

HOW TO READ ATENAS TODAY

Many of the pages in Atenas Today are in two column format, and the default “view” in the *Adobe Reader* will present these pages in a large size that requires you to scroll up and down to read the whole page.

By changing the “view” to “**Full Screen**” you can fit the page to your screen and avoid the scrolling.

When in “Full Screen” view, left click to advance to the next page, or right click to go back a page.

If the text is too small for your taste, push the “escape” key to exit the “Full Screen” mode, and change the “zoom” level to get the size you want.

THE NEW YELLOW PAGES

Don't forget to download and save the latest version of the Yellow Pages. Many new businesses have been listed. This section will help you find the goods and services you need.

ATENAS TODAY

December 23, 2016



View of Poás from Los Angeles, 5 p.m. December 22, 2016
Photograph Scott Schlieman

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ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 600 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Marietta Arce at atenastoday@gmail.com.

Compositions from back issues are now archived on [scomari.com / Atenas Today](http://scomari.com/Atenas Today).



DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

New names and numbers have been added to the directory. With each issue Atenas Today subscribers will receive an updated file containing the names and contact information of people who have chosen to be listed. Simply download the PDF file attached to this Atenas Today email and print it or save it on your computer.

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to atenastoday@gmail.com

Publisher's Note



Greetings during this festive and busy December 2016! The years are going faster and faster and while in many respects it's been a revitalizing year, our family lost two beloved pets (Sol, 15 in August, and Winnie 17 ½ just last week). They were both treasured companions and will be greatly missed by us all.

I am eager to welcome 2017! There are many celebrations in store for our family that we are truly looking forward to enjoying together. We will welcome family and guests in the next few weeks and that is always a good excuse to cook up something special!

The Festival of Lights, the Angel Tree Party and the Dance Festival brought much joy to our wonderful community last weekend. All the volunteers are to be congratulated for another season of successful endeavors. We look forward to learning what surprises and projects they are working on for 2017.

At present, it is very important to stay connected to family and friends and really share in a positive manner at the yearly gatherings that take place. Although today's families are quite different from the families of yesterday, it's great to be able to continue some traditions and be flexible about others. Modern life is dynamic!

As we close out the year, I would like to extend a special thanks to our advertisers, our contributors for 2016, and you, our loyal readers who we enjoy serving in Atenas, today and every day.

Seasons Greetings and all the best for 2017!

Marietta Arce
marietta.arce@gmail.com



COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

This space is available for posting community activities for the following weeks. Please provide information about your activity or event to atenastoday@gmail.com by the 15th of the month.

December 24th – Christmas eve, businesses close early

December 24th (evening) – Hanukkah begins

December 24th – 6 p.m. Bilingual services at Iglesia Biblica (see flyer)

December 25th – Christmas Day

December 26th – Kwanza begins, ends January 1, 2016

December 26th – Boxing Day Observed by Canada and Commonwealth Nations

December 30th – January 2nd – Fiestas in Pavas (see flyer)

December 31st – New Year's Eve – businesses close early

January 1st, 2016 – Happy New Year – National Holiday

January 1st (evening) – Hanukkah ends

January 6th – Three Kings Day – Epiphany – Marks the end of Christmas

January 12th – Palmares begins their Fiestas, end January 23th

January 16th – Martin Luther King Day is Observed in U.S.

REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Every Sunday: Buddhist Book Discussion at Roca Verde (See Flyer this section) **Next discussion Sunday, January 8th - no discussions on December 25th and January 1st**

Every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday: Hatha Yoga at Colinas del Sol (see Flyer in this section for more details)

Every Tuesday, Wednesday & Sunday Atenas New Community (Changes in Flyer)

Every Tuesday: Atenas Mindfulness Meditation Group at the home of Barb Moss, barbsms@yandex.com#10 Roca Verde. All are welcome, attendance is free of charge (donations welcome), and no experience is necessary. The gate will be open between 8 to 9 a.m. Our practice consists of a half-hour meditation, a dharma (teaching) talk, and sharing. We conclude around 11 a.m., please plan to stay till then to fully experience the group energy.

First and Third Wednesdays of each month Recycling near CoopetransAtenas Bus Depot – January date to be announced soon

Second Monday of every month: 4 p.m. Abandoned Animals of Atenas Foundation meeting at Antaños Please contact Sylvia 8868-1386 for more information. Volunteers are needed and welcome.

Second and Fourth Sunday of each month: 10 a.m. in the Catholic Church in San Jose Sur, mass in English said by Father José Brennan Aedth.

Every Tuesday: Atenas Bridge Club meets at Don Yayo's Restaurant. 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. No partner required.

