Sunday, July 14
Shout out to Terry and Cade for arriving the latest (1:15 am) and still smiling!

Sunday, July 14
Everyone arrived safely, and we’re off. The passion is almost tangible. Intacara is a game-changer and will be for generations. I look forward to getting out of my comfort zone and seeing where that leads me.

-Pearl Wright

Sunday, July 14
Today we enjoyed the beautiful drive through Ecuador into the cloud forest. We were greeted by the wonderful community of Pucura. We were part of a lovely ritual giving gratitude to the earth and elements. We danced in celebration of coming together with this community and the week together. Being here is a reminder of what is most important in our lives and provides us with perspective. I am grateful to be back with my Ecuadorian family. I am grateful to be able to spend the week with the amazing ASEA family. I am grateful for the opportunity to become more because of this experience and the people that will be surrounding me this week.

-KimMarie Larsen
Sunday, July 14
We enjoyed a wonderful welcome ceremony. We gave thanks for the earth, sun, fire, and water to bless our time together in Pucura. We also enjoyed cultural dance performances and tea given to us in a terra cotta cup as a gift from the community. With our tea, we toasted our friendship.

Monday, July 15
My face hurts from smiling so much.
- Pearl

Monday, July 15
First day going to the build site was exciting. I rode on the top of the bus coming home and it was like riding an elephant. Great scenery, love the teamwork of the group and it was super cool working with the locals. My favorite part was seeing all the females working as hard as the males. I dug to help make the floor the right level, worked straightening rebar and pushed and dumped a wheelbarrow full of rocks. I loved working on this school and all the special projects. I can’t wait to see how the rest of the week unfolds! =Dorothy Knauss
Monday, July 15
Today was terrific! Coming to Pucara for the third time felt like coming home. The work at the site was predictably challenging physically, but what a lovely group of people! The school is really feeling like a dream come true! It’s really happening!
This afternoon we had a remarkable experience visiting Fausto’s can sure processing business. Bill was over the moon sampling the product every step of the way. Fausto sells the final product, granulated panela for $1.25 for a 2 pound bag. We paid him $2, but it’s worth more! What a special experience, seeing firsthand Fausto’s pride in carrying on a family tradition that has been going on since his great grandfathers time.
This is a very special time for the Wofford family – to be here working together – mom, dad, and son – to build a better life for others in this community is moving beyond words. Looking forward to the rest of the week. – Beth Wofford

Monday, July 15
I came on the first expedition two years ago, so coming back this year I was so excited to see the progress on the vocational center. When we arrived at the worksite, I couldn’t hold back the tears – seeing the first structure all done, the brick wall and fencing and the terrace terrorist land. AMAZING!! I love this place! The people, the beauty here, and the vocational school we are here to help build. With the small amount of service we are here to render, I feel like a small ownership to this project. – Susan S

Monday, July 15
After working, we split into groups and visited homes of four families that live in Pucara and run businesses out of their homes.
- The Flores family makes panella (sugar) and sells it in a rock format to people in the region.
- Fausto makes panella (sugar) similar to our brown sugar and sells it to people in the region.
- Carmen roasts small batches of coffee and sells it in the region.
- Paoula owns a bakery in Apuela. This group met at Marcelo’s home and made bread and pineapple preserves.
It was very interesting seeing how these products are made in small batches with equipment that, in some cases, has been in the family for generations.
Tuesday, July 16
After work we traveled to the community of Azabi. Though some distance away from the school, this community has traveled to help work on the school construction as they know that member of their community will benefit from the school. They welcomed us with traditional dancing and the traditional shared table of corn, rice, and potatoes— a very special treat. We played games with the kids and watched them play with the tops they made from wood and local fibers.

Monday, July 15
I am struck by how incredible the people are here on this expedition—so much diversity in background and experiences and every one of them possessing kind, gentle, loving, giving, and generous hearts. It is an honor to be here and benefit by associating with each of them. Thank you! — Colleen Peterson
Tuesday, July 16

It was absolutely wonderful to watch Veronica Burke capture the hearts of the children of the village. She fell in love with them and they with her. She is always an inspiration for us to reach out to others.

- Annie Jennings

Wednesday, July 17

Blessings happen every day but today I feel super blessed working side-by-side with those who will benefit most from our team’s effort and seeing the commitment to a job well done is inspiring. I have not felt as blessed for a while. Knowing that generations of kids will benefit from our work makes me know that I am in the right spot. As long as I can work a shovel or move cement I will be on every Ecuador mission.

- Hugh Jennings

Wednesday, July 17

I had a lot of fun and the food was great I can’t see can’t wait to see what the rest of the trip brings.
Wednesday, July 17

Day three is concluding and what an amazing experience. We have made great progress and worked well as a team. I am filled with gratitude and such a rewarding feeling. We have shared much and will go all out tomorrow as it is our last work day. My heart is filled with love and compassion for these humble people.

