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CUENCA expats magazine

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10

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Santo Domingo Church at night.

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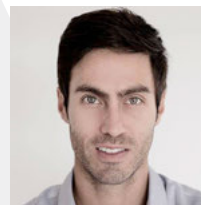
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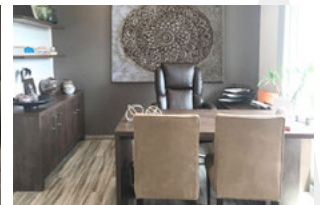


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> Publisher's letter



This earthquake tragedy on the coast has lit a fire in me. One day last week I just sat for an hour watching people from all over Cuenca dropping off truck loads of needed items to the collection center near Park Calderon.

Many people were giving all they had to the ones who needed it on the coast. I saw a large truck load of mattresses being dropped off, and then the next person walked up with just a medium sized bag of rice. Both people giving what they could, both helping out in their own special way.

And as I watched from just 30 feet away, I was loving the look on their faces, those selfless, half smile, eyes wide open, joyful expressions. Many also had shoulders that were just a bit taller as they left the center. My eyes followed them as they walked or drove away. They looked happier from their generosity.

And that look was exactly the same on each person's face as the attendant received their gift... For me, as I watched from across the street, this was the good stuff. Being able to quietly experience this selfless generosity, watching many people who have so little, give so much.

I had come to watch this for just a minute or two, but stayed for almost an hour. This had somehow turned into my front row seat, to "The Best Things in Life Show".

Please give what you can, and do what you can, for as long as you can. The coast will need our help for a long time.

George

www.ecuadorgeorge.com

FYI A Message from the Owners and Staff of Cuenca Expats Magazine

Most expats in Cuenca have little or no direct contact with those affected by the Coastal earthquake. Despite this, throughout this Issue there is story after story of expats joining together with the Ecuadorian community aiding in relief efforts. We're happy to report every Cuenca expat we know has done something. From raising thousands of dollars, giving of themselves in rescue efforts, or donating water, food and medical supplies. Everyone stepped up and did their part. Cuenca Expats Magazine especially wants to thank the Cuenca businesses and professionals who are advertising with us this month. Not only does their support allow us to continually offer this magazine free of charge, but also we are happy to announce that a portion of every dollar they invested with us this month will go to a deserving charity assisting earthquake victims. In addition, our printer Grafisum has donated to this cause. An ancient text once asked "Who is my neighbor?" What follows is the story of the Good Samaritan, someone who cared enough to help a total stranger in time of real need. We trust you have been encouraged by the generosity and selfless deeds of your fellow expats. We sure have been.





Christine Poulin
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My Fellow U.S. Citizens,

It is an honor to be your Ambassador to Ecuador. As one of some 80,000 U.S. citizens living in Ecuador, you are part of a vibrant and growing community within this beautiful country. One of my primary goals, and a central mission of our diplomatic presence in Ecuador, is to reinforce the historic bonds of friendship between the United States and Ecuador, particularly in education, health, trade, commerce, and people-to-people ties; as well as promoting a broad, positive agenda on issues of common interest for the mutual benefit of both nations' citizens. As U.S. citizens living abroad, you have a vital role in increasing the breadth and depth of this relationship.

The April 16th earthquake resulted in considerable loss of life and hardship for many in Ecuador. I join with you and others in mourning their loss, but also in committing all I can to assist in the recovery and reconstruction efforts. The U.S. Government is collaborating with the Ecuadorian Government in addressing many ongoing needs. The U.S. private sector and many of you are also contributing in important and meaningful ways. Thank you for your efforts to assist during Ecuador's hour of need.

The U.S. Department of State is committed to assisting U.S. citizens overseas. The Consular Sections at Embassy Quito and at Consulate General Guayaquil work every day to provide a full range of routine and emergency services to U.S. citizens, and to ensure important information flows to U.S. citizens living or traveling in Ecuador.

We strongly recommend you stay informed with notices from the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General by registering through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) online at <https://step.state.gov>. As we have seen recently, earthquakes, volcanoes, and even El Niño can affect many parts of the country. These natural hazards highlight the importance of registering with STEP to receive pertinent information, as well as taking proactive steps to enhance your family's preparedness.

I am enthusiastic about meeting as many of you as possible as I travel around Ecuador, learning more about the friendships and connections you have developed. I look forward to participating in the continued growth of the U.S. citizen community in Ecuador. A stronger and more prosperous Ecuador makes a stronger and more prosperous United States, and I am confident that together with your help, we will foster an even deeper relationship between the two countries in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Todd C. Chapman



Spectacular Celebration of the new **Azuay** Headquarter Building

by Andrea Vásquez

Cuenca Expats Magazine joined hundreds from all corners of the province for the grand opening of the beautifully restored Azuay Prefectura Administration Building in San Blas Plaza. Formally a nunnery, the building dates from the 1870's and was vacant for over 25 years. It took over \$2 million and 5 years of rehabbing to be fully restored. The evening's celebration highlight was a spectacular audio visual presentation projected on the actual building walls. If you missed it, it's worth seeing at the following link <http://bit.ly/1W5t33Q>.