Every Wednesday: At 11:00 a.m. (Please confirm with Michele Clutter 2446-0664)

Atenas Wednesday Women
informal get togethers at Kay's Gringo Postres

Third Thursday: (January 19th) 11:00 a.m. Costa Rica Writer's Group meets at Henry's Beach Bar near Multiplaza, Escazu, lunch follows at around 1 p.m. Contact : Bob Brashears at bbrashears0@gmail.com



Buddhist Book Discussion

*****'

Every Sunday (no meeting 12/25 or 1/1)
Meditation (optional) 1:30pm
Book Discussion 2:00pm
218 Roca Verde, Atenas

A gathering for those interested
in Buddhism and Buddhist writings
ALL ARE WELCOME !

If you wish to know what book we're currently reading,
or if you need directions or any other information,
please feel free to telephone or e-mail:

Adrienne and Richard Baksa
2446-8509
adriennebaksa@me.com
rbaksa@me.com



ATENAS NEW COMMUNITY

Associated with the Tico church, Iglesia Bíblica de Atenas
facebook.com/groups/145046998883605

DESCRIPTION: Atenas New Community is non-denominational with a diverse congregation - Messianic Jews, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Methodists, Catholics, Southern Baptists, etc. The focus is on Jesus Christ and the Bible, not on esoteric and divisive theological differences.

SERVICES:

Tuesday - 6pm - Bible study in English at Iglesia Bíblica – **temporarily suspended due to health reasons.**

Wednesday - 6pm - English worship service at The Brook Training Center

1st Sunday of each month - an English translator is provided for the 9:00am Spanish worship service at Iglesia Bíblica. After 1st Sunday service many of the ex-pats gather to eat lunch together, either for a potluck or at a local restaurant.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

On the third Friday of each month at 6pm it's movie time at the Brook Training Center. Popcorn is provided. Bring your own beverage.

Early, early on **Easter Sunday** morning, we worship together at a member's home for Sunrise Service followed by a potluck breakfast.

On Christmas Eve at 6pm there is a bilingual candle light Communion service at Iglesia Biblica at the blinking light on HWY 3.

ENGLISH PASTOR: Steve Lucas - <https://facebook.com/steve.lucas> • 8764-8960

TICO PASTOR: Oldemar Artavia - <https://facebook.com/oldemar.artavia>

ADDITIONAL CONTACT: Judy Hickman • 2446-4791 • judy@proslink.com

DIRECTIONS TO IGLESIA BIBLICA: On Highway 3 at the blinking light

DIRECTIONS TO THE BROOK TRAINING CENTER: 200 meters north of Iglesia Biblica on the right. After going through the entrance gates, take a left and drive down the hill. Parking will be on your left and the entrance on your right. In the event of heavy rains, the lower parking area will be blocked off. In this case, please park in upper area and enter through the home.

Atenas Yoga Center

Class Schedule

Monday	8:30 am - 9:45 am	Hatha Yoga with Leah
Wednesday	8:30 am - 9:45 am	Hatha Yoga with Leah
Thursday	8:30 am - 9:45 am	Hatha/Vinyasa Flow with Clara
Saturday	8:00 am - 9:00 am	Hatha Yoga with Leah/Clara

