

# CUENCA expats

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Eduardo and  
Juan Guillermo Vega  
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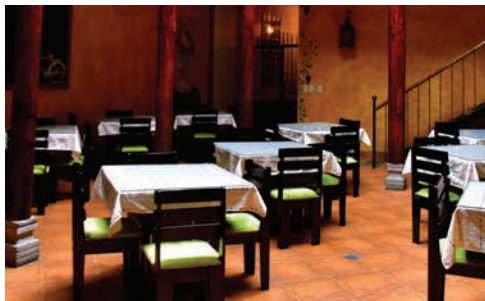
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It is hard to believe it is New Year's Eve. What a challenging year 2015 has been, but also how rewarding.

For 2016 I have decided to just do it. But not too much of it. A nice balance of doing something on my list, yet leaving enough space in between those goals to do other things, or do nothing at all.

Of course, losing weight is on my list, but only 20 pounds. I can do that in 52 weeks. You know, as we get older, just not gaining weight is an accomplishment. So, I won't get discouraged.

And I will step up my Spanish learning a bit and go back to class, starting in January. I will take Beginner 2 again as a review and then go right into Beginner 3, with the determination to talk like a 5 year old by the end of 2016.

Traveling more is also on my list. But I want to travel to better places. So I will plan a couple of nice trips for the second half of the year. Spain sounds exciting, maybe with a long layover in Mexico to visit Marty and Michelle.

Those are the only three things for me to do in 2016. And I know how to get them done.

It is as simple as taking that first step. That means I won't learn more Spanish unless I enroll in the class. Then all I have to do is show up. I don't need to worry about how hard it will be to learn, I just need to pay the fee and go to class. Pretty simple stuff.

Getting rid of that 20 pounds can be easy too. If I have it in the house I will eat it. So tonight I will throw away all the bad stuff and will no longer bring it into my home. I will enjoy these things in moderation when I am out and about. My friend says losing weight is as easy as drinking more water, eating a little less, and moving a little more. I can do that, I will do that, and I will start now.

My Ecuadorian friends have a tradition of leaving behind what they don't want coming with them into the New Year. Resentments, bad memories, or maybe some of that anger. They torch it away on New Year's Eve. I will be doing that also.

You can do these things, too. It works if you don't try to undo 20 years of weight gain in 4 weeks or think you will learn to speak Spanish in 3 days. And be careful not to torch the neighborhood down with all those resentments. We should work on this together.

And as for the travel thing, well, a number of you have contacted me and mentioned you already have plans for Carnival and asked if we can change the date of the trip. We did. The Travel Club's first adventure will now be the following Wednesday, February 17th. We hope this date will be more convenient for all of you. Please see the announcement below for more trip details. Also please remember its "first come, first serve" as the number of seats are limited on this popular day trip.

Let's get this New Year started out right. It has all the makings of the best year of our lives.

*George*

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## DATE CHANGE FOR TRAVEL CLUB TRIP

February 17, 2016

Departure Time - 6:45 am

The Devil's Nose Train and to the Ingapirca Ruins is now scheduled for Wednesday, February 17th. Yes, the date has changed because Carnival will be in full swing on our original date. The cost is only \$89. The bus will load at 6:30 am and depart promptly at 6:45 am from Parque de la Madre and will return at 9:00 pm. Everything is included in the \$89 price - The fare to ride the train, entrance to Ingapirca, and transportation with a guide for the full day. Even a boxed lunch and a nice dinner on the ride home is included in the price. The only extra you'll need to pay is for any refreshments during the trip.

Here's what you need to do to reserve your place for the trip: just email us at [travelclubinfo@cuencaexpatsmagazine.com](mailto:travelclubinfo@cuencaexpatsmagazine.com) that you want to go along. We'll then send you a form with all the instructions, including the need for a copy of your cedula or passport, and instructions for paying for the trip via Pay Pal or credit card. Deadline for payment and document submission is January 20, 2016.

Remember, seats are limited and it will be a "first come, first served" basis.

# Providing Christmas Cheer to Another Family

By Lisa Musil

Our family wanted to do something special for Christmas this year. We moved to Cuenca a few years ago, and since my husband, Jeff, had traveled back to the states in October, he had already brought home and distributed our modest Christmas gifts. Our eleven children are between the ages of 9 and 20, and we have everything we need. However, I don't know if that fact truly sunk into my children's hearts until after we provided Christmas cheer to another family this year.

Our friend, Suzanne Thurston, has been spearheading a project called End the Cycle of Poverty, which pairs people who want to give with young people who need a little help (usually financial) to complete their elementary education. The young lady that Suzanne had assisted last year, struck her as being a motivated individual: although she had given birth to her first baby at the beginning of the school year, she managed to attend school, and graduated from her elementary program with honors. My mom and I, along with three of my children, met with this 17 year old and her husband and extended family on their weekly shopping trip to Feria Libre in early December. We followed this young lady as she shopped for her extended family of 12, spending \$80 for a week of basic groceries. I was struck with the contrast between their lives and ours—how challenging a shopping trip is when the city bus only takes them to within a few miles of their home: they have to carry their purchases several miles over dirt roads, and even when we took a taxi as close as we could to their home, we still had to walk a half mile down a steep hill across a small river, and up the other side of the valley. This trek must be undertaken every time they want to go to town—for supplies, for doctor's appointments, or for school or work.

We made several shopping trips over the next few weeks. My mom and I went to Coral and bought the necessities—we had been shopping with them, so we knew what they would use: rice, beans, oil, pasta, etc., plus we bought a few "fun" things—a Disney notebook and

colored pencils for the student's little sister, a few inexpensive toys for a nephew, and a candle for an aunt, as well as a few luxuries, like Nutella and candy. Over the next week, my daughters and I shopped for more items—diapers for the two babies in the family, jackets for the young people, a few clothes for the nephew.

Other people also dropped off gifts at my mom's house. The morning of our delivery, I went to Feria Libre with one of my sons, to meet the student and her husband and baby. Before they came, we purchased fresh meat—including two chickens for their Christmas dinner—and assorted fruits and vegetables. The rest of my family met up at my mom's house, and we took several vehicles, including a large truck and multiple taxis up into the hills, where we each took a basket or bag and carried it to their house. Since the young woman had not been involved in the shopping, she was overwhelmed as we unpacked bag after bag, saying "Gracias" over and over.

My children were strangely quiet on the way home, and a sense of well-being and contentment seemed to infuse the rest of the week. Although I think some of them suspected I may have hidden surprise presents in my room, no one complained when I only emerged with token gifts for the youngest members of the family on Christmas morning: all members of the family seemed to acknowledge our blessings, and our holiday passed quietly and peacefully.

