

American

Accent

United States Embassy Tegucigalpa

November 2009

Volume 4, Issue 1

<http://honduras.usembassy.gov>

A Message from the Consul General

Greetings from the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa! This is our first newsletter to the American community in Honduras in some while, but certainly not our only communication: since the coup of June 28, we have sent 39 warden messages to Americans registered with us advising them on changes in the security situation here, as well as answered hundreds of phone calls and emails from Americans here and in the United States concerned about the ongoing unrest. We've also answered many questions about the State Department's "Travel Alert" for Honduras, with many wondering why the alert remains in effect though they haven't seen demonstrations or road blockages in areas where they live in recent days. Travel Alerts are designed to warn Americans not resident in that country that may be planning to visit it, to give them information they can use to make travel decisions, and to make recommendations about visiting particular countries during times of unrest. Demonstrations continue daily in Tegucigalpa, where there have also been recent explosions, while the continued political instability makes conditions unpredictable in the short term. The Department of



Douglass Benning, Consul General

State maintains close, ongoing contact with the Embassy, monitors the security situation daily and recently made revisions to the Travel Alert at our recommendation to reflect the current situation. The Alert can be viewed at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa_pa_4526.html.

The political unrest here has affected our work in the Consular Section, with non-immigrant visa operations closing on August 26 for all but emergency medical travel. We reopened on November 2, while our immigrant visa section continued to provide service to Honduran relatives of American citizens planning to move to the United States, unaffected by the August NIV closure. Our American Citizens Services (ACS) Section also continues to provide passport, report of birth, notary and emergency services to Americans here. In that light, this edition of our newsletter includes a description of the ACS work we do, a note on registering with the Embassy (in order to receive those warden messages), a call for volunteers to act as our Wardens in local communities, some answers to frequently asked questions we've received, and information on dengue and H1N1 flu.

It has been a difficult summer for the people of Honduras, and for Americans living in Honduras. I know that many of you have questions or concerns about U.S. and international policy related to the June 28 coup, so I would encourage you to take the time to read the Secretary of State's statements on Honduras available on the Department of State's webpage, www.state.gov, and on our Embassy's webpage, <http://honduras.usembassy.gov>

In this issue:

- Page 2 : Non-Immigrant Visa Unit Re-Opens
- Page 3: Wanted: Wardens
- Page 4 : Dengue Fever
- Page 5: H1N1 Flu
- Page 6: Peace Corps Project Success in Nueva Esperanza
- Page 7: Helping Hands for Honduras Coordinates Surgery for Children
- Page 8: Honduran Residency Information



**THE NEXT TOWN HALL
MEETING WILL BE HELD
IN ROATAN AT THE
FANTASY ISLAND
RESORT ON FRIDAY,
NOV 13 AT 5:00 PM.**

American Citizen Services—We are here to help you!

A wide range of services is available to American Citizens at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa. These include both emergency and non-emergency services.

Emergency Services include:

- Replacement of Lost or Stolen Passport
- Assistance with Arrangements after the Death of an American Citizen
- Assistance in a Disaster
- Jail Visits
- Help Finding Medical Services

Non Emergency Services Include:

- Issuance or Renewal of Passport
- Issuance of a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA)
- Notary Services
- Distribution of Federal Benefit Payments
- Treaty information
- Assistance in child abduction cases

The Consular Section can also provide information on absentee voting and Selective Service registration. The office maintains a list of registered lawyers and private security firms in the local area.

In addition to the services provided in Tegucigalpa, we offer consular services in San Pedro Sula. These services are for non-emergency American Citizen Services. The office hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The San Pedro Sula Office is located on the 11th floor of the Banco Atlantida Building. To contact, please call 558-1580.

The U.S. Embassy is located on Avenida La Paz in Tegucigalpa. The hours for walk-in services (passport renewals, notarials, and emergency passports) are Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. For a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA), please call to set-up an appointment. We are closed on Honduran and U.S. legal holidays. To contact us by telephone during regular hours, please call 236-9320 or 238-5114. For after hour emergencies, please call 236-9325 and speak to the duty officer who will be able to assist you. For more information on ACS, please see our website at <http://honduras.usembassy.gov>.

