Her story:

Teacher delivers school supplies to Amazon River villages



Carol Czajkowski, Power Middle School teache

BY CAROL CZAJKOWSKI KPECIAL WEITER

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From Hights punctuate the landscape, I star lights punctuate the landscape, I star lights punctuate the landscape, I star light that I am flying over Central America, but where? Costa Rica? Honduras?

The pilot must be reading my mind because a few minutes later he announces that we are flying over Managua, Nicaragua.

This is one of the first entries in my travel journal. Where am I going? Peru, South America. What is my purpose? To deliver school supplies to villages along the Amazon River.

Last summer I spent a life-changing two weeks living on the Amazon River.

Last summer I spent a life-changing two weeks living on the Amazon River. There I learned of a program in which schools and individuals in the United States could donate money to buy basic school supplies for the children of the rain forest. Returning to school in August I apprached my principal, Laura Miner, with the idea. She loved it, and our sixth grade took on the task. We held a fund-raising week in February, which the Observer covered with a story and photos.

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Early in March two students, Kevin Boskey and Maureon McNell, handed me a copy of the Detroit Zoological Society newsletter. One article was titled "Amazing Opportunities Abound for Valiant Volunteers." When I read that the 200 was looking for volunteers to help deliver school supplies to Amazon rain forest schools through the Adopt-A-School program, I cauldn't believe my eyes. I thought, "Sign me up!" The timing was perfect. I approached my principal by placing the article in her mailbox with a note that said, "Can we talk about this?"

Volunteering would mean that I would have to be released from my teaching duties for the week, and I wean't sure what the district policy was regarding an opportunity like this.

Laura Miner thought it sounded like an interesting experience and that the timing was right, but I needed to secure pormission through Cuntral Office.

One week later I got the thumbs up! I was permitted to travel to the Amazon rain forest April 16-25. This coincided with the beginning of their school year. I couldn't wait to witness how the money we raised mys used. I couldn't wait to see the looks on the Peruvian children's faces.

I booked my tickets with AeroPeru, only to find out later that they had gone bankrupt. I was determined to get there and made a joke about walking if I had to. I found an alternate route through Dallans, Texas, to Lima, Peru, to Iquitios, Peru.

On Saturday, April 17, after boarding three planes and 10-1/2-hours flying time, I arrived in lquitos, but the trip was not over yet. I had to travel on the 100-miles by boat to get to the ExploroNape camp where our home base would be for the week. This is on the Nape River, a tributary of the Amazon.

I learned on the three-hour boat trip that we would be visiting 16 of the 38 adopted schools, would be among them.

Amner, our Peruvian guide for th

nothingi
Pam Bucur do Arevalo, the person who organizes
Adopt-A-School, puts us to work right away – no

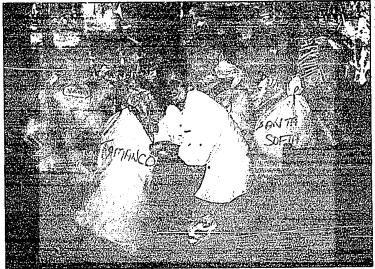
naps under mosquito nets or cold Amazon River water showers for

We begin by sorting supplies for the 38 adopted schools. Each school receives a bag of general supplies. The piles grow to mounds as we add: tape, chalk, markers, books, paper, maps, encyclopedias, soccerballs. The materials are put into a rice bag, marked and tied with a string. In addition to the general supplies, each child receives a supply sack with his name printed on it. Each sack contains: pencils, a sharpener, blank booklets, a pen, colored pencils, folders. All supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending them through customs. Also, buying the supplies are bought in Peru due to the expense of sending the expense of the expense of the large and the expense of the day. The kindergarten classrooms receive a set of assorted puzzles and educational toys. Each kindergarten supplies town the large through the expense of the largest reducts. The his department of the largest reducts the ledge and is the world's largest reducts. By boat' is the only mode of transportation here. We are greeted on the banks of the Napo River by the villagers. I don't speak Spanish, so a smile and "Buenos Dias" have to suffice. The villagers seem excited to see two hours. There are greeted on the banks of the Napo River by the villagers. I don't speak Spanish, so a smile and "Buenos Dias" have to suffice. The village, and the visit liast close to we h

Tuesday, April 20 - We visit Tour more schools.