The Magazine's managing partner, Ed Lindquist, was an honored guest at the celebration and presented a framed first issue of the Magazine to Paul Carrasco Carpio, Prefect of Azuay to be placed in his new office.



Ed Lindquist and Paul Carrasco Carpio.



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San Isidro Instituto Superior

Creating Culinary Artist in Cuenca

By Mike Herron - Photos Courtesy of Susan Herron and San Isidro

If you are like most people, you have probably walked right past the San Isidro Instituto Superior next to Banco Pichincha on Avenida Solano without noticing it. Yet you have undoubtedly tasted the fruits of their efforts if you have experienced the rapidly developing culinary scene in Cuenca.

The brainchild of Francisco Encalada, San Isidro has quickly gained a reputation for turning out some of the best and most innovative chefs found anywhere, not just in Cuenca. While traveling throughout the United States and Europe, Francisco noticed that in many places top chefs were acknowledged as stars in their own right. Such was not the case in Ecuador and many other Latin countries where chefs received little recognition, prestige or formal training. He studied how and where many well known chefs were trained and decided Cuenca offered a perfect setting to create the Ecuadorian equivalent of such famous schools as Le Cordon Bleu in Paris or the Culinary Institute of America in New York.

Francisco is not a chef. His background is in economics and business administration. He was, however, astute enough to recognize a need and develop a solution to meet that need. It took four years of paperwork before San Isidro Instituto Superior received full governmental approval to open its doors in 2009 as a culinary institute, the equivalent of a college for cooking.

Gastronomy is defined as the study of the relationship between food and culture, the art of preparing and serving rich or delicate and appetizing food, a style of cooking of a particular region, and the science of good eating. San Isidro teaches all of this and more as part of its culinary curriculum.

The wealth of fruits, vegetables, seafood and other ingredients available in Ecuador provides a perfect palette for exploring and enhancing local cuisine. In addition to learning about gastronomy, students also study subjects such as economics, entrepreneurship and English. The diverse subject matter helps prepare them for a variety of careers in the culinary world.

When you walk past the entrance doors to the facility another world emerges. While the students still sit in chairs, the institute's classrooms differ from traditional college classrooms in that the teacher has a mini-kitchen to teach from instead of a desk. In the labs, each student has their own cooking station, complete with stove, refrigerator and prep area, to prepare the day's assignment. Instead of solving



equations or writing essays, students learn the art of selecting the best and freshest ingredients in the market, using knives and how to create perfect sauces or pastries. During exams, instead of circling answers with a red pencil, the instructors judge the taste, appearance and presentation of each student's work.

The course of studies is a demanding one. Students attend classes four or five hours a day, five days a week, for two and a half years. In addition to their classroom education, students are required to gain work experience in the field.

A separate corporation, San Isidro Bakery and Coffee, has outlets in the Millennium Plaza and Mall del Rio where students can serve an internship to gain experience working in a retail store. Pastries are prepared and baked in an offsite location separate from the school and stores. A third outlet is scheduled to open this month on the grounds of the San Isidro Instituto Superior campus on Avenida Solano.

Since San Isidro opened its doors, 104 students have graduated from the two and a half year program with a certificate as a technologist in gastronomical and culinary arts. Another 320 students are currently undertaking studies at the institute. San Isidro employs 22 teachers and brings in guest lecturers from the USA, France and Mexico to enhance the learning experience for students.

Since its inception the institute has been recognized nationally and internationally for its excellent training and has received prestigious awards including the Culinary Cup in Guayaquil, Culinary Cup of the Americas, Culture Alive (Peru), Roots of Ecuador Culinary Cup, and Culinary Cup La Fiesta in Cuenca. San Isidro offers assistance with placement as part of their program, and prospective employers from hotels and restaurants now approach the institute seeking its well-trained and highly qualified graduates.

For most of the graduates, the next step in their culinary career will be a position as a sous (apprentice) chef to hone their skills in anticipation of becoming a head chef. Some will find positions locally, but many will continue learning at restaurants sprinkled throughout South America, North America and Europe. Some will find themselves preparing gourmet meals onboard cruise ships plying the waters around the world. Still others will take advantage of the combination of skills they have learned to open their own restaurants.

One thing is certain – thanks to the education they received at San Isidro, all of them will ultimately influence the continuing evolution of Ecuadorian cuisine both here and throughout the world. They are, in fact, actualizing the institute's slogan – I dream, I invent, I create, I am San Isidro!