As for the student's family, I think they appreciated the gifts and bounty, and I can see that the friendship that was forged between the student and Suzanne will have long-lasting positive repercussions—on both sides. The young lady plans to continue her education, but even if she doesn't, she has the satisfaction of having completed one level of study, which will certainly have an effect on her younger sister and the next generation. I am SO glad we volunteered for this mission.

For information on End the Cycle of Poverty, check out facebook or contact Suzanne Thurston at [suzthurston@earthlink.net](mailto:suzthurston@earthlink.net).





# Eduardo and Juan Guillermo Vega

## The Authentic Vegas

By Lynne Klippel

Photos By Dave Johnson (unless otherwise noted)



Photo by Pablo Carrion



Eduardo Vega is a treasure of Cuenca. Vega is a world-famous ceramic artist, still creating beauty and art at age 76 from his studio in Turi. When you enter his studio, you'll see a wide variety of ceramic art, created by Eduardo and his son, Juan Guillermo, who followed his father's footsteps into the world of ceramics. If you are fortunate, you may be able to speak with either of the Vegas and learn first-hand about their work.

You've most likely seen Vega's art around Cuenca, including the Totems on Remigio Crespo and various murals in governmental buildings and hotels. His work is modern, abstract, and reflects a uniquely Ecuadorian flavor as it celebrates the beauty of Ecuador.

Eduardo Vega realized he wanted to be an artist as a young boy. His parents were very supportive of the arts, especially his mother, Carmela Malo, who was a classical pianist and devoted to social causes in Cuenca. When Eduardo was eighteen, he traveled to Spain to study painting. The sea voyage took a month. He studied for three years in Spain and later in London, then returned to Cuenca when his mother fell ill.

While Vega was in Cuenca, he worked as an interior designer and in the very first ceramic factory in Cuenca. Before that time, all ceramics were hand-made by traditional artisans. Eduardo became fascinated by working in clay and won a prestigious scholarship to study ceramics in School of Fine Arts in Bourges, France.

In 1969, Eduardo returned to Cuenca after completing his study in France and was hired to design the interior of the new Hotel El Dorado, the first modern hotel in Cuenca. Part of that design was a large mural, which started Vega's work designing murals all over the world. Interestingly, he also worked with traditional



Photo by Tuga Astudio



Photo by Pablo Carrion

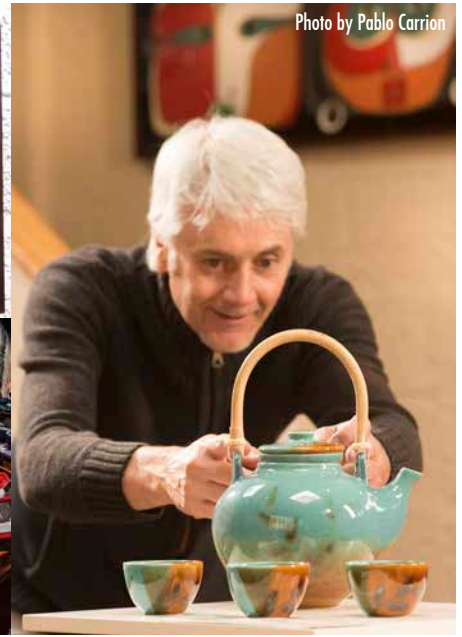


Photo by Pablo Carrion

Photo by Tuga Astudio

potters in Chordeleg, blending the best of their wisdom with the techniques he mastered in France. The project at El Dorado took two years to complete and put Eduardo Vega in the national spotlight. Since that time, Eduardo Vega has become the most honored ceramic artist in Ecuador. His pottery and murals grace governmental buildings, college campuses, and museums all over the world. His work is very versatile. He creates tableware, decorative plates, vases, and figurines that reflect his love of the flowers, animals and natural beauty of Ecuador. With everything from coasters and mugs to plates and tiles depicting the beauty of the flower market or women washing clothing in the river, a piece of E.Vega art is within reach of most tourists

and expats.

In the 1970's Vega and a partner founded Artesa, a large-scale ceramics factory in Cuenca. Vega was the creative director, formulating all the designs while his partner specialized in the technical aspects. Artesa had humble beginnings. Each of the partners had a shop in the backyard of their homes. The molds and first firings were done at his partner's workshop, and then Eduardo did the hand painting and final firing. His son, Juan Guillermo, recalls playing with clay and observing his father at work in the backyard. Those early experiences prompted Juan Guillermo to study ceramics in Ecuador and the United States before returning to work with his father at Artesa.

The next twenty years saw great expansion

of Artesa and the Vega brand of pottery. A large factory was built and Vega's designs were exported all over the world. Eduardo signed a contract allowing his name and signature to be used as the brand for all the Artesa projects since they were all designed by him.

Unfortunately in 1998, creative differences arose between the two partners. Eduardo and Juan Guillermo left Artesa to open their studio in Turi. Artesa was later sold.

To ensure that you are looking at an originally manufactured work of art by Eduardo Vega, examine the signature. It should read E.Vega. If it just says Vega, you don't have the real thing. Only pieces marked E.Vega or Juan Guillermo Vega are authentically manufactured by them.

Both of the Vegas offer their art at their



studio in Turi and in boutiques in Cuenca, Quito, Guayaquil, and in selected art studios and museums around the world.

Their Turi studio is a bustling place with approximately twenty-five employees working in various stages of ceramic production. The Vegas create all the designs. Staff assist in building molds, firing the ceramic pieces in large kilns as well as in hand painting and glazing. Each piece, from mugs and coasters, to intricate vases, is produced to exacting quality standards with a firing process that takes 12 hours to ensure lasting beauty.

Eduardo mostly prefers creating murals, as the large size makes them a creative challenge. He may work for eight to twelve months on a single mural. First, he creates the design, then builds the work in sections like puzzle pieces. When all the pieces are finished, he will travel with a team to the location to install it.

Murals are commissioned works of art. Vega tells the story of a tourist who visited his shop in Turi several years ago and fell in love with the art. Some time later, this tourist, who was a dean at a major university in the United States, commissioned a large mural for installation in a new building on his campus. Most of the murals created by Vega are in public buildings, hotels, or in private collections.

While Juan was growing up, he always enjoyed drawing but never thought of formal art studies until he was doing an exchange year in Elliot, Maine where he got really involved in his art class and many important school projects. It was during this time that Juan's passion for art began to blossom.

