
summer volunteer handbook

2010

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I. WHAT IS MANNA PROJECT?

Manna Project International (MPI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that connects college students and recent graduates with international service opportunities. Our mission is to connect and encourage communities of young adults to collectively apply their passions and education through service to communities in need. The overall vision for our work is to establish a global network of Manna Project communities where young adults live and work alongside one another in underserved communities. By working hand-in-hand with locals and other international organizations towards holistic community development, MPI provides first-hand exposure to international issues, raising awareness of community needs and the means through which students and graduates can pursue their call to service. In order to tie career interests to service work for participants, MPI has many different types of development projects in the areas of juvenile and adult education, health education, creative arts, and recreational sports activities, as well as information gathering and strategic planning. Taking a grassroots approach allows for an effective assessment of the community's needs and a widespread involvement in targeting specific actions in order to effectively meet those needs. In essence, MPI builds community to serve communities.

The luxuries of growing up in a country of high standards of peace, justice, liberty, and prosperity inhibits some Americans from realizing the uniqueness of their lifestyle. Although many college students across the country are informed of the social realities of foreign countries, most have not had the opportunity to leave the confines of national borders to experience living in another culture. International community service opportunities bring students in contact with global issues, allowing them to identify with foreign cultures and gain perspective into their own lives. MPI participants broaden their horizons through first-hand contact with a foreign culture and gain valuable work experience by leading community development programs in areas of their education and work interest.



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II. A BRIEF HISTORY

Manna Project International was started by a group of four Vanderbilt University students who were looking to harness the creative energy of college students and recent graduates to serve populations in need. Hoping to get their peers involved, they established an on-campus service organization. This new group's goals were to bring the university campus into greater contact with the local immigrant community, and to provide international service opportunities for students.

During the summer of 2003, one of MPI's founders, Luke Putnam, encountered the August family in Managua, Nicaragua. Along with an independent missionary named Amanda Gutierrez, the Augusts had recently purchased an 11-acre plot of land in Chiquilistagua, a rural community that lies approximately five miles outside of the capital. Luke and the others were excited by the Augusts' plan to develop a community and sports center to offer recreational, educational, and social opportunities to the local community. This vision coincided with MPI's goals.

After visiting the site again six months later, the four college seniors established MPI as an IRS-recognized nonprofit organization, and began recruiting other college graduates to commit to working in Managua for one year. In September 2004, eleven college graduates arrived in Managua to begin their year of service that has forever changed, and will continue to change, their perspectives and outlooks on life. While the faces have changed, current MPI-Managua members are helping to further develop the facilities of the community center and implement programs to reach out to those in the local community. Please see "Current MPI Nicaragua Programs" on Manna's website for more details regarding the status of the work in Managua. The program continues to take on new participants every year and has hosted over 100 volunteers who have helped greatly with these programs.



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In September 2007, Mark Hand, a veteran Manna Project volunteer, led the initiation of Manna Project's second international site in Ecuador. In conjunction with a local non-profit called UBECI, the MPI Ecuador group began running an after-school program for over 30 children in a small, impoverished town, San Francisco, about one hour outside of Quito. Through UBECI, the Ecuador group became acquainted with the community, working closely with a local financial cooperative to better understand the area's circumstances and needs. For the status of the work in San Francisco and the other communities where MPI is focused in Ecuador, please see "Current MPI Ecuador Programs."



Left: Nicaragua PD Christina Colopy works with a student during MPI's after-school tutoring program.

Right: Three members of MPI Ecuador's founding team of PDs (Abbie Foust, Hilary Fenet, and Zak Schwarzman) explore the natural beauty of the Andean region.



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III. VISION

MPI seeks college students and recent college graduates to execute community development programs abroad. We offer two types of international volunteer service opportunities. "Program Directors" serve for thirteen months and are responsible for the long-term growth and sustainability of the organization and its programs. "Volunteers" can participate in short-term volunteer sessions including one-week spring break group trips and four week summer sessions.

