

OYE el Cambio

Hear the Change...

“For me, OYE is a second family.”

-Oscar Suazo, age 12
OYE Scholar



OYE's Youth Leaders Race Forward

Racers sweating it out under the San Pedro Sula sun, fulfilling a life dream of running a marathon. Hundreds of fans cheering on athletes, watching teams get eliminated and celebrating the victors. Wise words from a nutritionist on how to eat and live in a healthy manner. Youth practicing yoga and selling artwork to locals for the first time in San Pedro Sula.

The past three months have been ones full of incredible initiatives in athletics, capacity building, art, and health, each of which has developed the knowledge and capacities of OYE's 50+ scholars. Through OYE's annual sports tournament, **COPA OYE**, and its participation in the **San Pedro Sula Marathon**, OYE has fulfilled its goal of promoting youth involvement in activities that keep them on a positive life path. These initiatives have not only helped youth establish goals, but they have also built self-esteem and provided youth with important life skills. Financially, the San Pedro Sula Marathon helped OYE raise over \$3,000 in check and online donations alone – an amount that can have a true impact for a small non-government organization. And thanks to a partnership with **WeYoga Center**, OYE's young artists have learned that their artwork is worth selling.

In the coming months OYE will continue to foster students' leadership development and skills in the arts, communications, and sports. It will soon begin educating 50 youth in El Progreso to learn how to use **Adobe's** photo-editing and video-editing tools, and it will be hosting a regional conference to unite youth leaders from Central America. It is an exciting time to be a part of OYE. As always, we thank you for your continued support and invite you to become part of the change.

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Did you know?

Honduras currently has the 4th lowest human development index in the Americas.

COPA OYE – Youth-led Tournament Four Seasons Strong



The fourth annual COPA OYE, a soccer cup that brings together a multitude of youth teams from El Progreso, took place this year from June 16 to June 30. After several hard-fought games, the team Vanegej rose victorious as the winner for the men's bracket and Galaxy for the women's. A total of 12 men's teams and 6 women's teams competed this year. These were average numbers for the cup according to Iloany Ochoa, who coordinated COPA OYE in previous years.

This year only OYE's female team participated in the tournament. The boy's team gave up its spot in the tournament so another school could join, which meant that the OYE boys split up and played on different teams from their respective schools.

As with most large-scale events, problems arose throughout the planning portion and the tournament itself. According to a report submitted by Fabiola Oro, who coordinated the event with Luis Paredes, the original goal had been to have 12 men's teams and 12 women's teams. In renting the soccer fields, there were misunderstandings with the dates. On the first day of the cup, OYE had planned another event with **WeYoga Center**, a yoga center in San Pedro Sula that opened a space for OYE's art students to sell their artwork for the first time in OYE's history. This was good news for OYE, though students were split between events. And, perhaps most importantly, because of the economic downturn, funds and donations were limited.

However, nothing of great consequence occurred that interfered with the cup. According to the same report, a well-regarded restaurant, **Las Tejas**, donated 20 dinners to the event. **AGUA VIVA**, a bottled water company, donated water and tents. There was a large turnout in the audience for each match. And there was "good communication and collaboration between the organizers" of the event.

Oro said that she would call the cup a success. "There were many teams from the community, universities, and schools." The youth were very motivated to play, due to the many incentives that had been placed, from a cash prize to a trophy to dinner. "The location was accessible; the atmosphere was well created; [OYE's radio] was presenting the game.... Yes, [it was a success] from the perspective of the player."

RACE 4 OYE Wins Big



This year's racers pose after the San Pedro Sula Maratón de la Prensa

On June 24, among the crowd of hundreds running the San Pedro Sula International Half Marathon, ran five in honor of OYE in an effort to fundraise for the organization. These five were Erick Estrada (17) and Paola Canales (14), two OYE scholars; Michael Solis, OYE's Development Director; Chris Benedict, an intern and three friends of OYE from WeYoga Center. Together, they raised over \$3,000 in online donations and checks.