Non-Immigrant Visa Unit Re-Opens November 2

On November 2, the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa re-opened offering nonimmigrant visa (NIV) services in Honduras to all regular customers. Following the signing of the Tegucigalpa and San Jose Accord, the NIV unit re-opened for normal operations. Those whose appointments were cancelled following the August closure are being contacted by the Consular Section's Call Center to re-schedule, while emergency cases are still be handled on a priority basis. Regular appointments for new applicants will be scheduled on a space available basis.



The Embassy would like to remind all American visitors and residents in Honduras to register with the Embassy at:

<http://travel.state.gov>

Wanted: Wardens

Are you an American citizen over 21 years of age living in Honduras?

Do you have an email account and telephone?

Are you willing to help your fellow citizens?

Please consider becoming a warden with the U.S. Embassy.

As part of our effort to serve American citizens living or traveling abroad, the U.S. Embassy has a warden system to assist American citizens, especially in times of emergencies. Wardens are volunteers who serve the particular geographic zone where they live.

Usually, we are able to communicate with most of the registered Americans citizens in Honduras via email or cell phone. However, when there is an emergency, natural disaster, personal crisis, etc., we look to our wardens for help.

What kinds of things do wardens do?

Forward messages from family members who have lost contact with an American citizen living in Honduras

Check on the welfare of American citizens in your region during a natural disaster or other times of crisis

Notify the U.S. Embassy of American citizens who need assistance

Assist the U.S Embassy in communicating important information

Currently, we are recruiting wardens in all regions of Honduras. If you think you would like to volunteer for this important job, please contact the U.S. Embassy at

USAHonduras@state.gov and we'll be happy to tell you more about the program.



TRAVELLING FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

CHECK YOUR PASSPORT EXPIRATION DATES.

RENEWAL TIMES CAN TAKE UP TO 3 WEEKS AND AIRLINES SOMETIMES REQUIRE 6 MONTHS

VALIDITY. APPLY NOW!

Frequently Asked Questions

How much does it cost to renew a U.S. passport?

Adult passport renewals have a fee of \$75 and require a completed DS-82 application. Passport renewals for children under the age of 16 have a fee of \$85 and require a completed DS-11 application, plus the presentation of an original birth certificate at the time of the interview.

Those with a lost or stolen passport will be assessed a fee of \$100 and will need to present a completed DS-11 application.

How long does it take to renew a passport?

For applications made in Tegucigalpa, the current processing time for U.S. passport renewal is two weeks. For applications made in San Pedro Sula, the processing time is three to four weeks. Once the Vice Consul determines the eligibility of the passport renewal, the information is sent electronically to the United States where the passport will be printed and then sent back to the Consulate. Last year, the Consulate processed more than 1000 passport applications.

How much validity do I need in my U.S. passport to enter / re-enter Honduras?

The Honduran Immigration Service requires six months of validity on your U.S. passport to enter / re-enter Honduras. U.S. air carriers may refuse to board you (when departing the United States) if you have less than six months of validity on your U.S. passport.

How many blank visa pages do I need in my passport to travel?

Some countries require passports to have two to four blank visa pages. Some airlines will not allow you to board if this requirement is not met. Passport holders must apply in person at the Consulate to request additional pages. Applicants should bring the current passport. The passport can be retrieved the next business day. At this time, there is no fee for adding additional visa pages.

DENGUE FEVER

Dengue fever is caused by a virus, which is transmitted by the bite of an infected Aedes aegypti or Aedes albopictus mosquito. There is no vaccine to protect against infection and no treatment to stop an infection. Dengue fever occurs in the tropics and subtropics, between 25° north and 25° south of the equator, which exposes about 2.5 billion people to dengue infection. Urbanization, air travel and inadequate mosquito control programs are factors promoting the spread of the infection.

