

Project Description

Ben Armstrong

Etta Projects Background:

In 2003 Penny Nixon created the 5019(c)(3) Etta Projects to honor and continue the work of her daughter Etta, who passed away during her time as an International Rotary Exchange student in Bolivia. Since that date, Penny, Etta Projects program director Katie Chandler, and many Bolivian staff have worked to complete health, sanitation, nutrition, and water programs in communities around Montero, Bolivia. Health programs educate local women (an under-represented group) about how to carry out basic health procedures, help provide medical equipment, and have even sent a few women to complete nursing degrees so that they may better help their communities. Sanitation projects focus on eliminating the root of many water borne illnesses by helping families fund and construct composting latrines that turn dangerous fecal matter into usable compost without the need for external additions or chemicals. School garden projects teach students responsibility, gardening skills, and teamwork while providing needed nutrition and fresh food to supplement school lunches and meals at home. Finally, water projects help communities ensure they have a clean water source by evaluating and providing the type of water filtration system or pump that would work best in their situation. All of these projects include workshops for adults and children so that communities understand and can perpetuate the changes. Etta Projects not only provides these services, but stays within these communities to ensure that they remain effective in the long term. Communities and families contribute labor and finances to the projects, and Etta Projects expects them to drive the projects by requesting financial help or expert advice on how to best solve these issues.

Need:

Since it's founding, Etta Projects has taken on more projects that it could ever have imagined. The projects continue to shape and improve the communities in which it works. Despite these achievements, Etta Projects now finds itself at an important 10 year milestone to evaluate and improve its operations to become even more effective and efficient. It hopes to improve the communications between the Bolivian projects and U.S. fundraising efforts, evaluate ways to improve its monitoring and evaluation, and create a strategic plan about the communities in which it should work in the future. To address these issues, I will work as a Program Assistant Intern for Etta Projects in Bolivia from mid March 2014- when the rainy season ends- through mid-November 2014- when the rainy season will again prohibit me from being able to access the communities.

Project Description:

I will be able to travel to the various project communities from the city of Montero (north of Santa Cruz) to complete my tasks that will be divided into three areas. First, throughout my stay I will evaluate the needs of different communities to help direct Etta Projects work in the future. I will interview communities, families, and government officials to gauge the need for certain projects and the willingness for community members to contribute to them. I will attend local

and governmental meetings to identify important initiatives currently being worked on in the region and how Etta Projects can better partner with local governments and nonprofit organizations to support local agendas. During times where I cannot access communities I will research other small-scale water, health and sanitation projects to offer recommendations for improving Etta Projects methods.

Etta Projects is partnering with the U.S. organization Peer Water Exchange (PWX) to create, test and improve a new android application to create and streamline a new monitoring and evaluation system. This system will be simple to use but will also include photos stories, and will turn data about projects into comprehensible graphs and figures. Bolivian staff will be able to enter this information, and an automatic update will send this information to U.S. staff. I will work to help translate the program from English into Spanish for the Bolivian staff, train staff about the new program, and work with the Bolivian monitoring and evaluation specialist to relay questions and improvements to PWX.

Finally, I will help update social media by taking high-resolution pictures and videos to show the progress of projects and Bolivian culture. I will work with program leaders to learn about individual projects and help Bolivian staff realize areas to improve monthly reports and make them both professional and personable. Other responsibilities may include enhancing our presence online (Weekly Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube updates) and writing articles for the quarterly newsletter.