Feldenkrais Method Classes

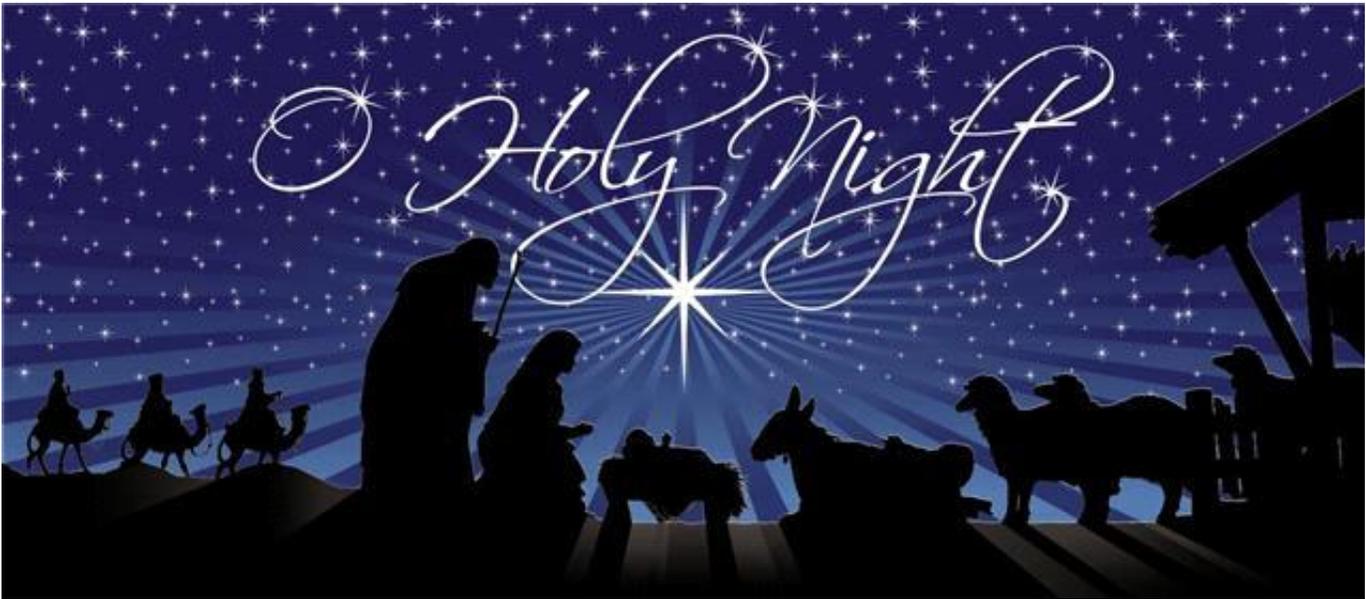
Wednesday	10:00 am – 11:00 a.m.	Feldenkrais with Rubia Santos
Saturday	9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Feldenkrais with Rubia Santos

NOTE: Feldenkrais Classes Finish on November 12, 2016 and resume February 6, 2017

Hotel Colinas Del Sol is located in Atenas centro, about 100 meters after the main entrance of the Roca Verde neighborhood, on the left. We are in the salón de eventos



All classes are 3000 colones or US\$6 Mats can be rented for 1000 colones or US\$2 Please wear loose and comfortable clothing We also offer private sessions. Contact Us: 8835-9853 • 8928-5497
classes@atenasyoga.com www.atenasyoga.com



Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 24! Atenas New Community in conjunction with Iglesia Bíblica will hold its 4th annual bilingual Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service at 6:00pm at Iglesia Bíblica at the flashing light on HWY 3. Come one, come all and bring your friends and neighbors for an evening of Scripture and beloved Christmas carols in both English and Spanish as we celebrate and remember this history changing event.

Fiestas Cívicas Calle Pavas de Atenas 2016-2017

Del 30 de diciembre 2016 al 02 de enero 2017

Viernes 30 diciembre 2016

5:00 p.m. Apertura servicio de cocina y cantina
6:00 p.m. Gran Exhibición de Caballos. Evento Gratuito; Cortesía de la Asociación Desarrollo. **DEDICADOS:** Rafael Ángel Anchía y familia. Familia González Anchía. Narrado por: Hernán Gómez y Oscar Rey.



2446-6020 / 2446-6002

Ciclo Deportes Atenas



2446-6463 / 8986-3281



2446-7679

Sábado 31 diciembre 2016

12:00 m.d. Servicio de cocina y cantina. Música al aire libre.
4:00 p.m. Gran Tope Semi-Nocturno (Salida: Finca Sergio Pérez, Barrio Mercedes de Atenas). **DEDICADOS:** Mario Castro y Sra. Alejandro Castro, Pablo Castro y Sra. Narrado por: Oscar Rey.
6:00 p.m. Música al Aire Libre, Recepción del Tope y Actividades para recibir al Año Nuevo.

Domingo 01 de enero 2017

10:00 a.m. Santa Misa.
11:00 a.m. Servicio de cocina y cantina.
12:00 m.d. Reinado Infantil mixto(Niños y Niñas) Rifas, Premios, Payaso y demás.
7:00 p.m. Campeonato de Monta con *Sensación Taurina*.
Narración Especial: Jorge Arturo, el popular "Canero".
Excelentes Ganaderías: Ganadería Joel Cepeda, Ganadería Guille Murillo, Ganadería Mario Arroyo, Ganadería Julio Sandoval.



2446-7537
8871-6234



2446-5141

Lunes 02 de enero 2017

4:00 p.m. Servicio de cocina y cantina. Música al aire libre.
7:00 p.m. Cierre Espectacular Monta de Toros y Rodeo Criollo". Montadores "Los Populares", Ganadería Fernando Agüero y Los Amigos de Tequilla, Ganadería "Los Hijos de Juan Vicente Herrera". Narración Especial: Hernán Gómez.
Barrileras con Cuatro Equipos de Rodeo:
1. San Luis de Turrubares 2. Los Scobies de San Pedro de Turrubares 3. Los Gladiadores 4. Equipo Ateniense.