MPI directs its efforts towards communities in need: communities with inadequate access to basic educational, medical, and recreational resources. MPI aims for a holistic approach to community development, working with people of all ages in various aspects of their lives. This broad approach enables those with diverse passions and skills to work together towards providing a targeted community with the resources to serve its specific needs. For example, to better serve the healthcare needs of a targeted community, a holistic approach involves teaching health classes, providing access to clinics, and offering recreational activities that increase physical and mental health. College campus chapters and other domestic participants, who work towards similar goals by raising awareness and support for our international initiatives, complement the MPI international service team.

International Participants

- Work with fellow volunteers to develop community programs
- Create opportunities for growth and education in communities
- Broaden understanding of current international issues
- Define personal career goals
- Focus on career interest through service work

Domestic Participants

- Establish MPI chapters in U.S. universities and colleges
- Build bridges between university and community
- Provide local service options for current students & faculty
- Offer short-term international service-work opportunities
- Encourage community programming events

Partner Organizations

- Develop relationships with other international organizations
- Provide sustainable effort from college students and recent graduates
- Assist in supporting and sustaining the efforts of partner organizations serving communities in which MPI also works



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IV. THE ROLE OF AN MPI SUMMER VOLUNTEER

Developing programs & facilities

Volunteers serve an important role with MPI. With extra hands and focused energy directed into specific programs and projects, short-term volunteers can complete lasting accomplishments in a short amount of time. We work to match your interests as a volunteer with our programs on the ground, and also welcome you to submit specific ideas for work projects based on personal interest or training. If you have an idea already, please provide the details of it in your initial application.

The volunteer experience

Short-term international volunteering can be a life changing experience. MPI encourages volunteers to take their role seriously and challenge themselves to take the opportunity to think and step outside the box in order to gain a full and rewarding volunteer experience.

Summer volunteers are hosted by a team of Program Directors. This short-term opportunity provides volunteers a glimpse of what a full term of service looks like for those who are considering applying for Program Director positions after graduation. Since volunteers live, work, and spend down time together, there are always opportunities to meet like-minded people and form fast friendships with other volunteers from around the U.S.

Raising awareness

Being able to spend time in the developing world is a privilege that few people get to experience, and volunteers act as a window into the developing world for our friends and donors. Through presentations, slideshows, blog entries (check them out [here](#) and [here](#)), and online photo publishing, volunteers raise awareness of MPI's mission and the global inequities it challenges.



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V. SUMMER VOLUNTEER TIMELINE FOR 2010

MPI's Summer Volunteer Program offers two four-week sessions. This year, we will also offer an eight-week option to four selected students. Volunteers must arrive and depart on the specified dates for each session.

Applications Due	First round: February 1, 2010 Second round: March 29, 2010
Notification of Acceptance	Two weeks from deadline
Contract and \$100 Deposit Due	Two weeks from acceptance
Full payment due	One week prior to arrival
Session 1 Arrival Date	May 13, 2010
Session 1 Departure Date	June 10, 2010
Session 2 Arrival Date	June 11, 2010
Session 2 Departure Date	July 9, 2010
Eight-week Session Arrival Date	May 13, 2010
Eight-week Session Departure Date	July 9, 2010



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VI. CURRENT MPI PROGRAMS

Our programs are at various stages of development, some more permanent than others. Varying levels of development require different degrees of proactiveness, creativity, and flexibility; providing you the unique opportunity to expand on and make more thorough your set of leaderships skills. You will have the well-rounded experience of researching, designing, and implementing projects; complete with both great accomplishment and frustration. Working with MPI requires that you be flexible, patient, creative and proactive in problem solving, as well as a self-starter. If those traits describe you, you are perfect for this job. Below is the full program list for both the Nicaragua and Ecuador sites. For more details about the programs in Nicaragua, [click here](#). For more information about Ecuador's programs, [click here](#).