So next time you're out and around Cuenca you can enjoy an incredible meal at places like San Isidro Bakery & Coffee, Anima, Dos Suces, Fraiche Pastry, Karana Chocolateria Artesanal Ecuatoriana, San Andrés Coffee or La Caleta Cocina Ecuatoriana, all of which are run by San Isidro Instituto Superior graduates, please remember to thank the school for the role they played in your gastronomic delight.





Feeding Earthquake Victims and Relief Workers

Like so many other organizations throughout Ecuador, San Isidro Instituto Superior has responded to the need for assistance for victims of the recent earthquake. During the first two weeks after the April 16th quake, the school served as a collection point for donations of food and other needed items. Two of the institute's students who are paramedics were given a leave of absence from their studies to participate in relief efforts. Together with other culinary schools throughout the country, San Isidro is sending a team of 15 individuals to the coast to coordinate their efforts with government and military personnel. Bringing the donated food with them as well as additional supplies the school has purchased, the team will cook meals in the camps that have been set up for refugees and workers alike.



About the Author

Mike Herron has been living in Cuenca since January 2015. After retiring from the telecommunications industry, he pursued his lifelong dream of becoming an author. Writing under the pen name J. Michael Herron in the contemporary romance genre, with a dose of fantasy and suspense thrown in, he currently has four self-published books completed and is working on a series of four more. His books are available on Amazon.

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Have you always wanted to cook like a chef?

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If your answer to any of these questions is yes, then make plans to join us at the monthly cooking classes just for expats starting in July as a joint effort between Cuenca Expats Magazine and the San Isidro Instituto Superior. Just like the full-time students who study at the institute, you will have the opportunity to learn from some of the best chefs and cooking instructors around.

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When you complete the entire sequence of classes you will receive a certificate proclaiming your accomplishment. To ensure you receive personalized attention, class sizes will be limited and they are sure to fill up quickly. Watch for more information about dates and costs in the next issue of Cuenca Expats Magazine and make sure to reserve your spot.

Eye witness account of the earthquake

by Court Rand

On the night of April 16th, I was with my parents, Sylvain, our mechanic Diego Ordoñez and his wife Nancy Rogel and their three kids. We were enjoying the beach when the quake struck. We ran outside. The ground moved for another 45 seconds.

We headed across the street leading to Shanti Lodge. There was a landslide. So we tried to head south towards the inland hamlet of Rio Canoa. We couldn't cross the bridge.

Very close by, people we had met the night before were trapped in a house. Fortunately, Maija - who is trained as a nurse - was so calm and following perfect first aid protocols. We had to bring our friends to a hospital. So we decided we should try to head to Bahia de Caraquez but faced a huge landslide of about 50 feet high.

We found a break in the curb where we could possibly get down to the beach below. It was blocked by a fence and a big chain. A crowd formed around me and someone brought out a hammer and smashed through the lock and we tore the fence down by hand. The bridge to Bahia de Caraquez was clear.



We first tried the IESS hospital in Bahia. It was a mess. Maija yelled from the back of the truck "Go to Leonidas Plaza". When we got to the hospital, we saw that it was somewhat chaotic but a medical team provided us with a stretcher and a neck brace. They took care of our friends.

We decided we should head back to Canoa to see if other people needed help. Canoa was a ghost town. We went to the church and found Mike, a Canadian in his 60's who had his head wrapped in bandages. He needed a doctor.

We left the church and came across a truck that was using a rope to try to pull some debris out of a collapsed building. We had a very powerful winch and said we could help. A man was stuck under this 6-floor hotel. Sadly, his wife did not make it.



We worked for hours, used car jacks, a tool to cut through concrete and steel. Everybody worked hard and Mike said that he would wait to go to the hospital. He said that we needed to help that guy. After working for 5 hours, most of the guys left. They were tired. Sylvain, Jorge, two other guys and I stayed.

There were aftershocks. We had to keep trying to get him out of there. The police arrived after 5 am. We got Santiago out of there around 6 am. He absolutely needed immediate medical attention. The police took him in their car. We took Mike to the hospital. His wounds were worse than we thought and he never said a word while we were helping Santiago.

We got back to Canoa at about 10am. I was exhausted and needed to sleep.



Diary of an Earthquake First Responder

by Lorrie Beno

April 22, 2016

DAY 1-2: We made it to the coast last night after dark. It was a 12-hour trip. The last 100 km had many landslides but there was earth-moving equipment near, keeping the dirt and rocks out of the way. It was slow going.

St. Vincent has very little damage. We are staying at the beach south of Canoa, next to some houses that were critically damaged. The military is sharing the space with us so we are well protected. No power here but the military has a generator.