Through many years of education, travel and research projects in traditional potter

communities around Ecuador, Juan has honed his skills to the point that he has also become a renowned potter. In developing a style of his own, he has been hired to do custom work including ceramic tiles, murals and complete kitchen remodels.

The Vegas are busy creating new designs and plans. They plan to expand their studio at Turi and add a small café as well as additional space for a pottery wheel and more kilns. Juan Guillermo laughs when he shares that the current studio is so full that he has to use his pottery wheel at home in his laundry room. There is no room for it at Turi.

Vega has traveled all over the globe to study ceramics. His designs have been widely copied and inspired ceramists around the world. Because of his innovative use of modern abstract design, art by Eduardo Vega is recognized and collected in major museums.

Eduardo Vega shows no signs of slowing down his work. He is constantly creating new designs and enjoying his creative life in Turi. From the sheltered young man who left Cuenca at eighteen to pursue his dreams of becoming an artist, to the world-renowned creator of murals and ceramics, Eduardo Vega is a testament to the joy of art and creativity.

Take a trip up to Turi and visit the E.Vega studio at Via Turi 201, which is open daily. You can also visit the website at: [www.eduardovega.com](http://www.eduardovega.com) or call them at (07) 281-7177.

*Lynne Klippel is a best-selling author, ghostwriter and publisher who specializes in non-fiction books and information products. She's lived in rural Paute since 2012. To read more about lynne, see the expat profile on page 20. Visit [www.SageMountainBooks.com](http://www.SageMountainBooks.com).*



Photo by Pablo Carrion



Photo by Tuga Astudio



# CUENCANÍZATE: A HELPING HAND TO EXPATS

By Staff Writer  
Photos by Dave Johnson

There are many reasons why 5,000 expats call Cuenca home. The friendly people, affordable living, perfect weather, diversity of cultural activities, beautiful colonial architecture, and growing international restaurant scene are to name but a few. However, the most important reason is the welcoming attitude of its political leadership. Cuenca has launched "Cuencanízate," a new program that offers an opportunity for expats to integrate more fully into the daily life and culture of the city.

"Cuencanízate" launched on December 2, 2015 in Parque Calderon. A traditional Cuencano party was held, in which guests sampled typical cuisine of the region, while listening to local music. Also various representatives of the Expat community recounted personal anecdotes of their lives in Cuenca. With a flurry of balloon releases, Cuenca's Mayor Marcelo Cabrera Palacios introduced the initiative and Cuencanízate was set in motion.

Ana Paulina Crespo, the City's Director of International Relations, oversees the Cuencanízate program with the assistance of her able staff.

The first Cuencanízate project is a book called "Diccionario de la Real Lengua Morlaca" (Dictionary of the Real Language of Cuenca). You don't need to live here long to know there are phrases and words used in everyday conversation that don't seem to make sense, even using a translator. Just like in English, when we use

words that "short hand" our conversations and puzzle anyone who is not a native speaker. The Cuencos call these words and phrases "morlaca." The commonly used morlaco words have taken root with the passage of time and a changing social context. Some of these words are taken from the Quechua language, others from the North American language, and many were invented from other similar languages. Wherever the words originated, Cuencanos know how and when to use them. And with a lot of study, you too can begin using these morlaca words in everyday conversation. This pocket dictionary is free and you can pick up your copy at City Hall.

Mayor Marcelo Cabrera Palacios made it clear a number of times during a recent interview with Cuenca Expats Magazine that we are all Cuencanos—native born and expat alike. A concrete example of his words put into action is the Cuencanízate initiative. The program will be running until June, 2016.



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# Cuenca Tennis

## Affordable Fun, Fitness and Friendship!

Roz Reymers Lucero

Photos Courtesy of Ken Lucero

Cuenca Tennis is an inclusive group of tennis players that encourages players of all levels to enjoy tennis and friendship in Cuenca. Whether you are an experienced tennis player or beginner, you will find a welcoming group of expats (and, so far, one Cuencano!) at the Jefferson Perez Coliseo on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 9-noon.

Tennis is "a game for a lifetime," so what better time to play - or learn - than now! For those who already know the game, players rotate in, four to a court for "doubles." Players have different skill levels, which is taken into account when partnering up for each game. During the morning most combinations of mixed-level and same-level players occur, giving everyone the benefit of "playing up" as well as competitive play.

Neil Palmer, Cuenca Tennis regular and long time player (formerly of California), points out that "Persons of all ages, young and not-so-old, can play and enjoy tennis. Tennis requires a certain degree of fitness, but this level can be developed as one plays more often. Tennis is an easy game to learn the basics of, and there are well qualified coaches to help anyone improve their game, whether a beginner or a seasoned player." Guy Hurst (formerly of Oklahoma), adds another perspective for experienced players: "Tennis is the game that you do not ever master, but trying makes your life whole. Challenging game, but ... I love it!"

Never played or a beginner? Ken Lucero, the administrator for Cuenca Tennis (formerly of California), encourages taking lessons during the Tuesday, Thursday morning hours. "After your lesson, you can rotate in for some game practice and support! We will provide you with contact info for pros that are especially good for doubles, which is what most of the group plays." Players can also group together for a "clinic," splitting the cost (something that mid-level and experienced players do, too, to

brush up on particular strokes and techniques). A private lesson runs approximately \$10/hr while a clinic runs approximately \$20/hr for two, but \$25/hr for 3 or more.

Cuenca Tennis enjoys fun and friendship off the courts as well, with lunch afterward often "on the table" - especially when there is someone's birthday to celebrate! According to Neil, "I think tennis, more than most sports, is a game where the social side of playing is emphasized. Playing tennis is a great way to meet new people and to enjoy old friends more. I love playing, but more importantly, I really enjoy the friends I've made playing here in Cuenca."

Ken Yasui (from Indiana) echoes the sentiment of fun, fitness, and friendship: "I truly enjoy playing tennis. You don't have to be a competitive player to enjoy it. It literally lifts me up and puts me into a healthy and happy mood for the rest of the week. Sure it's a great way to stay in shape, keep that spare tire away, and help keep you limber. The real icing on the cake is, we have a great time together. Everyone is so helpful and supportive, which is especially appreciated when you are new in town as I am."

Cuenca Tennis was begun by former expat, Andre Zina, who has since moved back to the states, handing over the reins to Ken Lucero. Ken, a longtime USTA club player from California, helps coordinate play, serves as contact, and maintains the group's associated FB page, Tennis in Cuenca.

With the \$2.50/hr court cost split between four players, Cuenca Tennis provides an inexpensive way to enrich your expat life here in Cuenca with the fun of tennis, healthy exercise, and good friendship!