Nicaragua

Education

- After-school Literacy
- After-school Math
- Creative Arts
- Children's English
- Adult English
- Preschool
- Educational Scholarships
- Library/Computer Lab

Health and Wellness

- Women's Health
- Women's Exercise
- Child Sponsorship
- Feeding Program

Sports & Recreation

Community Center/Construction

Business Development/Microfinance

Ecuador

Education

- Children's Art
- Children's English
- Adult English
- Ecuadorian University Campus Chapter Development
- Community Public Library

Health and Wellness:

- Exercise/Nutrition Classes
- Preventative Health Center/Community Health

Mingas (community work projects)

Agriculture/Environment

Teen Center/Youth Development

Local cooperative capacity development

Small business development



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VII. SAFETY AND THE MPI HOUSE

The MPI house

All MPI summer volunteers live in MPI houses and apartments with our yearlong Program Directors. Living in such a setting provides significant benefits in coordination of projects and in having a comfortable place to discuss and reflect on things learned each day. All volunteers have access to the resources of the MPI house. In Nicaragua, volunteers are able to use in-house internet and laptop computer, phones for limited inexpensive international calling and our pool and hammocks for beating the heat at the end of an exhausting day. In Ecuador, there is a laptop computer at the Manna house for summer volunteers as well as several internet cafés within walking distance of the house to check email and make inexpensive international phone calls. Also, volunteers have access to a 360-degree view of the Andes Mountains from the MPI-Ecuador terrace and several hammocks in the atrium to relax in after programs.

All volunteers are required to attend weekly meetings so that they can be updated on weekly information within the organization, see the week's schedule, and voice interest and opinion in Manna's current happenings. Throughout each week, there will also be individual planning and preparation meetings for each program.

A note on safety

In both Nicaragua and Ecuador, petty theft is a common occurrence. Security is a priority at our MPI houses and our project sites and we take a great deal of initiative to prevent theft. As such, we recommend that volunteers think carefully about what valuables they choose to bring with them. We also discourage volunteers to bring laptop computers for their one-month stay, as we have a computer at each site that summer volunteers can use to email and research program information.



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VIII. EXPECTATIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Attitude and personal presentation

Every volunteer's actions and words reflect on our country and on our organization. PDs are expected to be positive and open minded to local cultural norms. This requires flexibility when things are not easy or efficient, as well as enthusiasm for trying different activities and experiences. It also means being respectful of others' beliefs and values, be they community members or other volunteers.

Lifestyle habits

MPI participants must abide by all local laws. Additionally, volatile habits such as drug use and excessive drinking are prohibited while working for MPI. MPI has the authority to terminate a contract with a volunteer, without refund, if they do not abide by or are suspected of not abiding by the zero drug or excessive drinking policy.

Please note that due to the nature of MPI's structure, the lines between work life and personal life are often significantly blurred. For this reason, lifestyle habits such as drug use and excessive drinking not only impact home and work relationships but they also harm the Manna Project reputation that hundreds of volunteers have worked to establish in the communities we serve. We ask that you take these points into consideration while deciding whether or not to apply for a summer volunteer position.

Couples

Couples are welcome to apply as summer volunteers, though expected to sleep in gender divided rooms.



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IX. FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

MPI's Summer Program costs \$650 per 4-week session per volunteer. This sum covers all necessary expenses including room, board, program transportation, retreats, cultural excursions, and MEDEX international travel insurance. It does not cover "luxury" or special food preferences, though it does cover specific foods for allergies or vegetarians. Flights to/from Nicaragua and Ecuador are not included.

Fundraising

Your summer costs don't all have to come out of pocket. Many of our summer volunteers raise funds for both program expenses and travel by sending letters to friends and family, asking for donations to MPI as a way to fund their volunteer experience. And while you may be hesitant to ask friends and family for financial support, they often feel privileged to support such an experience.

If you do seek out donations, they should all be clearly designated to you for your living and travel expenses. When personal contributions amount to more than the required amount for your stay, you may choose to donate them towards a particular program or to MPI's operating expenses. For a template fundraising letter and information about how we process donations, please email andrew.preston@mannaproject.org.

All donations to Manna Project International are tax-deductible. However, MPI volunteers cannot receive a tax-deduction if they write a personal check to cover their own program expenses. Financial information is kept strictly confidential between administration and each individual.