Today we will move up into the hills, to remote areas checking for injured or dead, then return to camp by dark. Martial law exists here and curfew is imposed.

DAY 3: We are still camped in Canoa and venturing North and West to areas where a few houses are scattered. These areas have not gotten any help. Infections are setting in and so far we are able to treat everyone. Running low on Neosporen (topical antibiotic) and large stick-on bandages.

We have enough Tetanus shots for the team and military traveling with us. All the guys stepped up for their tiny shot except the guy in charge. I had to chase him down, but I got

him and I will admit I enjoyed it more than he did. This entire population needs that vaccine. Everyone is scratched and cut.

We also went into Canoa yesterday. Lots of damage there. Many dead and still finding bodies.

The severely injured have been sent to Guayaquil via helicopter. It has been 7 days now and chances of finding someone still alive are slim.

DAY 4: More remote villages today. One we failed to get to. The road was gone. They are trying to decide how to get there. Someone suggested that they fly over and drop me. I suggested they keep thinking.

DAY 5: Lost my tent last night. But don't cry for me, a very kind neighbor is letting me sleep in her laundry room that has a bunk bed. I feel like I'm in the Hilton! I can stand up. I have a door and a screen. Best of all, I don't have to sleep in my filthy clothes! Almost all my group has returned to Quito to load up more trucks and come back. I'm the only one from the original group who stayed. All critical patients were moved to better locations and I think that we have treated all the larger wounds. Now comes the redressing of the wounds and checking on infections. Medications have been a challenge as they are written in Spanish.

DAY 6: Activities have turned to building shelters. The rains keep coming and people are sleeping in cow pastures. The guys here are unbelievable. Never have I seen anyone work harder. Everyone is tired and crew injuries are on the rise.

More military moved in yesterday to clear the field next door. Testosterone levels are very high.

DAY 7: Full day manning the med station. Cuts and scrapes, infections, coughs and sore throats. The hospital in Bahia reopened and can do more. The trauma portion is over and so is my usefulness. I have reached the point where I am using resources and contributing less. So I gladly hand my laundry room over to a local expat that is handling the shelter building.

I hitched a ride to Guayaquil and arrived at the hotel looking like a homeless person. The hotel hesitated to let me in the door. But now I have actual sheets on an actual bed and real running water that got hot. A miracle!

Many thanks to all the great people that crossed my path. I am forever grateful for their kindness and generosity.

Special hugs to Peter Stromberg who, after losing his beautiful house, allowed us to use and destroy his land by having 100+ people camp all over it and turn his new truck into an old beat up mess delivering people and supplies. If there is a heaven, Peter earned his spot there.

And that is the end of my story. I'm getting way too old for this. Lorrie Beno just retired to Cuenca two month ago. She has a professional background as a Paramedic, a Mechanical Engineer, and as a Catastrophic Insurance Claims Adjuster.



Cuenca Mobilizes to Aid Earthquake Victims

Expats Do Their Part

by Philip Ruffolo





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Marty Doherty

I grew up in the Bronx, New York. Graduated from Manhattan College majoring in Education. I was the goalie for the college soccer team, have always been a huge sports fanatic. Coached State Championship Girls' Basketball team at Machebeuf H.S. in 1986 and Girl's State Tennis Championship team at Manual H.S. in 1993. Traveled extensively through Europe, the Caribbean, and New Zealand. A great memory of mine was actually when I shook hands with soccer legend Pele.

1. Where was the last place you lived before moving to Cuenca?

Venice, Florida

2. Why Cuenca?

Tried living the beach life in Playa del Coco, Costa Rica for a year. I realized the heat and humidity made life more than a little uncomfortable. Also needed more intellectual stimulation than a small fishing village offered. Toured Ecuador three years ago as a possible retirement destination, and fell in love with idyllic Cuenca.

3. What do I like most about Cuenca?

First and foremost the people. Cuencanos are so friendly, helpful and exude contentment. The temperate climate is conducive to daily strolls through the plethora of parks and "El Centro". Being the 3rd largest city, I love the convenience of the modern shopping malls, the variety of restaurant options, the excellent medical facilities, the inexpensive public transportation and the eclectic music and entertainment scene. Lastly, I like that you can confidently experience all of this in a city with so little crime.

4. What was your profession before you retired?

I was lucky enough to have taught mathematics and coached in probably one of the best public high schools in America. Every day at Denver East High School was another day in paradise. Imagine 40 students in a class with hardly any disciplinary problems. It was one of the few schools in the country that can boast of State Championships in Basketball (boys & girls), and Lacrosse. Some of my other jobs before teaching: cab driver in Manhattan, lifeguard at the only public beach in the Bronx, bartender, and ski lift operator in Breckenridge, Colorado.