This collaborative fundraising effort, called RACE 4 OYE is repeated with half marathons and marathons all throughout the world. This is the second consecutive year OYE has participated in RACE 4 OYE with the San Pedro Sula International Half Marathon. Last year, approximately \$6,000 was raised with the same marathon. To account for the difference in funds raised, Solis said that it was likely because they were missing two key fundraisers this year. However, "over the past two years, we have raised over \$20,000," he said.

Routing Peace to Central America

At the second annual Central American Donors Forum in Seattle, Julietta Castellanos spoke about the threats facing Central America. Among them, she cited rising homicide rates in what is now considered to be the most dangerous region on earth outside of a warzone. She focused on Honduras, a nation "in crisis" that currently ranks first among the world's most violent countries.

Castellanos, President of the National Autonomous University of Honduras, understands Central America's security situation from a deeply personal perspective. In October 2011, her 22-year-old son died after having been kidnapped and murdered in Tegucigalpa.

But Castellanos did not bring herself to mention that fact before an audience of leaders from the private, public, and civic sectors, all of whom had been brought together by the Seattle International Foundation to find innovative ways to tackle the most pressing problems in Central America. Instead, she focused on the facts.

Over the past six years, insecurity has increased at frightening levels, especially in Honduras. The trafficking of drugs from Colombia through Central America toward the North American market has stimulated violence. Drug trafficking is related to a range of other criminal activities, particularly when drug lords neutralize or undermine the work of the police through corruption and even the infiltration of government forces -- as happens throughout Central America.

When discussing what organizations of all kinds need to do to address the issue, Castellanos turned to one of the forum's central themes: youth.

"We have to invite youth into this discussion because they are the most at risk," Castellanos stated. "In Honduras in 2011, 7,000 youth between 15 and 34 were murdered. Of those about 4,000 were men and about 3,000 were women. Once found, many of their bodies showed signs of having been tortured."

Castellanos was not the only person at the forum to highlight the dismal reality that Central American youth confront. Geoff Thale of the Washington Office on Latin America spoke of the numerous threats that affect the region's expanding youth population. These include long-standing patterns of poverty and inequality, the disruption of traditional family structures due to migration, reduced access to education, and few opportunities in the labor market. Consequently, youth turn to gangs in their search of identity, stability, and family structure, which adds to the growing problems of street and organized crime.



The focus on youth in Central America is critical as the region's youth population continues to grow. By 2015, an estimated one-third of Latin America's population will be between the ages of 15 and 34. Currently, one out of every five youth between the ages of 12 and 24 in Central America neither works nor studies. The situation is gravest in Honduras, where nearly one out of every four youth in this age bracket neither works nor studies.

Driving regional growth requires educations and jobs for Central American youth. As Julieta Castellanos stated, "Education is the one unquestionable element of social mobility." If left uneducated and unemployed, the booming youth generation will not produce drivers of economic growth and regional development. Instead, youth will continue to become the region's chief generators crime and violence.

Central America is at a critical moment in its history due to crime, drugs, poverty, and violence. The reality is one where Central America's governments, often characterized by inefficiency and corruption, cannot succeed in operating solo to address the region's web of escalating problems. The geographic positioning of the drug trafficking route through Central America is unlikely to change in the short-term, nor are the levels of poverty or socioeconomic vulnerability likely to diminish.

Despite these seemingly dire circumstances, there is a prominent role to be played by members of the private and civic sectors.

"The U.S., including U.S. philanthropy, should do more in the region," said Mauricio Vivero, Executive Director of the **Seattle International Foundation (SIF)**. "What happens there affects the U.S., through trade, immigration, and violence caused by the drug wars and gangs."



Michael Solis is an OYE staff member. A version of this article appeared in Huffington Post on 6/25/12.

Living Healthy in Honduras



On Saturday, July 7th, nutritionist and personal trainer **Vanessa Faraj** conducted a seminar at OYE about nutrition and exercise to encourage healthy habits among the scholars. Here are some facts and tips she provided, adapted from her blog post:

Carbonated beverages and artificial juice are detrimental for the health. Each bottle of Coca Cola contains more than 11 teaspoons of sugar. Additionally, the brand of juice “Valle,” labeled as “natural,” contains more sugar than Coca-Cola.

