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Fueyo Helps Improve Education in Rural Honduras



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(St. Petersburg, Fla.) June 9, 2009 – In a rural Honduran valley amid the mountains of the Olancho region, Vivian Fueyo, PhD, dean of the College of Education at USFSP, will dedicate a week this summer to improving education for the children of the Agalta Valley. With the Education Director from Honduras Outreach, Inc., a U.S.-based non-profit, Fueyo will work with teachers and principals on aligning their curriculum with national Honduran standards and strategize on how to meet benchmarks that will help students advance academically.

Fueyo's involvement began in 2007 when local businessman and philanthropist Gerry Hogan invited Fueyo to visit the valley to support the efforts of HAVE (Honduras Agalta Valley Education Foundation) and see how her professional experience could impact the lives of the people in one of the most rural regions of Honduras. In 2008, she spent a week in the valley with College of Education graduate students from USFSP, communicating in Spanish with teachers in the valley and learning what they needed to improve the educational opportunities in a region with two elementary schools, one middle school and no high school.

"I didn't know what to expect," Fueyo said. "I didn't expect the level of appreciation and community support for education or the level of poverty."

The Honduran teachers expressed a need for ideas to increase student engagement and improve critical thinking while working without textbooks or material resources for the students they were teaching. Honduran teachers have groups of 40 to 45 students in classrooms where the teachers may have the only copy of the class textbook. Some students walk up to three miles to get to school where they can only spend a half-day in class because that's all the teachers will get paid for by the Honduran government.

Fueyo and the graduate students helped establish a support group for middle school girls – a group that has continued since last summer to help young women learn about the opportunities for self-sufficiency through education. Many girls in the Agalta Valley marry after middle school and start their families at age 14. Part of Fueyo's work this summer will be to advise the education director on the development of the curriculum for the new high school and to explore connections that can be made with the country's major university.

"My trip last summer confirmed for me the impact a great teacher can have," Fueyo said. "I saw teaching excellence and great dedication under harsh conditions. These teachers believe in their students and in the opportunities they can have with the right foundation."

Fueyo serves as chair of the Education Advisory Board for Honduras Outreach, Inc., and the HOI director and fellow advisory board members will also travel to the valley. The trip runs from June 20-27.

-USF St. Petersburg-

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