- Scott Alread

One Liners

- Ecuadorian drug deal of the century - it was a dark night in rural Ecuador when a pickup truck pulled up to a corner and Pearl’s hand came out the window to get some help from Kate the medic
- I am off the clock – Ryan
- BYOTP – bring your own toilet paper
- I am eight, no, I am Ocho! – Bill
- This is better than a ride at Disneyland they don’t make you sit down – Colleen said while standing to take photos on the bus ride to Azabi
- Even my short hairs are happy – Colleen expressing joy while driving to the worksite
- Snort – Pearl
- Miguel said no spiders. I found six – Cayden
- Gold and a puppy all the girls would love that – Cayden
- Im not here to think, Im here to dig
- Discomfort is the opportunity for gratitude – Pearl
- Day three – Wow, this ASEA stuff works!
- We need to share shots – I mean photos! – Kate
- 30 more centimeters – Maestro
- Duck Cayden!
- Dogs, cows, bands, and roosters. Oh my, welcome to Oz.
- Tu has comido un payaso – you ate a clown/you’re funny – Jefferson to Kim
- Broad squad #1
- Rebar women’s squad today got a new name – Twisted sisters!
- I have coffee with salt – ha ha
- Always remember to put at least 1 teaspoon of salt in your cup of coffee! – Dorothy thought it was creamer– Maybe because I miss understood our hostess about what was creamer and what was salt – 2 days of salty but polite coffee!
- This isn’t a girls game! This is girls holding hands!
- That Ecuadorians are easy to love!
- You are full of botany!
- ?? Who brought the band instruments last year for the town = Ask Terry why!
- I will seek and rebuild – Shawn Burke
- Not everyone was 100% but everyone gave 1000% (Gabe paraphrasing Kim)
- We will leave Ecuador different people – Kim
- Kindness is the universal currency!
Wednesday, July 17
Thank you, ASEA and Choice Humanitarian, for returning to my country again and for your support to all in this region and for coming together with the people and children of this community and for all your support in building this great dream. I hope that this week in my country has been good and I am hoping that you can return again and see some dreams that have come true. We are so grateful to you for coming. - Jefferson Montoya

Wednesday, July 17
It is a great experience to work with the people of ASEA and their families in the construction of the training center.
- Miguel

Wednesday, July 17
After work we visited some natural hot springs. The warm/hot water felt good on tired muscles and the hot shower (for those that were able to find them) was a treat.

Wednesday, July 17
These experiences with our new friends in Ecuador will always remain close to my heart. I am grateful for opportunity to be here, to be a part of such a great cause, to work side-by-side with these amazing people, and all of you from ASEA and Choice Humanitarian. My heart is full! I can’t wait to share this incredible experience with my friends and family. I love you all! You have made a huge difference in my life! Thank you for the great example you have been to my husband Scott and myself. We will never forget this. More to come! - Gloria Alread
Thursday, July 18
Five individuals from the community five hours away were talking to Sixto about projects and when they heard about Takara their eyes lit up and they knew they wanted to figure out a way to get something like that in their community. So they visited and worked with us for three days and had a great time. They left smiling from their new American friends time with. And with the dream that they will have an into the car out of their own one day.

Wednesday, July 17
I came to Ecuador not knowing what to expect. What I found was a country field with smiles and gratitude. The people here may not be rich by the standards of the USA, but in my opinion, they are much richer than most. Families are watching over everyone. We came up with a quote today on the bus while on our way to this worksite. “Just like air drop, you have to be ready to receive.” The folks from Choice and everyone from ASEA are the best. New friends for life. Thank you for this opportunity. - Christine Corey

Thursday, July 18
Thanks ASEA friends, it is a pleasure to work together with you. Thank you for your support and help and for your great hearts that wish to help the Intag area’s people. You are a great group. It is always a great pleasure to meet you in our small country of Ecuador. You are promoting change and hope to the people in this region. Thank you! - Raquel

Thursday, July 18
For me, it’s a pleasure to cook for great people like you at ASEA. I hope that you will return again soon and have a good trip home. I was happy to make Colleen a birthday cake and I loved her toast…”Being here is amazing sitting with all these amazing people helping others. Best birthday ever!” - Victor
Thursday, July 18
The MASH unit — Many bodies in the “infirmary” today and felt like Hawkeye and Hot Lips Houlihan! Made beds out of bricks and wood slabs for patients suffering with fever and GI issues. Recruited Marion today to help with Gloria’s fever and we were able to give her relief. Also, helped Bill last night and now handing out a lot of Tylenol and acetaminophen and Zofran. Ethan is on the mend and everyone seems to be feeling much better. We are all going to enjoy the comforts of our home and families but will never forget the bonding moments that come from GI issues! — Kate the Medic

Thursday, July 18
In support of the school, the government sent a backhoe and an operator to help Excel are great the progress of building.