The energy drinks that are so popular among teens in Honduras, are in actuality very harmful, because of the combination of sugar, caffeine, ginseng, guarana, and other chemicals. These chemicals raise blood pressure for fifteen minutes, thus creating the illusion of providing more energy for that time interval. Energy drinks are also linked with heart disease, diabetes, and even heart attacks.

Instead of energy drinks, opt for a cup of black coffee with a dash of ground cinnamon, a combination that is both delicious and healthy. If you need to sweeten your coffee, do not use cream; instead, use a teaspoon of honey or a sweetener called “Stevia.” Do not use brands like Splenda, Sweet ‘n Lo, Equal, etc., as they have been linked with certain types of cancer.

Another and even healthier way to provide your body and mind with energy is to eat an apple. It has been scientifically proven that an apple provides more energy than even coffee, since it contains a mix of fructose (a natural sugar for the fruit), fiber, and vitamins your body needs to start off the day with energy.

Here is a list of food one should ideally have as snacks:

- A sliced apple with half a cup of junket: Add one tablespoon of powdered cinnamon, then put it in the microwave for 30 seconds. And voila! You have the perfect snack for after exercise or when you want something sweet yet simultaneously healthy. You don’t believe that it’s delicious? I dare you to try it!
- Whole unsalted almonds: One portion is about 16-20 almonds.
- Celery with almond butter
- Celery with hummus
- Fruit salad

For the complete version of Vanessa’s analysis, please visit the following link: http://oyehonduras.blogspot.com/2012/07/oye-vive-saludable_5867.html



Vanessa Faraj is a Marketing and Talent Acquisitions Executive at KM² Solutions. She is also a nutritionist and a personal trainer.



Scholar Spotlight: Erick Estrada

Erick is seventeen, in his last year of high school, and aims to go to college. He has an older 19-year-old brother who studies computer science in college. He has five siblings: one sister and four brothers. This description could match that of any young, aspiring American boy in a large family. But for Erick the situation is more complex than it would seem at first glance.

Erick lives with his mother, who works full time as a teacher at a nearby Catholic school. She is also in charge of some of its religious aspects, such as mass and retreats. His brother works part time to help with the family income. The rest of his family lives separately: his three half-brothers, his half-sister, their mother, and his father.

“We communicate with them once in a while,” he said. “[We visit] one, two times a year.”

Erick joined OYE on his mother’s recommendation six years ago. OYE has taught him important values in life, he said. “At first, I thought [OYE] would be like other youth organizations that only help them economically...My first year, we had training and meetings for all sorts of things. [OYE] not only helps us economically but also helps us grow ethically, as people.”

Recently, Erick participated in the San Pedro Sula Marathon through RACE 4 OYE. For him, the chance to run a marathon was a “dream come true,” and he can’t wait for next year’s race.

Join the OYE Family...Make a Change!

When OYE first opened, we only had the resources to provide 5 scholarships a year. But thanks to people who believed in the untapped potential of the youth of El Progreso, we have grown into a multi-faceted youth development organization that empowers hundreds of youth per year.

By making a gift to OYE, you can have a tremendous impact on our ability to offer more scholarships and enhance our leadership development programs for Honduran youth.

Your support is only the beginning. Each scholarship liberates OYE youth from the path of gang involvement, violence, and drugs and allows them to focus on their education and development. The challenges that Honduran youth face today are not new, nor are they easily solved. However, OYE is helping develop a generation of leaders who are equipped with the tools and education necessary for making a difference. **We invite you to become part of the change!**



Check donations can be made out to "Organization for Youth Empowerment" and sent to:

Organization for Youth Empowerment
3351 18th Street, Washington, DC 20010

You can also make secure online payments on our webpage at www.oyehonduras.org.

OYE extends a special thank you to **KM² Solutions** and **LUFERGO** for supporting OYE with a donation of three computers for its Creative Room. OYE thanks **WeYoga** for helping promote the artwork of OYE's young artists.