2446-5234 / 2446-4018



8867-1738 / 2446-7362



Tels: 8348 9084 • 8348 9105
Fiestas Calle Pavas



2446-8585
2446-8989 / 2446-4020

DOGS OF THE MONTH



Fundación Ateniense de Ayuda a Animales Abandonados
Atenas Foundation for Helping Abandoned Animals
Cedula Juridica # 3-006-542026
ATENAS de Alajuela - COSTA RICA

SASHA



NOW ADOPTED

Sasha is a very loving and friendly dog. She is a mature and healthy lady and OK with most other pets but not cats. She is about 2 years of age, walks on a leash and is obedient. She is flea and tick free and has had a rabies shot and been spayed. She will keep your home safe. Sasha has much love to share in a forever home.

LYNDA



Lynda has a fun loving personality with happy greetings for everyone. She is good with other dogs and children. Lynda has been spayed, wormed and had all her shots. Give her a forever home and she will reward you with loving kindness and many kisses. She is 1-2 years of age.
kastnerm@hotmail.com

ANIMALES ATENAS PROGRAM

Stop by the community building next to the Fire Station on Friday mornings to see the animals and good quality used clothing and household items. Donated items are needed and can be left at Kay's or at our Friday mornings location.

SPECIAL NEED- FOSTERING

Foster volunteers open their homes and hearts to animals for adoption. Many of these are abandoned by the owners and are starving on the street.

Animales Atenas provides all vet care as well as providing food, treats and toys free to foster parents.

Animales Atenas does not have a shelter for abandoned animals.

If you are not able to foster and would like to help in some other way, we have other options for volunteering.

DORA 8855-9822
doritrebole@yahoo.com

Sylvia 8868-1386
AnimalesAtenasCR@AOL.com

The Naked Jungle Lives in *Mi Casa*



by Mary Martin Mason
marymason1946@gmail.com

Years ago Charlton Heston starred in a movie called *The Naked Jungle*, loosely based on a short story, *Leiningen Versus the Ants* by Carl Stephenson. Never known for his acting chops, Heston usually played epic characters like Moses, El Cid or Ben Hur, each portrayal identical except for the costuming. In *The Naked Jungle* he nailed the arrogance required for the lead role, Leiningen, much as he later did when he served as the hard line, tough talking president of the National Rifle Association .

The plot concerned a cocoa plantation owner, Leiningen, who resided in the jungles of South America. The movie tossed in a romance with a mail order bride played by Eleanor Parker who Leiningen immediately rejected as “used goods” when he learned she was a widow. He strutted around with his button unbuttoned down to his navel, and Parker displayed a great deal of cleavage. Just as she had tired of his haughtiness and was about to board a steamship on the Amazon to return to her home in the United States, a legion of army ants or marabunta arrived. The short story, without the crazy romance, more accurately depicted the stand-off against the ants that Heston with Parker at his side launched. The best part of the movie was the crunching sound of the ants as they ate everything in their path including small animals which scientifically is not accurate. The impact of *Jaws* on swimmers and *Psycho* on those fancying taking showers was replicated for me after seeing *The Naked Jungle*. I developed a healthy respect for the tiny insects.

Two years ago when I first moved into my house, it wasn't crunching sounds but rather, it was a soundless swirling mass of ants that congregated around crumbs that alarmed me. The ants, derived from 84 different genera in Costa Rica, were everywhere, even in my toothbrush and in my bed.



Queen exiting nest

Before resorting to boarding a steamship headed down the Amazon, I consulted the gringo population who offered multiple solutions that ranged from organic to nuclear. My Tico friends

simply recited, "*Las hormigas son tus amigas,*" a polite way of saying it is Central America, and no matter what you do, you are a tenant in the ants' house. They are the victors.

Civilized humans have inhabited what is left of our fragile planet for a relatively short time, about 6000 years. Compare that to the 100 million years in which over 20,000 different genera of ants have been on Planet Earth. As for speed, ants can outrun any contestant in the Boston Marathon. Each tiny ant could set a record in the Olympics for their ability to lift two times their weight. A colony would qualify for Mensa, their collective brain cells equal to the brain of a human.

Like us, ants are social, but unlike us, they would never hold an election for higher office. Without a lot of hoopla, the colony is divided between the queen, sterile female workers and the males. The males (sorry, guys) solely exist to mate with a future queen ant, while the female workers look after the eggs laid by the queen, seek food, babysit and defend the nest.