You can like and follow Cuenca Tennis on their related FB page, Tennis in Cuenca. Contact Ken Lucero, administrator, for additional information at [lucerok@yahoo.com](mailto:lucerok@yahoo.com). The Jefferson Perez Coliseo is located at Unidad National and 12 de Abril.



Rex Ageton



Some of the Cuenca Tennis group!



Guy Hurst



The Dining Room



The Menu

# La Gastro Picanteria

## A Food Lover's Paradise

By Sherry Johnson



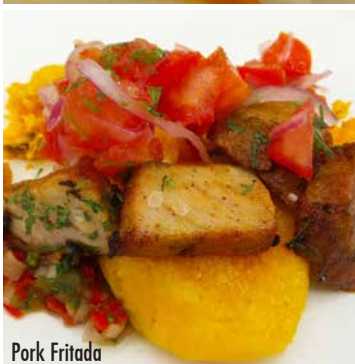
Paul, Estefania & Ofelia



Three drinks we sampled



Shrimp marinated in lime & cilantro



Pork Fritada

**O**n a small side street, just off Remigio Crespo, near the Bank of Pichincha, one would not expect to find a food lover's paradise. La Gastro Picanteria, which opened on October 12th and offers a new modern gourmet take on traditional Ecuadorian dishes, is just that.

Paul & Estefania opened their restaurant as an extension of their successful cooking school, Cook life, which has been operating nearby in a smaller location for two years. In the Cook Life School, the "cooking therapy" class can either be the four-week module or individually tailored with flexible hours. When the space they currently occupy became available, they decided to launch their dream of opening a restaurant, offering fresh local food at affordable prices.

Paul's mother, Ofelia, who he lovingly refers to as the best cook in the world, also works in the kitchen. Estefania runs the front of the house and adds the little touches that people who have dined in fine establishments around the world notice right away.

Behind the restaurant is a beautifully tended orchard that provides many of the fresh fruits and avocados that Paul uses in the dishes. They drive into the Cajas to pick their trout fresh from the ponds, and what they don't grow themselves they get at the Mercado or from local farms nearby. Even the coffee they serve comes from small local plantations in Loja, Paute & Yunguilla. Every detail has been thoroughly and painstakingly thought out to provide you with a sophisticated upscale dining experience that doesn't cost an arm and a leg.

Bistronomy – offering good food, created with

passion, exceptional service, and all at a very affordable price. A "pop-up restaurant," each item on the menu has an explanation that goes along with it, and with a menu that changes weekly, depending on what is available and in season, they offer a diverse dining experience that will never get old! The restaurant itself is very beautiful, with whitewashed brick walls, black trim and black furniture. A large bank of windows overlooking the front allows a lot of light to flood the interior, creating a blank canvas against which the food takes center stage. Every touch is classy and elegant, right down to the beautiful little wooden clipboards that hold the menu.

La Gastro Picanteria offers their unique dinner menu that changes weekly from 6:30 to 10:30 Thursday through Saturday. You can dine on their six course tasting dinner with choice of entree for a mere \$15. Once you have sampled Paul's creations, you will be grateful that he chose to come home to Cuenca and open a restaurant, instead of taking a position as a chef in say, New York City, where they would charge \$150 or more for his six course dinner.

We started off our meal with one of the drinks on the menu. The Pink Gin with Horchata & limon was delicious, the Canelazo Frio (Zhumir Amarillo with cinnamon & naranjilla juice) was tangy and my personal favorite, and the Cahipica Jas (Zhumir Seco, sugar and fresh citrus juice) was crisp and refreshing.

For dinner, our first course was a beautiful purple cornbread made from collado morado, served with an ensalda of tomatoes, onions & cilantro and a colorful, delicious pico de gallo. Our second course was a yucca croquet, deep

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fried a golden brown, served with an accompanying cilantro mayonnaise. Next we had shrimp marinated in lime & cilantro, served over a compote of sweet potato, with purple and orange sweet potato chips. A sea bass filet, crusted with coconut and served with a crab & mango chutney turned out to be my favorite dish of the night. Fresh trout caught that morning in the Cajas, served with French carrots, asparagus, and finished with a tomato & shallot sauce came next.

We also tried a Pork Fritada, served over a llapingacho (like a thick pancake) and malto pio as a side.

For dessert, we tried two of the options – Chocobanano, homemade chocolate ice cream, served with warm chunks of banana bread and a freshly whipped cream; and a mousse flavored with naranjilla juices – which was tangy and sweet at the same time. With each dish, the accompanying garnish was always edible, including the flower petals that topped dessert.

After dinner, I asked for a cup of tea. Served in a simple white cup, hot water was poured over mint leaves and allowed to steep. A pretty presentation, and delicious with a teaspoon of sugar.

Open seven days a week from 12:30 to 3:30, La Gastro Picanteria offers a homemade lunch at almuerzo prices for \$3, or you can order off the menu. They will soon begin offering wine or craft beer pairing dinners once a month, and have many other special events in mind for the coming year, including “pop-up” dinners in your own home for you and your friends and a Grand Opening after the holidays. Like their page on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/La-Gastro-Picanteria-928452383894649](http://www.facebook.com/La-Gastro-Picanteria-928452383894649) to stay up on all their events and new menus each week.

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# Craig Arrowsmith and Ileana Esquivel

Interview By Staff Writer  
Photo courtesy Craig Arrowsmith



## **INTRODUCE TO US TO YOUR FAMILY.**

We are Craig Arrowsmith and Ileana Esquivel. We have 2 beautiful daughters: Sofia, age 7 and Grace, age 4.

## **WHERE WAS THE LAST PLACE YOU LIVED BEFORE MOVING TO CUENCA?**

We moved to Cuenca from beautiful Portland, Oregon.

## **PARDON ME FOR SAYING SO, BUT YOU LOOK TOO YOUNG TO BE RETIRED. ARE YOU DOING ANYTHING FOR WORK DOWN HERE IN ECUADOR? IF SO WHAT?**

We purchased a historic home in El Centro with the intent of creating several small, furnished apartments that will be available to rent by the month. After 1.5 years, we are finally finishing the renovations and are currently hosting our first tenant. We also receive income from the rental of our home in the US.

## **WHY ECUADOR AND WHY CUENCA SPECIFICALLY?**

We have traveled extensively but have always dreamed of living abroad to truly experience a different culture. When we set out to find our new home, we agreed upon the following criteria: a country where the national language was one in which we had a reasonable chance of becoming fluent, safe and politically stable, affordable, and family-friendly. Ecuador, and Cuenca in particular, fit this description perfectly!

