

Conduct Scientific Experiments in Rain Forest

Education Majors Teach in Remote Belize

Articles follow on professors' work & how students raised \$ for the trip



Ready to explore the Mayan ruins at Lamanai, Belize, are Bainbridge College students who worked in Belize this semester. Left-right standing are Amber Addison, Paige Poitevint, Twila Crocket, Valley Rogers, Hayden Holt, Joseph Sarpong, Feliciano Fancisco Gonzalez, Rayna Andrews, Reca Flanders and Eric Dueno. In front are Lacey Walker, Amanda Inlow, McCall Mason, Tiffany Smith, Heather Morton, Mary Margaret Wells, Jenna Jeter and Samantha Hager.

Instead of sunning on the beach during Spring Break, 16 Bainbridge College education majors flew across the Caribbean to work with students in remote Belizean classrooms for an education

class and to study Mayan ruins, rain forest plants and test water quality for a science class. They worked in schools in Corozal, Belize, examined engineering and time keeping aspects of Mayan ruins, studied medicinal plants and discovered that mineral content and alkalinity of Belizean water is like Georgia's. *(At right are Joseph Sarpong and Rayna Andrews with their students in Belize, taking time for some fun together.)*



The study abroad group included Bainbridge residents Recca Flanders, Samantha Hager, Amanda Inlow, Jenna Jeter, McCall Mason, Heather Morton, Paige Poitevint, Joseph Sarpong, Tiffany Smith and Lacey Walker; Cairo residents Amber Addison and Feliciano Francisco Gonzalez; Climax residents Rayna Andrews and Mary Wells, and Colquitt residents Twila Crockett and Hayden Holt. They were accompanied by Early Childhood Care and Education Program Director and Assistant Professor Valley Rogers, who organized the trip, and Assistant Professor of Chemistry Eric Dueno, who is new to BC's study abroad program.

The group flew to Belize City, the largest city of the country that gained independence from Great Britain in 1981, and experienced its wide mix of cultures. Then they went to Corozal in northern Belize and ended the trip in San Pedro on Ambergris Caye. Since returning home, they have been sharing their experiences and what they learned from the cultural differences they encountered on their working trip.

For example, Feliciano Francisco Gonzalez of Cairo spoke to Bainbridge Lions Club to thank the club for its scholarship that helped to send him to Belize and to tell about how he overcame challenges during the trip. Other students have presented their Belize experiences at Bainbridge College, Bainbridge High School, Hutto Middle School and John Johnson Elementary.

Talking to a BC education class, Rayna Andrews of Climax gave an overview of the trip, the culture shock she felt seeing third world poverty in a crowded big city and hearing many languages, including Mayan and Chinese in addition to English, Belize's official language along with Spanish and Creole. She discovered her deep love of teaching as she worked with the class of 30 first graders and their one teacher. Some of them speak several languages, others do not know English.

Although the BC group worked several days in classrooms, they had time to see natural and historic sites to enhance their learning. They climbed the ruins of a Mayan temple at Lamanai, saw exotic animals in the zoo, snorkeled and fished in the Caribbean, and went zip lining and cave tubing.

To make the week-long trip, which was part of their coursework in the education and the integrated science classes, the students worked to raise funds for their expenses. They organized garage sales, sold poinsettias, baked goods, and BC Cookbooks.

"This group of students worked diligently to be able to go," said Library Director Susan Ralph, who serves as co-coordinator of BC's International Education Program with Dr. Dave Nelson. "As our international study opportunities expand, we see a greater need for scholarships to help our students study abroad. We are thankful that the BC Ambassadors have agreed to share part of their scholarship funds from the BC Cookbook sales to help our students take advantage of these educational opportunities."

“It is amazing that Bainbridge College offers study abroad trips,” Ms. Andrews said in her presentation, noting there are groups going to London and to the Galapagos Islands and more trips are being planned for next year. The full-time student and mother of three said that study abroad is not out of reach for BC students.

BC Profs Work with Colleagues in Belize

While their students were busy teaching and collecting water samples in Belize during Spring Break, the two chaperones stayed busy with more than leading the group of 16 Bainbridge College (BC) education majors. Early Childhood Care and Education Program Director and Assistant Professor Valley Rogers and Assistant Professor of Chemistry Eric Dueno worked with colleagues there and brought new ideas back to southwest Georgia.

Ms. Rogers, who has led previous trips to Belize, spent six months organizing the trip and about a month with follow up work. In addition to meeting with teachers in very remote villages, she gave a presentation at Corozal Junior College on parental involvement and early literacy for the pre-school teachers in Corozal District. She had made a presentation there about brain development during the trip she led last year.

“It was great to see familiar faces this year,” she said, noting that she uses for her BC students some portfolio assessment ideas she gained from meetings with the college’s education department.

Dr. Dueno, who is new to BC’s study abroad program and who has a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of South Florida, presented two seminars to the science faculty at the college in Corozal.

“I was really impressed with the way the Belize study abroad program was organized,” Dr. Dueno said. “Ms. Rogers does an outstanding job with this and, although we traveled through much of Belize, at no time did I feel unsafe.”

The students they led voiced that same sentiment and attested to the tremendous experience they enjoyed. Some students said they had big accomplishments, such as taking their first plane trip, overcoming fear of heights by climbing the ruins of a Mayan temple, enjoying the plant and animal life while snorkeling and visiting the rain forest, and being surprised to discover that water samples they tested were so similar to Georgia’s.

The students are speaking about their experiences to civic groups and classes at Bainbridge College and area schools.



BC Students Working to Fund Studies in Belize

Early childhood education majors stayed busy raising funds to help defray costs for their studies in Belize at Corozal Junior College (CJC) during BC's Spring Break. With the flag of Belize behind them, students are seen here checking some yard sale items collected from faculty, staff and students.

They are (from left) Rayna Andrews, Berinda Horne, Linda Jones, Caleb Adkins and Joseph K. Sarpong. At right is Valley Rogers, who lead the trip and who coordinates work in the on-going Early Childhood Education program BC has with CJC. She was also actively involved planning activities for International Education Week (IEW) that the college observed Nov. 16-20, 2009, and which involved her students.

The travelers also sold poinsettias, had two yard sales on campus, and sold Bainbridge College Cookbooks in a project provided by BC Ambassadors, who created the Cookbook to fund their endowed scholarship. The Ambassadors agreed to split the proceeds for any student selling cookbooks for the study abroad opportunity.