5. If you hadn't been born in this century, then when and what would you be doing?

I would have lived in the "Middle Ages", obviously as a knight. Slaying dragons, going on crusades and rescuing damsels in distress.

6. Do you make friends easily?

With my Irish heritage (father born in Maghera, Ireland), I find it natural to share experiences with as many people as possible.

7. What do I do for exercise?

I swim laps at the Ivan Enderica Ochoa pool, in comfortably warm water and play tennis occasionally with a great group of gringos at the Coliseum courts. Also, like everybody else truly enjoys walking around scenic Cuenca.



Restaurant **Mi Escondite**

Traditional Cuencano Food in a Family Home

by Carol A. Boe - Photographs by Carol A. Boe

Take a drive to Restaurant Mi Escondite in Ricaurte just outside of Cuenca and experience real homemade Cuencano food in a family's home. The restaurant specializes in cuy (or guinea pig) and everything that typically goes with it. This restaurant is where Cuencanos eat and the menus are bilingual.

Ines Compoverde and her husband Jorge Tacuri started Restaurant Mi Escondite twenty years ago after another job kept Ines away from her children. Her mother-in-law suggested that they open a restaurant on the first floor of their large house, while the family lived upstairs. The idea to specialize in cuy came from Ines's mother-in-law who raised the Ecuadorian guinea pigs. Ines decided to have the best cuy restaurant in Cuenca. She and Jorge continuously strive to make their food even better, because after all you are guests in their home.

Although cuy meals are their specialty, you can order grilled chicken or grilled pork, too. Both come with delicious Ecuadorian vegetable and potato side dishes. They also serve vegetarian meals. And on weekends, you can enjoy Ines's special hot chicken soup.

Tables are grouped in different rooms of the house to facilitate quiet dinner conversation. Or you can eat outside on the large shaded patio. Check out the ice cream bar on the patio.

Ines and Jorge's son manages a second location at Juan Jose Flores 2-85 and Gonzalo Zaldumbide in Cuenca. Ines prepares all of their cuy and sends them downtown to be slow-cooked with the same original flavor.



Owners: Jorge Tacuri & Inés Campoverde

CUY This was my first time eating cuy. It tastes like rabbit and chicken. Restaurant Mi Escondite cooks every cuy slowly on a spick over a bed of hot coals. This gives their cuy its unique flavor.



While cooking, the cuy is basted with grease from the animal, garlic, and secret spices. It's done when the skin is crispy. The traditional way to eat cuy is with your hands so you can break off and eat the crunchy seasoned skin first. Then, pull the meat off of the bones. Cuencanos believe that the meat closest to the bones is the tastiest. Because every cuy is fresh and slow-cooked, it's best to call at least one hour before you come, so yours will be ready for you.

PAPAS AHOGADAS



(DROWNED POTATOES)

Papas Ahogadas is always served with cuy. These delicious soft boiled potatoes are covered in a yellow sauce.

The color comes from a yellow oil. The papas are served in a white bowl and garnished with a half hard-boiled egg and tomato slices.

SANGORACHA

Sangoracha is a unique purple-colored beverage that's typically served with cuy to help cut the grease. Restaurant Mi Escondite makes a pitcher of fresh Sangoracha for you.



Its beautiful color comes from soaking the purple sangoracha plant in water. Next, lemon, sugar cane, and Cristal alcohol are added to the purple water. Cristal is 42% alcohol and comes from Cuenca. It's also known as "El Alma del Ecuador" (The Soul of Ecuador.) Sangoracha is always served hot so you taste the alcohol.

HOURS: Mon to Wed: 11:30am - 3pm / 5pm - 10pm
Thu - Sat: 11:30am - 10pm / Sun: 11:30am - 4pm

1. Ricaurte, Sector 4 Corners / Reservations: (07) 2 890 228

2. Juan Jose Flores 2-85 and Gonzalo Zalumbide, Cuenca
Reservations: (07) 2 861 717 / 403 3471

 Restaurantes Mi Escondite

Qiwa

expertos en cuero



Qiwa Cueros

Cuenca's World-Renowned Exclusive Leather Producers

by Carol A. Boe

Qiwa Cueros is a Cuenca family-owned business that sells unique high-quality leather products. Over the last 20 years, the company has grown into an innovative global specialty brand. Qiwa's beautiful hand-made items sell for top retail prices in the United States at Nordstrom, Barneys, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Carroll Leather, plus at major Spanish retailers. If you live in Cuenca, you can buy the same products direct from their factory at wholesale prices.

