8-week paid internship over the summer with the nearby **Monteverde Institute (MVI)**.

The Institute includes scientists – including several female scientists -- as well as study abroad programs for university students. They usually work with older students and visitors, but we hope this experience paves the way for more joint projects between MFS and MVI.

What a variety of activities the interns were able to experience! The summer included monitoring a nearby creek for pollution, a camera trap on the MFS campus that caught a picture of a **tigrillo (ocelot)**, preparing dirt for the reforestation effort, getting up early to spot birds, and filling in at the MVI reception desk, among other explorations.

Interns Nati and Yerica agree that their favorite assignment was the one where they worked with microscopes to extract RNA from dirt. We all heard about RNA during the pandemic, but who knew it was a key factor in the quality of soil!

Filling in at the Institute's reception desk gave them a whole new respect for receptionists! They found themselves trying to answer a wide range of inquiries, many of which required knowledge of both the many functions of the Institute and of science.

In their final presentation, Nati and Yerica summed up their experience this way: "It helps both of us with our resume as we would like to study something related to science. We also consider it a great experience that leaves us learning a lot about various STEM-related topics. It also gives us a taste of what it is like to work at an institution that supports the environment."



Assessing volume and purity of a stream near a factory that MVI has monitored for years.



On Reception duty!



The species spotted with camera traps on the MFS campus



The tigrillo (ocelot) runs by the camera.



New Faces

Ana Xinia



Help support us!

You can make a tax-deductible contribution in Canada, the U.S. or Costa Rica. Your support helps more than a quarter of our students attend our school when they would not be able to study with us if not for financial aid.



Thank You!

Jose Alberto



Sigrid

We are pleased that most of our teachers and staff have decided to continue with us this year. International teachers commit to spend a minimum of two years with

us but two colegio teachers who joined us post-pandemic have decided to stay on for a third year.

Nonetheless, we do have a few new faces for our 2023-24 school year:

Ana Xinia Porras, who was previously the assistant for MFS Human Resources and Finance, has moved into the Sub-Director role. The position was left vacant last year for financial reasons, but Head of School Liza Ewen is delighted to have Ana's assistance for school management. Ana brings to this position several years of both teaching and administrative experience.



Camila

Jose Alberto Arguedas has stepped into Ana Xinia's former role. He brings to the position a great deal of administrative experience in the commercial sector. From 2007 until he joined MFS in July, 2023, Jose worked in a wide range of roles for a major grocery chain, starting as a cashier and later managing human resources, payroll, merchandise receiving, on his way up to being the administrator for a large grocery store. We are delighted that he brings that experience to MFS!

Sigrid Fonseca Gonzalez is our new Assistant Teacher for grades 1 and 2. Sigrid grew up in Monteverde, and attended college at the Hispanoamerican University in Puntarenas, Costa Rica. Sigrid has 6 years of teaching experience, working with students of all ages. She loves working with children, "for every day we learn something new from them, they are a box of surprises." As a teacher she believes that the best way to teach is for the children to learn at their own pace, and that it is up to us teachers to reinforce their learning with love, dedication, and effort.



Jeremy

Camilla Herrera Jimenez joined us as the new Assistant Teacher for grades 3 and 4. She grew up here in Monteverde and completed her younger grades at the Creativa, another private school in Monteverde. She completed high school with us at MFS. For her senior project she worked in both schools in order to study to be a preschool teacher. Her project focused on ways to involve environmental education in formal education. She tells us "After finishing high school, the offer to work at MFS became a great opportunity for me to become a great teacher."

Jeremy Broomfield has joined us to teach art and music to our older students. For a decade at Verde Valley School, (a boarding school in Sedona, Arizona) he was a Visual Art teacher, Database Administrator, Dorm Parent, Director of Residential Life, Meditation Instructor, and Yearbook Editor. This is his family's second year in Costa Rica. He is passionate about improving things and he believes the creation and/or appreciation of art is essential to a well-lived life. He loves spreadsheets, puzzles, and games. Because he works part-time with MFS, he is for hire as a Life Coach, a Portrait Painter, and a Labyrinth Designer. In whatever time remains, he is a musician, singer, songwriter, poet, and baker.



We are delighted to have these new staff on board!