## **WHERE DO YOU LIVE IN THE CITY AND WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT LIVING THERE?**

We live in the El Merced neighborhood of El Centro, near Todo Santos. It is a fantastic location, with close proximity to Parque de la Madre, Parque Calderon, and numerous restaurants with a

diverse offering of international cuisine. In fact, within a 1 block radius, we have Columbian, Peruvian, Cuban, Italian, Spanish, and traditional Ecuadorian eateries, we have even heard the neighborhood referred to as the "Los Platos" neighborhood because of the great food diversity.

## **WHAT DO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY DO FOR FUN?**

We enjoy spending time in the park, entertaining friends in our home, and exploring the rest of the country. The kids have been involved in ballet, rock climbing, art classes and even horse riding.

## **DO YOU HAVE ANY PETS?**

Since moving to Cuenca, we have adopted 2 kittens, Pearl and Paloma (named by the kids.)

## **WHAT IS THE BIGGEST THING YOU MISS ABOUT WHERE YOU ARE FROM?**

We probably miss friends and family most since moving to Cuenca, but quiet nights and Thai food come in at a close second! (Someone please open a Thai eatery!)

## **DO YOU SEE YOURSELF LIVING HERE FOR A LONG TIME OR DO YOU HAVE PLANS TO LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE?**

We moved here intending to stay only 18 months, but just celebrated our 2 year anniversary. We will eventually move back to Portland, but for now we are really enjoying our new life in Cuenca.

To read the entire interview, visit our website: [www.cuencaexpatsmag.com](http://www.cuencaexpatsmag.com).



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# Goza Espresso Bar

## A Coffee House and More

By David Johnson

I have to come clean - Goza is one of my favorite "hang-out" places in all the world. You read that right...IN ALL THE WORLD. In my opinion (as if it would be anyone else's since I am doing the writing), Goza Espresso Bar is everything a coffee house should be and so much more. As you will discover, if you haven't already, Goza is a special place that is not easy to duplicate.

Situated on the corner of Calle Larga and Borrero, Goza is a very popular spot because of the outdoor terrace which is very inviting, great for people watching and central to many of the shops and businesses in El Centro. It reminds me of the many European-style coffee places I have frequented over the years. This is not surprising since the owners, husband and wife team Hagay Albo and Exidia Silva, have spent a great deal of time outside of Ecuador.

Hagay is from Israel and has enjoyed a successful career working at and owning many restaurants. Exidia studied Hotel and Restaurant Management in Switzerland and honed her skills in the United States. Because of their passion and a void in the market, opening a coffee place in El Centro seemed to be the perfect plan. "In the beginning, it was very difficult," Exidia remembers. "There would be times where we had no customers and wondered if we had made the right decision. We knew once they experienced coffee the way we wanted to serve it, people would keep coming back."

Goza doesn't serve just coffee and espresso as their name implies - they also have

sensational food and a very diverse menu to choose from. From various breakfast selections, pastas, sandwiches, steaks, wings, chicken dishes and nachos to coffee and cocktails and just about everything in between. My personal favorite is the club sandwich which is prepared to perfection and served with fries. It is simply outstanding.

Additionally, Goza is a great place for entertainment. Along with occasional live music, they feature a live DJ who plays 80s music on Thursday and Saturday nights. And, if you are a sports fan, you can relax, and watch the game with a cold beer. If you have a particular game you want to watch, they may even change the channel for you.

If you've spent any time at Goza, you realize there is a driving force behind the way the business runs that makes it extraordinary. Exidia feels it is important, as the owner, to know how to do everything involved in running a successful restaurant from waiting tables to preparing the food, and everything in between. To achieve their goal of providing superior service, food and atmosphere, they hire young ambitious people and provide them with an opportunity to accomplish as much as they'd like in their employ.

A perfect example of this is their General Manager, David Astudillo, who is one of the brightest restaurant leaders I have encountered. Even under the age of 30, he is one of the main reasons Goza runs so smoothly. "We want everyone that comes here to feel welcome and know that they will receive the level of service they are accustomed to regardless of where they are


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from." He believes in paying his staff very well along with providing a nurturing environment where they are encouraged to accomplish their personal goals. By doing this, he has very little turnover. "People like to come to a place where they are known," David says. "By keeping our staff happy, we keep our customers happy and they keep coming back." Exidia adds, "Loving what you do is key and we love being here."

One of the greatest enjoyments is going to a restaurant, having sensational service, a phenomenal meal in a great environment. I don't believe in perfection, but Goza Espresso Bar strives for nothing less. This is one of the reasons why they have become one of the top restaurants and certainly the best Espresso Bars in Cuenca. But, as Hagay says, "Getting to the top is easy, staying there is the challenge."



Club sandwich



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# Lynne Klippel



Lynne Klippel and her adult son Tom moved to rural Paute in 2012, taking on the challenge of building a house and living near a small village with no other expats. If you go to Chican and ask for the Gringa, you'll be directed to Lynne's house.

Lynne still works full-time as a writer and publisher. Her company, SageMountainBooks.com, has published more than 200 books over the last 13 years and has some really good ones coming out in 2016 including, "Ecuador Bound - How to Relocate without Losing Your Money or Your Mind", co-authored with Gringo Visa's Maite Duran. The ultimate bookworm, Lynne loves teaching new writers, writing, editing, and book marketing almost as much as she loves sitting on her porch with a great read.

## **WHERE WAS THE LAST PLACE YOU LIVED BEFORE MOVING TO CUENCA?**

The last place I lived before here was St Louis MO where I worked as the head of medical libraries for a large healthcare system – yes, it is all about the books!

## **WHY CUENCA?**

I came to the Cuenca area because I'd turned 50 and was ready for an adventure before I got too old to enjoy it. I'd visited Ecuador a couple of times before then and loved it. I chose this area for the natural beauty, good infrastructure, and kind people.

## **WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT CUENCA?**

I love the freedom, peace, and opportunities here. I'm just a bus ride

from Cuenca and come in at least once a week to see friends and enjoy big city life. The people I've met here, both in the expat and local communities, are remarkable. I am blessed to have some wonderful friends here and meet more great people here every week. I didn't expect that. What a great surprise.

## **WHAT WAS YOUR PROFESSION BEFORE YOU RETIRED?**

I'm not retired and have a long time before I can collect pension funds, so I stay busy ghostwriting, working on my own writing projects, and publishing books. Being an entrepreneur here works well for me as long as I have internet. I have a few extra grey hairs from times when I had 100 people registered for a training program and had no internet access. Thankfully, my internet in the country is getting better every year.