Qiwa is one of the biggest leather producers in Cuenca. They also offer a stress-free shopping experience. Their factory and store face a large green park on quiet Calle Paseo Milchichig, just off of Avenida de las Americas. If you don't find the exact jacket, purse, shoes, boots, or just about anything else made of leather that you're looking for in the store, don't worry. Qiwa can custom-make it for you. They just need your measurements and your choice of leather. You can even show them a picture of what you want from the Internet. Then, in five to 15 days, you will have your very own exclusive factory-made Qiwa Cueros product. They'll even deliver it to your home. They give their customers full service.

Qiwa Cueros was started by Juan Malo in 1988. His love of leathers came from working in a tannery. He wanted to have his own business and chose the name Qiwa, which means "harvest" in Kichwa. The name symbolizes harvesting all the work the company does to build their own global brand. They use fine leathers in many colors from Spain, Colombia, and Ecuador.

Mr. Malo also wanted to help smaller Ecuadorian leather producers while growing his own business. So, he organized and managed the first leather cooperative in the country. Qiwa and their Spanish suppliers trained the other craftsmen in the coop. There's no competition between members. Other coop members make all of the shoes and boots that Qiwa sells.

Such cooperation gives Ecuador a stronger presence in the international leather market. Qiwa's generous efforts to help develop smaller companies was recognized and supported by the U.S. Aid for International Development (USAID).

Juan Malo is now retired but works part-time as president. His vision is still very much a part of the company. Juan's daughter Carolina is now General Manager and runs the day-to-day operations. She earned an MBA in Barcelona and studied design in Italy. Carolina Malo is one of the few women company executives in Ecuador.

Carolina explained that as Qiwa continues to sell custom-made jackets and other leather products to people around the world, they also want to focus more on the Cuenca market, including expats. Her company has already produced many custom-made leather jackets in different colors and larger sizes for local expats.

The Malo family wants all of Ecuador and the world to know that the Qiwa brand stands for leather expertise and the best customer service possible. Their exclusive high-quality products last a lifetime because leather lasts forever.



HOURS: Mon to Fri: 8:30am - 1:00pm / 3pm - 6:30pm
Saturdays open by client request only,
Call on Friday to schedule a Saturday appointment.

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QIWA



Ecuador Dental Care

The Best Dental Care in Cuenca is a Long Family Tradition

by Carol A. Boe

Make an appointment at the Ecuador Dental Clinic and experience the best and most state-of-the-art dental care in Cuenca. Dr. José Domingo Acosta and his family have now been treating dental patients in this city for four generations. Dr. Acosta's grandfather came here from Colombia to practice in 1910. He was the very first dentist in Cuenca. His son, Dr. Acosta's father, was both a practicing dentist and a professor at the University of Cuenca's Dental School when it was still called the School of Medicine. In fact, he was young José Domingo's teacher. Today, Dr. Acosta works as part of a highly-specialized team that includes his daughter, Dr. Pamela Acosta, and her husband Dr. Andrés Vega.

The senior Dr. Acosta, who speaks excellent English, first decided to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps because he loved making things with his hand and liked spending time at the office. After he graduated from the University of Cuenca, he completed a post-graduate course in implants in Mexico City. He has now been practicing dentistry for 35 years. Always wanting to improve his skills, Dr. Acosta has attended many professional congresses in the United States, Peru, Colombia and other countries. He says he enjoys what he's doing every day.

Dr. José Acosta still does general dentistry. However, he has specialized in oral rehabilitation, including ceramic crowns, bridges, and veneers, as well as implantology for more than 23 years. Dr. Pamela Acosta is a specialist in oral rehabilitation and prosthetic implantology, while Dr. Andrés Vega specializes in periodontics, implantology and endodontics.

The Acosta-Vega team has been working with expats for the last 10 years. In fact, 50-60% of their patients are from

the United States and Canada. They have also treated people from Europe, New Zealand, Russia, and Australia. In addition to providing excellent dental care, they keep in touch with patients to monitor their progress.

Most of the expat patients tend to live in the vicinity of the Ecuador Dental Clinic. They have been referring others to Dr. Acosta throughout his years of practice. With so many on-going referrals it's clear that expats and other patients are happy with the care they receive. Dr. Acosta believes that this tells his team members that they are doing things the correct way. When their patients need orthodontics or major surgery, they will refer them to other hospitals or clinics.

Dr. Acosta and his colleagues love helping people anyway they can. For example, when new patients are also new to Cuenca they will help them find other types of medical professionals and resources in the city.

The Ecuador Dental Care clinic has been in the same building on Calle Eduardo Muñoz and Avenida Gran Colombia for 14 years. It's an ideal location for their practice. There's plenty of parking as the Immigration Office is across the street and banks are close by.

Dr. Acosta gave me a tour of their modern, clean and fully equipped clinic. There are different consultation rooms and even a full-service laboratory on the premises. The laboratory is managed by a German gentleman who makes all of the clinic's porcelain crowns, bridgework and removables for them. The clinic is also staffed by two assistants who take care of the equipment and appliances. Their secretary handles patients' business.