The female Aedes mosquito requires a blood meal for her eggs to develop. She prefers human blood to that of other mammals. She has an almost imperceptible bite and can bite several people to complete a single blood meal. Although she can feed any time day or night, she has increased biting activity two hours after sunrise and several hours before sunset. Eggs develop 3 – 7 days after the blood meal. They hatch 1 – 3 days after being laid in fresh water. Larvae have a pupation stage of 5 – 14 days before leaving the water and becoming adults. Female adults usually have their first blood meal within 4 days of emerging from the water.



Symptoms of Classic

Dengue:

Fever/chills: 39 - 41°C
(102-105°F) starting
3 –14 days after bite
and usually lasting
less than 7 days

Headache, pain behind the eyes

Muscle pain, especially in the lower back

Bone pain (earning the nickname “break-bone fever”)

Pink/red rash on trunk 2 – 4 days after onset of fever

Petechiae (non-blanching red rash)

Nausea, occasionally vomiting

Altered taste (often metallic)

Rarely diarrhea or symptoms of a cold



Treatment for Dengue:

Oral fluids (lots of them)

Rest

Tylenol/acetaminophen for fever and pain (avoid aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen and naprosyn)

Blood tests to diagnose (only turns positive after ~ 4 days) and to follow platelet count

Isolation from mosquitos – to prevent bites and further spread of the virus

Worrisome Signs of Possible Hemorrhagic

Dengue

Platelet count drops below 100,000

Abdominal pain – intense and sustained

Persistent vomiting

Abrupt change from fever to low body temperature

Restlessness

Severe sleepiness



The Honduran Ministry of Health has reported a recent increase in the number of patients with lab-confirmed novel H1N1. Several public and private schools have been closed due to the infection.

Novel H1N1 (called “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza causing respiratory illness in people. Study has shown that this new virus has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia, and bird (avian) and human genes. Scientists call this a “quadruple reassortment” virus.

Spread of novel H1N1 is thought to occur the same way that seasonal flu spreads: mainly from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Symptoms develop 3-5 days after exposure.



**WASH
YOUR
HANDS
OFTEN**

NOVEL H1N1 FLU

Symptoms:

Influenza can cause mild to severe illness. The flu usually comes on suddenly (within 1 to 2 hours) and may include these symptoms:



- Fever (usually high), chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Diarrhea and vomiting

What you should do if you become sick with flu-like symptoms:

Stay home and avoid contact with other people until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone

Call your doctor to advise them you are sick

Discuss whether flu testing or treatment with Tamiflu is needed

Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

Rest to help your immune system fight the infection

Take a pain reliever like Tylenol or Motrin as needed

Wash your hands frequently with soap or hand sanitizer.

The following individuals should consider taking Tamiflu:

- Those with severe illness (e.g. pneumonia)
- Children under the age of 5
- Pregnant women or those with a chronic medical condition

Emergency warning signs (need urgent medical attention):

Fast breathing or trouble breathing

Bluish or gray skin color (child)

Severe or persistent vomiting

Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen (adult)

Confusion (adult), lethargy or severe irritability (child)

Sudden dizziness (adult)

Not drinking enough fluids (child)

Peace Corps Project Success in Nueva Esperanza

Honduras welcomed its first Peace Corps Volunteers in 1962 and since then over 4,500 volunteers have served in Honduras. Volunteers have been engaged in supporting various development initiatives in partnership with government and non-government organizations, local communities and a host community based organizations. Working in both urban and rural communities have provided Volunteers opportunities for them to educate, share and transfer their knowledge and skills at the local level.

The following article was submitted by Peace Corps Volunteer Courtney Dunham from Eugene, Oregon. Courtney is an Protected Areas Management (PAM) Volunteer based in Nueva Esperanza, in the department of Lempira. The PAM project provides technical assistance to communities located in the buffer zones of prioritized protected areas so that people can improve their environmental and living conditions through education, conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. The PAM project is headed by Menelio Bardales. After her Volunteer service, Courtney will move on to serve as a USAID intern for the U.S. mission here in Honduras.