## **IF YOU COULD GO BACK IN TIME, WOULD YOU DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT, AND IF SO, WHAT?**

If I could go back in time, I'd keep my same career path, even though it was a bit curvy. I started as a teacher and then a healthcare administrator. I always wrote in those professions as well as learned as much about leading teams and dealing with customers. I use those skills on a daily basis today. Who knew teaching 4th grade could lead to a great career in publishing? I would have never dreamed that, so it was a great surprise.

## **WHO IS YOUR HERO(ES) AND WHY?**

My parents. My dad was famous for his big laugh, for never meeting a stranger

and his kindness. My mom was wise, a great leader, and could always say the right thing at the right time. I always wanted to be a blend of the best of the both of them.

## **WHAT'S THE MAGIC FORMULA FOR SUCCESS?**

Use your natural strengths, take responsibility when things go wrong, and stay organized so things get done on time. It doesn't hurt to have a good farm girl work ethic either.

## **WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PIG-OUT FOOD?**

Popcorn. I could eat it every day.

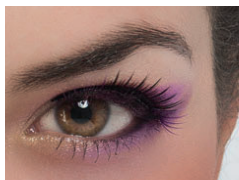
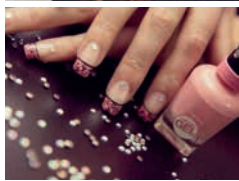
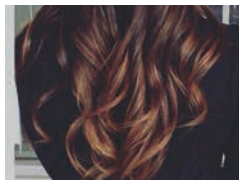
## **WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU TOLD A LIE AND WHAT ARE THE DETAILS BEHIND IT?**

I told a lie today. A group of us in Paute had a surprise birthday party for our favorite cab driver. I told a whopper to get him to the location. He was so surprised!

## **HOW DO YOU OVERCOME WRITER'S BLOCK?**

I get up and move around - take a walk or do some housework. Moving your body helps you get out of your head and unblocks the words. This is the #1 question I am asked in interviews and people always laugh when I say vacuuming or doing the laundry will get me back to writing every time.

To read the entire interview, visit our website: [www.cuencaexpatsmag.com](http://www.cuencaexpatsmag.com).



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**H**appy New Year to one and all! Katha Upanishad says, "Get awake! Rise up! Get in the company of the wise! Realize knowledge! Now that's the way to begin a new year." Hear, hear! Look at this, celebrating a New Year in South America! Who would have ever guessed, last year, that I'd be here, now? Isn't it amazing the way life ambles along, one day at a time, until you suddenly look back, over your shoulder, from where you currently stand, and realize the vast expanse between then and now, here and there? It can be quite startling at times: a shocking realization that this is you, this is your life, and baby, you are here! To all who share my bewilderment, welcome to the party!

The New Year holiday is without a doubt, completely unique unto itself, in that it inherently contains two parts, concurrently an ending and a beginning, separated by nothing more than a split second. Often thought a bittersweet time, we delve into self-reflection, as well as endeavor to create and foster new and fragile futuristic visions, hopes and dreams. We tend to look at ourselves, our lives, and our world, viewed from under a microscope. We do this personally, as well as within a shared human community. In my mind, this is always a good pursuit. We look inward to our failings, mistakes, losses and fears. We rejoice in our accomplishments, joys, love, and adventures. Succinctly, we pull forward and project hopes and aspirations for the future, and for the potential differences and possibilities those future moments may hold for us.

On an intimate note, as I lay to rest 2015, I see the following: there were times I didn't live up to the idea of who I would like to be in this world, there were those I have disappointed, there were times when I was less than honest and true to myself, there were some things I left undone – important things and people that needed my attention, there were goals and ideas that I didn't reach for - out of my own smallness and fear, there were times I failed to release and let go of pain, loss, or those things that no longer serve me well, there were times I felt personal disappointment and shame in many of the policies and fear-based behaviors in my own beloved country, there was horrendous sadness and terror around the world and I did nothing, there were animals suffering in the name of human

consumption, beauty, and entertainment, there was destruction and disregard of the life force this planet contains and for all it provides us, and there have also been times when I DID think and act out of compassion toward myself and others, that I have been Graced with friends and family who love, excuse and forgive, that I do, mostly, operate in unselfish ways, that my accomplishments were amazing, with all that I did, saw, and felt this year, that I enjoy good health and all-around abundance, that it is a blessing to be a US citizen and that I am grateful for all the beautiful people, places and potentiality within the US, that there are, world-wide, tremendous acts of bravery and heroism - in spite of fear - that occur every day in a thousand ways, in a thousand places, across the globe, there are those who prioritize the rescuing, rallying, petitioning, and organizing for the saving of the animals, the environment, and the souls of this planet, that there is a paradox, currently known as the human species, capable of unspeakable horror and inexplicable splendor all at once, and that as a whole, we are an evolving, dynamic, epically tragic and breathtakingly beautiful masterpiece!

Benjamin Franklin said, "Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each New Year find you a better man." Agreed. However, I am not one to set resolutions. I lack faith in them. They are like what Mary Poppins described as, "pie crust promises: easily made, easily broken". Mark Twain said, "New Year's Day: Now is the accepted time to make your regular annualized good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual." I see, much like the New Year holiday, that in every single day I experience an ending and a beginning. Each day's end holds the death to what was, and every day's morn holds the birth to what may be. Within this very short and constant cycle, I see that I must hold myself accountable for every choice I make and word I say – each new choice is a declaration, a resolution for positive change, as I endeavor to remain awake and acutely aware in my thoughts and actions. Every passing moment is wrought with past, present, future. Every passing day contains within it the onset of a new beginning, in every moment. It's to that truth that I must be diligent. Once a year, for a life-changing resolution, simply falls WAY too short for the continual, micro adjustments I

feel are necessary to create the me I want to be, and the life I want to live, for myself and others affected by my choices.

Having said that, as I ring-in 2016, and set my eyes to that newly born horizon, my thoughts waft along, as sanguine mental meanderings. Here, I share but a few of my 2016 dreams: I hope and will labor for continued good health and physical fitness – I have so much I want to yet see and do, I will continue to utterly revel in love and profound gratitude for my friends and family, I will leap over self-inflicted walls, boundaries, grudges and fears, I hope to explore more, learn more - especially Spanish, give more, understand more, love more, I hope to listen less to the destructive forces of the media and gossip, I aim to focus on world peace- yes, I said that – and simple, daily acts of kindness and generosity, I hope to take an honest look at myself and the human condition, and encounter ways that I can be a fitting and gorgeous part of any positive solution or aid that may present itself, I will choose to seize each passing moment, and inhale all that's good and joyful, and to exhale smiles that dance on the wind, and as time hastens by, I will choose not to lament, but glorify! I desire to absorb beauty from everywhere and everything, and radiate love. I hope to, above all else, keep my heart and mind open, my face unto the sun, and break into my own unlimited potential. There's a beautiful movie line that as summarized says, "The years teach much that the days never knew." I hope that in 2016 I learn much, through joy and love, and that as each day passes, I realize my beautiful lessons and embrace and hold dear to them. In this way, as Benjamin Franklin says, I may find myself a better man.