Thursday, July 18
Today has been bittersweet it’s our last day at the vocational school and we have been here only 3-days. It feels like we have been here much longer. Working alongside of the locals and the ASEA family is an experience I will never forget. I am a better person for being on this expedition. — Marion Morgan

Thursday, July 18
The food has been amazingly out of this world. I think Victor needs to create a recipe book and call it quote happiness in your mouth. — Marion Morgan
Thursday, July 18
We dug holes
We carried rocks
We poured cement
We created rebar supports
We had El ángel del agua
We are building a school
Thursday, July 18
After work the community set up a market for us to shop for locally and hand made goods. After, a group of elders danced to "the song of the grandparent's" for us. Then we played games with the community and danced. The farewell was fun, but bittersweet.

Friday, July 19, 2019
This week I came to know something I had always spoke of but never fully understood. We are all on this earth, running about, making do with what we have. We come from much and very little, sickness and health, opportunity and struggle. Still, we share the same means, wants, and desires. Enough food, clean water, clothes to warm and cover us, means to prosper and move forward. And sometimes to hold all of us together is to know someone is there for you, to feel that love. So when I see that big old moon in the night sky I can know that there are others who are looking at it as well and that we are the same and that we have each other and that I can make a difference.
Thursday, July 18, 2019
Absolute best birthday ever! Nothing better than the up hitting me of love and community - being in a beautiful place, among beautiful people, sharing the beauty of working together for the betterment of all. As in the two words not two words just as in the words of the song from the musical wicked put wicked in italics I have been changed for the better! Thank you! - Colleen Peterson

Friday, July 19, 2019
We were doubly blessed with 6 hours of band practice in the opposite hall of our bedrooms. Complete with a rooster 5 AM alarm - just had to laugh!

The town put all our names in lanterns and shot them up to the sky! Such a gracious people. Our hearts will be connected!
Friday, July 19, 2019
My heart is full, my emotions are close to the surface. I feel so much gratitude for the experience and opportunity of this week. To be with amazing, hard-working, and caring individuals creating a dream for the good people in Ecuador. It has been such a pleasure to hear and feel your hearts this week as you embraced this experience. Our last day in Pucora was very tender for me, because I was sick I didn’t participate much in the farewell ceremony. This allowed me to watch you, to see the joy in your face as you interacted with the community was thrilling. The sweet villagers love you. They will forever remember these moments.

Friday, July 19, 2019
Find joy with those you love without distractions because that is what we found this week.

Friday, July 19, 2019
How do we go back to our busy lives and remember the lessons we learned? I know I must live a deliberate life with conscious decisions to focus on what truly brings joy. We rise by lifting others. We can do something that will bring joy to others if we learn to see others and listen to our hearts. Don’t let the world drown out the whispering of our hearts. I hope we can go home changed and share this experience with those we interact with. Thank you for making this a great expedition. – Kim

Friday, July 19, 2019
Terry asked us all at the farewell... “how do you define poverty and how do you define wealth?” We saw people sweeping dirt because it’s there’s. We saw kids playing and having fun with small things. Let’s remember what poverty is and what it isn’t. Let’s remember that everyone can make a difference and no act of kindness is ever wasted.

Friday, July 19, 2019
Find joy with those you love without distractions because that is what we found this week.
Saturday, July 20
We left Puerto Lago and headed to the markets of Otovallo. After lunch, we stopped by the Middle of the World museum that designates the zero latitude of Ecuador. From there the group hugged, cried, laughed, and went their separate ways. Some people returned home, some people stayed in Ecuador to enjoy the beautiful country. But everyone felt a shift that will be cornerstone of a new way of seeing and experiencing life.

Friday, July 19, 2019
After a heart wrenching set of good byes to our friends in Pucara, we visited Crater Lake on our way to have spend some time shopping and having lunch in Cotacachi. After checking into Puerto Lago, some people visited a local waterfall or the Condor park.
About CHOICE

We work with rural communities around the globe ending extreme poverty. We focus on developing local leaders as the basis for sustainable transformation out of poverty.

Why CHOICE

We begin with the exit in mind. Our goal is to train community leaders to take ownership of their own development. We work with communities until they are self-sufficient and sustainable, then we exit and they thrive.

What is Extreme Poverty?

Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank as living on an average of US $1.90 a day or less. They estimate that 1.44 billion people live in this condition. But extreme poverty is multidimensional and measured beyond income. Areas beyond income include health, education, standard of living, and a general lack of opportunities.

What Makes CHOICE Different?

Simple, Appropriate Technologies
All technologies introduced can be built and sustained through locally available resources and skills.

Strong Local Leaders
We train village leaders to manage their programs by relying on their own resources and leadership.

Leverage - Turning $1 into $5
Villages contribute labor and resources. Local government and partners contribute funds, materials, and training.