When I arrived as the first Peace Corps volunteer to the rural community of Nueva Esperanza, Honduras, my counterpart assisted me in organizing a community meeting to get an idea of the work that the people needed and wanted to be realized. We asked the men and women to write out a list of their most pressing needs. Written near the top, on both lists, was a need for better stoves. I agreed, considering many times I passed homes so full of smoke that I thought the house had caught on fire! The typical stove is a round, clay dish on top of three bricks with space underneath for firewood and no chimney.

According to the local Health Center, the number one health problem in the area is acute respiratory infection, further validating the need for better stoves. I felt a project to construct improved stoves would benefit the community in both morale and health. Also, because my community resides in a protected area in Honduras, my project goals are to increase environmental awareness and collaborate with the local people to decrease the damage we do to our ecosystem. The stove design which I learned during pre-service training uses less firewood and thus would help decrease local deforestation. Thus, we had found a good place to start.

The improved stove I learned to construct during training includes a small oven and is a basic design that uses materials found locally.

Because my counterpart is a woman and because I wanted to promote the women's status in the community, we were determined to incorporate a gender equality component to the project. So, of the many women interested in the improved stoves, we encouraged them to take the initiative and form the group "Women in Action". This empowered role was new for the local women and, at first, progress was slow as

they took much cajoling just to participate in leadership activities or games. Following these activities, I lectured on the different parts of a grant proposal and the women recorded on large sheets of paper why this project was important for them, their justification for the project, their goals, and their objectives. By the end of the meeting, we had our grant proposal. For some of the women, this was the first meeting they had ever attended in their lives and most were intimidated by the fact that they were going to be doing "man's work". Others simply refused to believe me when I explained THEY were going to construct the stoves.

With the brilliant suggestion of my counterpart, the women were organized in work groups of four. There were 56 stoves to be made and thus 14 groups of four where everyone was in charge of building the stoves in their group. My counterpart ensured me this system would work well because in a small community, when one has an obligation to a neighbor, it takes priority over most other responsibilities. As a result, there were very few incidents where all the women didn't arrive on the construction days. The small groups also made training easier for me. I was able to train each group, making certain that everyone understood and had a hand in the building process.

From writing the grant proposal, to collecting local materials, to putting the last layer of mud around the gleaming new chimney, the women were involved in every step of the process. Other stove projects have been completed here but never one that has actively involved the beneficiaries. Therefore, while these stoves won't last forever, the knowledge the women have acquired of how to make them will.



An example of an improved cooking stove and oven.

Helping Hands for Honduras Coordinates Surgery for Children

Submitted by Ronald Roll, Executive Director

Every parent's dream is to have their children grow up happy and healthy and full of possibilities. For parents whose children are born with congenital heart defects their dreams are quickly changed into just keeping their child alive and urgently getting them the help they need. In the United States, parents facing this problem have a variety of options regardless of their social or economic conditions. In Honduras, however, since pediatric cardiac surgery is not available, their only option is to look elsewhere, to another country, for their child's corrective life-saving heart surgery.

Last month **HELPING HANDS FOR HONDURAS** coordinated another Pediatric Cardiac Surgical Mission of dedicated pediatric cardiologists, anesthesiologists, cardiac surgeons, perfusionists, nurses and intensivists from five countries here in Tegucigalpa. This was our fourth cardiac mission since last September. The goal for these cardiac missions is simple: provide free, life-saving cardiac surgery to as many families as possible, as efficiently and safely as practical in a country where this type of surgery does not exist. The success of this latest mission is that 21 Honduran children received life-saving, open-heart surgery. We have already begun to plan for yet another cardiac mission later this year, hopefully during the month of November.

There will always be the need to bring children with congenital heart defects to the United States and we'll continue to do so, but by working together with the International Children's Heart Foundation and Gift of Life from Rotary District # 7260 in Suffolk County, New York we will be able to help even more Honduran children with congenital heart defects. Our website is www.handsforhonduras.org.