To my friends I give you this, a New Year's toast: Cheers to you! Cheers to your sorrows and joys, to the miracle that is you. I celebrate you! May all goodness come to you and may you REALLY love it! May our kinship live on in our hearts forever!

Happy 2016!

# First Annual Cuenca International Writers Conference

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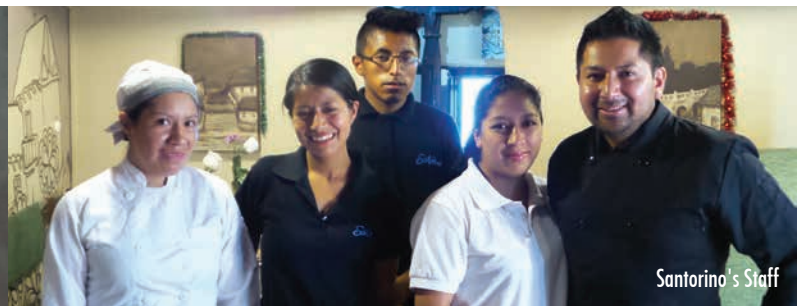








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Santorino's Staff

# Santorino Restaurant and Bar

## Painstaking Attention to Detail

By Dave Johnson



Dining Area



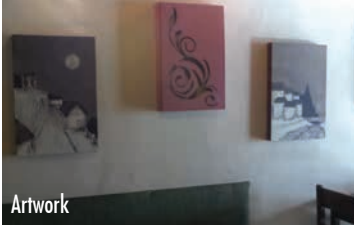
The bar



Mural in Dining Area



Chef in the kitchen



Artwork



Filet Mignon

There are restaurants for every taste, budget and atmosphere preference here in Cuenca. Depending on what you are looking for there is no shortage of new restaurants popping up. Because of this, the long-term survival rate of eateries here is not very high. Just when you've found the perfect place, it is gone. One restaurant that has defied these odds, offering patrons an eclectic menu, great location with comfortable ambiance, excellent prices and all-day drink specials is Santorino Restaurant and Bar, located at the corner of Calle Larga and Mariano Cueva, across from Todo Santos.

The outside of the building is warm and inviting, painted in vibrant colors to attract the eye. The design fits in nicely with the traditional architecture in the area. While it might appear to be a place that exclusively serves "comida tipica" (typical food), a quick glance at the daily specials board gives passers-by evidence to the contrary. Owned by husband and wife, Edgar Montaleza and Veronica Vele, Santorino has something on the menu for everyone. While their food leans towards Italian dishes (their Spaghetti and Meatballs is awesome!), they also have traditional options like seafood, a mouth-watering filet mignon and, coming at the beginning of 2016, pizza.

Atmosphere plays a large role in the enjoyment of any meal and this is where Santorino really shines. The restaurant inhabits a building that is 270 years old. Decorated with styles from Peru and the Philippines with a smidge of Italian influence, the restaurant is broken up into smaller dining rooms so that guests aren't overwhelmed by the din of conversation. Each room is decorated with local artwork, rounding

out the overall experience. There is also a small outdoor patio just off the sidewalk that is perfect for people watching on a sunny afternoon.

Each day, Santorino offers generous lunch and dinner specials that are delicious and reasonably priced. I have eaten there many times and have tried several different entrees including their pasta, seafood and most recently, the filet mignon, served with red wine mushroom gravy, vegetables cooked to perfection and lightly fried baby potatoes. Everything at Santorino has been excellent, but I know why the filet mignon is one of their best sellers – it is so tender you can cut it with a butter knife and it just melts in your mouth. It is, without a doubt, one of the best steaks I have had in Cuenca.

A quick glance at Trip Advisor and you will see others think that Santorino is a great place to eat as well. Not only is it ranked in the top third of restaurants in Cuenca, it consistently gets great reviews from people who eat there. "I like this restaurant because the food is very fresh, cooked with the finest ingredients - it always makes you come back for more. I've eaten there a couple times and the food was great! Plus, very good service and good atmosphere - we truly recommended this restaurant."

With pizza being added to the menu in the New Year, Santorino's will have even more to offer diners. Combine that with Edgar and Veronica's painstaking attention to detail and desire for everyone who passes through the door to feel comfortable, while dining on excellent food and you will become a regular. "We love what we do and we want everyone that eats at Santorino's to feel like family while they are here."

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# Ecuador Cares

By Lynne Klippel

**E**ccuador Cares is a new non-profit organization recognized by the Ecuadorian government, founded by a group of North Americans and Ecuadorians with a clear mission: to provide help and hope for orphans, the aged and the terminally ill. The group came together in 2014 to help an orphanage in dire straits, lacking clean water, plumbing, and adequate food. When that project was completed with many man-hours of volunteer labor and a cash donation of just over \$28,000 for a year's worth of food, Ecuador Cares began a new project in Cuenca at Hogar Miquel Leon.

Hogar Miquel Leon is both a girl's orphanage and a refuge for abandoned seniors. Managed by a small staff of dedicated Sisters, over 100 people reside at Hogar Miquel Leon, close to San Sebas Plaza. The girls must leave the orphanage on their 18th birthday. With no family support, home, or job, they are prey for the unscrupulous.

Ecuador Cares instituted a robust program of support for both the youth and the senior residents. Each Saturday close to 30 volunteers arrive to teach cooking classes, English, sewing, computer skills, CPR/First Aid, and job interviewing skills to the teens. Other volunteers read to the younger children. The seniors enjoy music, dancing, and crafts. The afternoon culminates with a delicious meal prepared by the volunteers and youth, mentored by a local chef or a volunteer. Ecuador Cares also provides funding for school supplies and uniforms for the children and personal care items for the elders.

In December they started a 4-week sex education/personal safety program taught by Dra. Sonia Nivel of Corporacion Mujer a Mujer. Plans are underway for a halfway house to provide adult supervision, housing, and support for those who are 18 and want to finish their education, and a job placement program.