Wednesday, April 21 - We visit Tamance plus three other schools. Tanance is the largest school we visit and one that Power has adopted. Actually, there are four U.S. schools needed to adopt Tamance because of its size. Today is a special event for Tamance. The village people get out their finest clothes and the whole village study, they do wear clothes like T-shirts and shorts, not leaves as some of my students think.

Villagors have opportunities to trade homemade items such as mini-blowgues for clothing. This is popular with tourists. A river boat brings clothes from Iquitos with which villages can trade their



Procious: Power Middle School teacher Carol Czajkowski helps pack supplies, provided through donations from American children Her students adopted schools in Peru to which the supplies

Crops.
Children and parents meet us on the banks of the Napo River. Students and adults line the path as we walk to their school. Pan begins the ceremony by introducing me and recognizing Power Middle School for raising the money. (Each attudent at Tannance also received one of more than 100 pencils donated by Power.) After Pam and Luis speak, I hand out the puckets to each student. There are smiles, handshakes and "gracias senorita" from our Feruvian friends. The children walk away studying the packets. Then pictures are taken outside.

Back inside, Pam translates my wishes for a Back inside, Pam translates my wishes for a good school year, the head teacher wishes their friends in the United States good health. We leave the school and wave good-bye as we board the boat for the next three schools. I am pleased that Power has become involved with this endeavor.

Thursday-Fridny, April 22-23 – We visit eight more schools.

more schools.

B Saturday, April 24 – We visit Las Palmas, the other school Power has adopted. The packets won't le delivered here until next week. School is not in session on Saturday, but we stop by to say hello to the teacher. The water is very high, so we must take a duggout canoe to get there. Since returning to the U.S., Pam informs me that the rivers are higher than she has seen in years. Many schools are flooded and have to put off the start of school until mid-june. We get snow days; they get flood days.

B Saturday-Sunday, April 24-25 – We leave

today and I am exhausted, but I am so pleased that I could be a part of the program. After taking three airplanes and opending 10-12 hours in the sir, I land at Detroit Metro. I find it difficult to sleep without the sounds of the rain forest. The rain forest can be a rather noisy place, especially at night, and it seems too quiet. I finally fall insleep, ready to return to Power to share the most incredible experience.

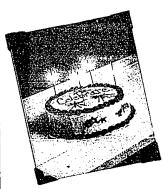
The communities' schools had different personalities. Some students sang songs and some didn't. Some schools were big like Tamanco and some were very small like Sukasari. Some ded us (whole fish and roasted bananas, fresh eccentric juice and coconut shavings), but most did not. Some were organized and some were chaotic. Soms schools were on the river bank and others we had to wade through the kneed-deep water to get to. One thing that is common to all schools, however, is that the children of the rain forest will have an opportunity for a better education this school year.

More than 3,000 children received basic supplies. I am really excited about the conservation issues that are being addressed and believe our money was well spent.

Did I mention the look on the children's faces?

Thank-you, staff and students of Power Middle School, for pitching in to help the children of the rain forest.

Carol Czajkowski is a teacher at Power Middle School in the Farmington district.



The finest Alft we give to future generations is the treedom we preserve today.

Closed Independence Day. Open Monday, July 5, from 10 am to 9 pm.

Here we are: Above is a photo taken by Carol Czajkowski during her trip to Peru. nate we are: nove is a paint taken by Carot Calpediski airing her trip to Peri She was able to meet some of the students that supplies from American kids will help. She spent two weeks living along the Amazon River in Peru.

SHOPPING HOURS . MON-SAT 10-9 . OPEN SUN AT NOON