U.S. doctors perform surgeries under the leadership of Helping Hands for Honduras.

Peace Corps Project Success in Nueva Esperanza (Continued from page 6)

There was a noticeable positive change in the women as well. Many women who, at first, were hesitant to get involved in the construction, developed greater self-esteem and confidence and, by the end, were offering to help make the stoves for others outside of their group. The requirement for each woman was to help build three stoves, but some helped out with as many as 11. One work group was even paid to go to another town an hour and a half away to make the stove in the home of a man who was interested in the design.

With new stoves and a new oven, there are countless follow-up projects to focus on. Our next step has been cooking classes; learning to cook more healthily and using the oven. Instead of fried chicken, the women are preparing baked chicken or learning new foods like pizza! As the same fire that heats the stove heats the oven below, another enterprise is making lunch at the same time as baking bread to sell at community events and generating more income. Also, learning faster, easier recipes gives the women more time to do other things like make pottery, a traditional practice here.

As a Protected Areas Management Peace Corps Volunteer, one of our goals is to increase environmental awareness of locals who live within protected areas of Honduras. However, I realized when I first entered my site that people here already live sustainably, and I wasn't going to have much success lecturing about protecting the forest when the main concern on peoples' minds was if they were going to have enough food to eat. Therefore, this improved stoves project was perfect for Nueva Esperanza to reduce respiratory infection risk, decrease deforestation, and at the same time make life easier. A total of 56 stoves were constructed by 56 trained women who learned that it is possible for women to perform manual labor and to take their own lives into their own hands. There were many additional men, women, and children who participated in the learning process and there are well over 200 individuals benefiting from a home free of smoke; and this is just the human count! There's no telling how many trees were saved as well!

Your Input in Needed!

READER SUBMISSIONS: In our on-going effort to improve this newsletter and make it more useful to our American community, the *American Accent* staff is seeking your submissions of:

Letters to the Editor: In order to more adequately address the concerns that members of the American community have, we are looking to start a "Letters to the Editor" section of the newsletter. Any American who has questions or concerns that they think could also benefit the American community as a whole, are encouraged to submit letters. The *American Accent* staff will try to print and respond to those letters that deal with issues affecting the entire American community.

Organizational Profiles: In this edition we highlighted a number of charity and non-profit organizations through which Americans are working to assist Honduras. We welcome other organizations to submit a short (150-300 word) description of their group to the newsletter. In each future edition, we will highlight a different group.

Other Articles: If you have another topic that you believe would be of interest to the American community, feel free to submit your ideas to the *American Accent* staff.

Honduran Residency

Information

All American citizens residing in Honduras are reminded of the importance of maintaining their legal status within the country. Foreigners who are illegally present within Honduras (including tourists who remain in Central America past the 90 days usually granted upon entry) can be subject to fines and/or detention and deportation. American Citizens must have the proper visas to work in Honduras. American Citizens can not legally work in Honduras while in tourist status.

American Citizens who want to live legally in Honduras for extended periods must receive permission from the Honduran government. There are two options: Permanent Residency and Special Permanent Residency. Permanent Residency is for those who wish to live in Honduras for the long term. Special Permanent Residency is for people who are in Honduras for a limited amount of time and for a specific reason, like employment or missionary work. The Ministry of Government and Justice (Secretaria de Gobernacion y Justicia) oversees immigration issues. Although there are immigration offices in San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba, all foreigners must apply for residency at the Tegucigalpa Office. For information on office location, fees, forms, and hours of operation, please see their website at www.gobernacion.gob.hn.

The Embassy recommends the following:

1. Hire a Honduran lawyer with expertise and experience in residency requirements.
2. Make sure all of the required documents are in order before submitting your residency request. Delays in gathering the documents may result in having the petition dismissed. In other words, make sure your petition is correct the first time.
3. Translate all supporting documents into Spanish. Official documents from U.S. governmental agencies need to be authenticated through apostilles in the United States.

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Tegucigalpa, Honduras

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American Citizens Services

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