HOURS: Mon to Fri: 8am - 1pm / 3pm - 7pm
Calle Eduardo Muñoz and Avenida Gran Colombia
(behind Banco Pacífico) - Cuenca

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Diane & Jeff Johnson

by Susan Herron



Let's start at the beginning, how did you two meet?

D: I knew of Jeff, as we both played volleyball in the same league, although not on the same team.

J: Mutual friends suggested I ask her out.

D: One day he called me and was just chatting away, so I finally asked why he called. I was flattered when he asked me out, but a bit disappointed because I was hoping he was going to ask me to play volleyball on his team.

J: She said no to a date, said she had a boyfriend, but thanked me for calling.

Obviously you did get together, how did that happen?

D: Something told me that I needed to date Jeff, that if I didn't I would regret it.

J: She broke up with her boyfriend and called me back. But by then I already had a different girlfriend.

D: Eventually we broke up with our respective boy/girlfriends and started dating.

J: After about two weeks I broke up with Diane. What was I thinking? I soon asked her out again.

D: Yes, he had a business conference to go to and wanted a pretty girl on his arm.

J: Not really, although she is pretty. A year later we were married.

You both are quite young, why Cuenca, why now?

J: Last fall we visited Diane's niece who lives and volunteers in Riobamba, Ecuador. That's when the seed was planted.

D: Adventure is what we were looking for, but not in the cold northern Wisconsin winter, where we are both from. We were ready for a warmer climate and a different country to explore.

J: We assumed, like most people, we'd have many more years before we could retire. However, after meeting with our financial advisor we learned we could retire now on a limited budget.

D: I started researching different Latin American countries, getting overwhelmed with the choices. Then one day I realized the easiest place to start would be Ecuador, since my niece lives here. She suggested that we'd like Cuenca, so Cuenca is where we decided to go.

When did you make the big move?

J: We arrived on November 15, 2015 with the idea of only staying in Cuenca for three months. We weren't convinced that we'd like living in a bigger city.

D: Yes, we were going to use Cuenca as an incubator of sorts to learn Spanish, experience a new culture and explore. However, we fell instantly in love with Cuenca.

J: We weren't sure we'd want to permanently stay in Ecuador, so before coming here we committed to volunteer, this summer,

as docents on the Lake Superior Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

D: So, we will be going back to The States for three months this summer. Our professional residency visa paperwork is currently in process, so the plan is to return to Cuenca with our new visas in hand this September.

What activities do you enjoy in Cuenca?

J: We both enjoy the outdoors and being physically active. Our vacations usually revolve around physical activities such as camping, biking, kayaking, hiking.

D: I love to bike and find Cuenca a very bike friendly city. I was pleasantly surprised by that.

J: We also enjoy volunteering, in fact, it was through one of our volunteering activities, walking dogs, that we eventually got our little puppy, Huber, here in Cuenca.

D: We love exploring this incredible city, mostly by bike or on foot, and the mountains make such a beautiful backdrop.

Any drawbacks to life in Cuenca?

J: No, not really, although we found there is so much to do and see, when we first got here we quickly over committed ourselves with volunteering, learning about the community, personal enrichment, etc.

D: I'm the one who has a tendency to overcommit us. There are so many things to explore, new people to meet & places to see. I want to do it all.

J: Feeling overwhelmed with our calendar, one day we decided we needed to create a family mission statement to help us focus. Anything that didn't fit within that statement we either pulled away from or didn't commit to.

D: Now our lives here aren't so hectic and we spend our time with things we are truly passionate about.

What does Date Night look like for you?

D: We go out at night sometimes, but usually we have a "Date Day." The perfect "Date Day" for us would be to get up when we want, relax, have coffee on the terrace, and do yoga together.

J: Then wander about town, either on foot or by bike, finding something new to explore.

D: Being outdoors, along the many rivers & parks is perfect. When the weather is nice, we like to go to Parque el Paraiso, lay on the grass, and take a nap or read a book.

J: And then come home at end of the day, snuggling on the couch with our dog, Huber, and watch a movie with popcorn.





PhysioGym

Personal physical therapy with exceptional outcomes

by Christine Poulin



Isabel Puyol, is the owner and manager of PhysioGym where physical therapy is taken to another level. Isabel, a physical therapist for 28 years, has studied at the Cuenca State University but also in the United States and Argentina. She is providing, along with her team, services that allow healing to be done at various levels. Rest assured that PhysioGym's team is absolutely aware that healing is multi-faceted as physical, emotional, mental and psychological aspects play a role in our health. By going to PhysioGym, you will certainly be in good hands.