Ecuador Cares welcomes volunteers to help in any of these programs as well as those who have skills in repairs and plumbing. There are a few boys at the orphanage who would love to learn carpentry. You don't need to be fluent in Spanish, just have a heart open to helping others.

For more information or to volunteer, contact President Diane Lenz Shanley at [Diane@EcuadorCares.org](mailto:Diane@EcuadorCares.org)



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Volunteers teaching cooking lessons.



## David and Debi Billings

By Susan Herron

### **I understand the way you met was very interesting. Tell me about it.**

Debi: In 2000, while living in Arizona as a single mom, I wanted to take my daughter to Jamaica. I used Match.com to try to contact someone living close by who could show us around. That's how I found David.

David: I was living in St. Thomas. Debi contacted me thinking St. Thomas was real close and I could show her around.

Debi: OK, well on the map it looked very close.

David: I didn't go, as I had to work, but that initial contact sparked on-going communication.

### **How long did you date and how did you manage dating long distance?**

David: For nearly 2 years we "dated" via phone and email until finally Debi came to St. Thomas to meet in person; it was love at first sight.

Debi: After that, since I had the more flexible work hours, I flew to St. Thomas every 6-8 weeks to see David for a week.

David: Once, I went to Arizona and met Debi's daughter. Another time, we joined my mother in England for 2 weeks of visiting family and friends.

Debi: It was at a little B&B on that trip David FIRST proposed to me.

### **What's this about "The Eagle Has Landed?"**

Debi: After the trip to England where David proposed, I knew he would give me an engagement ring the next time I saw him. I was nervous on that flight to St. Thomas. October 1, 2003, exactly 1 year from our face-to-face meeting, he shows up at the airport wearing long pants and a button-up shirt, practically formal attire for St. Thomas. As we left the airport, a uniformed stranger took my suitcases and began placing them in a white limousine. At first I thought my luggage was being stolen, but then I realized David had hired a limo! Once settled inside, David got down on one knee, held open a tiny box with a beautiful diamond ring, and asked me to marry him, again! It was so PERFECT!

David: I had planned a little party at Betsy's Bar and had to let everyone know Debi had arrived and we were on our way. I called my friends to say, "The eagle has landed." In a few minutes, we arrived to friends and an engagement party!

Debi: We married in June 2004 and chose Pennsylvania over Arizona or St. Thomas because my family lived there and David's mom lived close by in New Jersey.

David: After we married, Debi moved to St. Thomas for a year before we moved to Arizona.

### **What made you choose Ecuador?**

David: The first 7 years of marriage, we traveled to all 7

continents and saw a lot of the world. We knew we wanted to retire abroad, and were looking for a place that felt like "home."

Debi: We narrowed it down to Costa Rica, Panama and Ecuador but after visiting Costa Rica and Panama we ruled them out, as they just didn't feel right for us.

David: We came to Ecuador on a scouting trip from June through August 2013, decided Ecuador was for us, and moved here in December 2013.

Debi: The weather and the standard of living impressed us, but it was David's emergency surgery for a retinal detachment while on our scouting trip that sealed the deal. His excellent medical care, and our new friends' amazing support, made Cuenca feel like "home."

**You have been here two years now, what does "Date Night" look like for you.**

David: We don't often go out at night but do lots of activities during the day.

Debi: We enjoy breakfast with friends, lunch out almost daily and maybe dinner out once a month. We attend a monthly potluck at church and enjoy having friends over for dinner. We like going to the movies at Millennium Mall, touring the museums, churches, and nearby towns, and having romantic adventures all around this great country.

David: One of our favorite activities is climbing the stairs to Turi two or three times a week.

Debi: And we never pass up a chance to hike in the Cajas with friends!





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 CUENCA - ECUADOR

This month we are featuring the many friendly faces from the Christmas parade here in Cuenca. There were so many, it was hard to choose which ones to publish. We hope you enjoy these pictures as much as we enjoy sharing them with you. To see more pictures and video, visit our website at [www.cuencaexpatsmag.com](http://www.cuencaexpatsmag.com)



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# Instant Karma

By Ed Lindquist

Most of us believe our actions have consequences. Whether it's long remembered Sunday school lessons on sowing and reaping, or just observing everyday human behavior. Even Karma has entered everyday vernacular as short hand for cause and effect.

Last month, I attended the 4th Annual Christmas Gala and Fundraiser for Hearts of Gold. This organization is one of many supported by expats doing good works in Cuenca. A highlight every year is auctioning a special 1908 Double Eagle gold coin. And each year, Richard Verkley, one of the founders of the charity, retells the story of the gold coin. How a man named Ron who was down on his luck, and couldn't afford to, nevertheless donated this gold coin to the organization. And sometime after donating that gold coin, that individual's financial fortunes turned for the better. Verkley goes on to say that every year since, the winner of the gold coin has returned it back to the organization to again be auctioned for more money the following year. That's a very generous move by these past winners.

This year's bidding started and increased toward the \$2,000 mark. I, like many in the audience, was thinking if I won the gold coin, would I keep it or have



George Fogues with Inge Palmer

the guts to re-gift it back to the charity? Fortunately, I didn't have to make that decision as someone else had the winning bid of just over \$2,000.

As previous recipients of the gold coin, this year's winners Neil and Inge Palmer donated this special gold coin back to Hearts of Gold. Cuenca expats giving over \$2,000 to a good cause is always commendable, and their generosity should be recognized and applauded. But as that famous radio commentator Paul Harvey used to say, here's the rest of the story.

At this year's event, Hearts of Gold also

had a lottery for a new car or \$15,000 in cash. After much anticipation, the winning ticket was drawn. And to everyone's surprise, the winners were none other than the Palmers. The same couple who just minutes earlier had re-donated that special gold coin. A \$2,000 donation, minutes later returned a \$15,000 jackpot. Instant Karma!

Now if this isn't amazing enough, after winning \$15,000, the Palmers announced they in turn are donating money to their favorite charity, Happy Dogs. Its purpose since founded in 2012 is to reduce the over-population of unwanted dogs and cats in Cuenca via education and spay and neuter clinics.

Sometimes in life, we need concrete reminders of universal principles of good to live by. This was surely one, at least for me. While most of us will never have the opportunity to donate a gold coin to a worthy cause, let alone \$15,000 to our charity of choice, we have opportunities every day to practice generosity: a helping hand to a neighbor, a supportive ear to someone in need, even a friendly smile to a stranger. Who knows what may be waiting around the corner in return.

*Editor's Note: if you would like to learn more about Happy Dogs go to: [www.facebook.com/happydogsincuencaspayandneuter](http://www.facebook.com/happydogsincuencaspayandneuter)*

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