PhysioGym is a bilingual clinic with a specific mission. A vast variety of physical therapy services are offered and their team is ready to help you with issues such as acute and chronic pain, back and neck pain, concussion management, fibromyalgia, foot and ankle pain, general orthopedics, kinesio taping, leg and knee pain, occupational therapy, hand therapy, pre and post-operative care, shoulder pain, spine rehab, sports injuries, total joint rehab, vestibular therapy, wellness programs, lymphatic drainage after surgery, work injury rehabilitation and much more.

Babies, pregnant women, teenagers, athletes, adults, the elderly can receive the adequate therapy and treatment at PhysioGym. Your physical therapy and rehabilitation will be personally designed by the team based on your unique situation, needs and goals. Massage, electro therapy, magnetic or laser therapy, ultrasound, yoga, pilates are part of the many therapies available.

Isabel Puyol, being a prenatal educator, has created a space called the Baby Gym which offers support for pregnant women and women who already have children. Yoga for babies, relaxation classes, baby development classes, baby gym workshops are some of the services that are available. As Isabel says, « In order to be healthy, we need to educate ourselves». Health and education go hand in hand.

PhysioGym, who's main structure is based on traditional allopathic physical therapy, has a regular team formed of five

people. They also network with other specialists such as an occupational therapist, speech therapist, psychologist, nutritionist, osteopath. The team members are also working very closely with the patient's doctor in order to be able to offer the best services possible according to what is needed. If you have specific needs, they will be met with professionalism, expertise and compassion.

Come in with or without a referral. If your situation requires home services, they will be able to help you. If you have insurance, PhysioGym accepts most of the insurance companies that cover the expat community.

COMING SOON!

Take note that on July 16th, from 10am to 4pm, a Health Fair co-sponsored by Cuenca Expats Magazine, will take place at PhysioGym. An audiologist, a nutritionist, an ophthalmologist, a dentist, a lab technician, a health insurance company, a supplement provider will be present. Leave with free samples, get coupons for special treatments, do some lab tests. Enjoy healthy drinks and snacks. It is a day specifically designed for the expat community. You will be able to sign up for group therapies such as diabetes, fibromyalgia, MS, arthritis and lupus. A calendar will be set up for you to consult. Never feel alone. PhysioGym is there to support you.



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Bringing Out the Best in People

by Mike Herron



On Saturday, April 16th, at 6:58 pm a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Ecuador. Centered near the town of Muisne in a sparsely populated coastal area 170 kilometers (110 miles) from Quito, the earthquake caused widespread damage, collapsing structures within hundreds of kilometers. Much of the town of Pedernales, about 35 kilometers to the south-southwest of the epicenter, was leveled. At least 646 people were killed, 4,605 people injured, and more than 29,000 people are now homeless. More people are still missing and the death toll is expected to rise as rescue efforts continue.

My wife and I were at the kitchen sink on the third floor of our apartment building in Cuenca, doing our dinner dishes, when the earthquake struck. Far from the epicenter, we still had liquids sloshing over our counters and a few loose items falling from shelves. Being Southern California natives, we are no strangers to earthquakes, and we both knew this was a major quake and that somewhere a tragedy was unfolding.

As I write this, it has been more than two weeks since the quake struck. I marvel at the changes that have taken place all around me. Gone are the petty online discussions about which presidential candidate can do the least damage back in the "old country". Gone also are conversations about movies or restaurants or other innocuous topics.

Instead I see Ecuadorians and expats alike banding together trying to figure out the best way to help the victims of

the earthquake. Some are organizing volunteers to go to the scene and provide direct help. Others are involved in collecting non-perishable food, clothing and medical supplies to ship to the affected areas. Still others are trying to link friends and family members with news about loved ones. Organizations like the Hearts of Gold Foundation, Ecuador Cares, and others are expanding their charitable activities to include the victims of the quake. Helping Kids In Ecuador, an organization that provides medical services to children in Ecuador, dispatched medical teams to affected areas to assist the relief efforts. El Colectivo Madre Tierra, alongside with San Sebas Café, Yakumama Hostal and Brigada de surfistas por un techo are also working hard in order to set up a camp in Canoa.

One of the things that impressed me the most is that any distinction between Ecuadorians and Gringos has vanished. Forgotten for the moment are our differences, replaced by the genuine and heartfelt desire to help another person in need.

I've often wondered why it seems to take a disaster to bring out the humanity in people. We all possess the traits of compassion and kindness, yet for reasons of our own, many of us often keep these qualities hidden below the surface.

It restores my faith in humankind to see how people have responded to the earthquake in Ecuador. My wife and I have donated food, clothing, medicine and money to show our support for those affected by this catastrophe. We plan to do still more. I encourage you to do the same.



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* The process of certifying a document so that it will be recognized by the legal system of a foreign country.

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