My first line of attack against my ant problem was to hire a serious fumigator. This tactic required relocating my cat who with me left the house for the day. The fumigator said I could safely leave the cat inside the house since she was not a Persian. That logic seemed illogical so I, along with Cleo who was my only cat at the time, vacated the premises, putting all my dishes outside and washing them after I was able to return. Immediately, I discovered not only ant corpses, but spiders, scorpions and alas, geckos. Six months later, I relived *The Naked Jungle*, a mass of ants greeting me in every room.

Next, I tried the TERRO® Liquid Ant Baits that I brought back from a trip to the United States. Just as dogs consider the cat box a source of their favorite *Hors d'oeuvre*, ants savor the sweet Terro® and return to the colony to share the bounty. The male ants die immediately, but the workers (remember they are all female and thus, intrepid) keep returning snacks to the colony. Not only do the targeted ants partake, but suddenly they have invited their neighbors, leaving a "trail pheromone" that acts like a dinner bell to other species.



Industrious leaf-cutter ants

While this method works, wiping out the seen predators and the countless unseen, it reminded me of being on the Serengeti years ago. A safari I took entailed following the wildebeest (who

give birth to 500,000 calves in three weeks during their annual migration) and their smarter zebra companions who accompany them to the Mara River. Here crocodiles and lions await them in a frenzied feeding that once witnessed, is forever remembered. The lessons learned in Tanzania about the delicate balance of life on our planet I transferred to the odious ants.

Next, I decided to go green. I bought expensive ingredients for potions from some guru who swore my problem would be remedied. I created a Frankenstein laboratory, mixing the dry with wet ingredients, spraying my cabinets. While I did not detect the crunching of the ants as they devoured everything in their path, sometimes I imagined hearing their laughter at this remedy. It appeared the ants were snacking on the solution without any effects. I surmised that a) I had either been duped or b) the variety of ants had developed an immunity to any such nonsense.

Rumor has it that coffee grounds, powdered chili, ground citrus peel, pulverized cinnamon, or a mixture of vinegar and water will repel ants. Recently an ex-pat blog offered the tantalizing tidbit that ants hate spearmint. Plant spearmint and stash it around your house, someone suggested to say *adios* to ants. After a visit to one of the many La Garita *viveros*, I planted six individual pots of spearmint that are now in various rooms in my house. My three cats munch on the salads I have provided them. The ants do a conga line around the plants that serve as little more than a traffic barrier. Even when I tear off leaves and drop them amid an eddy of ants, nothing happens. *NO PASA NADA*.

My most successful attack of the ants has been to hire a fumigator from Grecia who is known for ridding such landmarks at the Teatro Nacional of pests, all naturally. The cats were allowed to stay, and I sat on the front porch during the process, mainly because the spray is wet, not because it is lethal. The geckos lived to chirp about the experience, and the ants went to wherever ants go after they shed their mortal coils. This remedy, while effective, will be temporal.

Ants continue to teach me lessons of adaptability, a trait we must acquire to be successful expats. "*Las hormigas son tus amigas*," is, like Pura Vida, more than a platitude. The bromide suggests an acceptance of the Costa Rican environment; warts... make that ants... and all.

Pictures from Wikipedia



Christmastime in Atenas, Costa Rica is coffee season!

By Shannon Farley

Coffee trees are the quintessential Costa Rican Christmas tree – dark green, waxy leaves and bright red coffee berries on short, bushy trees pruned to stay small and manageable. The only things missing are tinsel and lights.

December is the peak of coffee picking season in Costa Rica. All over the green mountainsides at Christmastime in Atenas you can find workers (mostly Nicaraguan) carrying their plastic baskets filled with red coffee berries to collecting trucks. The sweet-sour smell of coffee beans being washed and processed is prevalent at the *beneficios de café*, or coffee processing plants. And when they start roasting, the rich aroma fills Atenas' valleys.

Up in the cool, green mountain neighborhood of San Isidro, El Toledo Coffee is one of only a handful of organic Costa Rica coffee farmers, and also has the distinction of offering the only coffee tour in Atenas – the El Toledo Organic Coffee Tour.



Gerardo Calderon Campos and his wife, Rosario (Sole) Vargas Ramos, their sons Raul and Gabriel Calderon, and Gabriel's wife, Ivette, all run the small family business.



At 3,609 feet (1,100 m), the higher altitude provides perfect coffee-growing conditions and there are at least 700 coffee farms here – although only seven families in a small association produce organic coffee on about 40 acres.

Inherited from Gerardo's father, Tito Calderon Gonzalez, 88, he changed coffee production after 60 years on the family's nearly nine acres to being mostly organic 18 years ago.

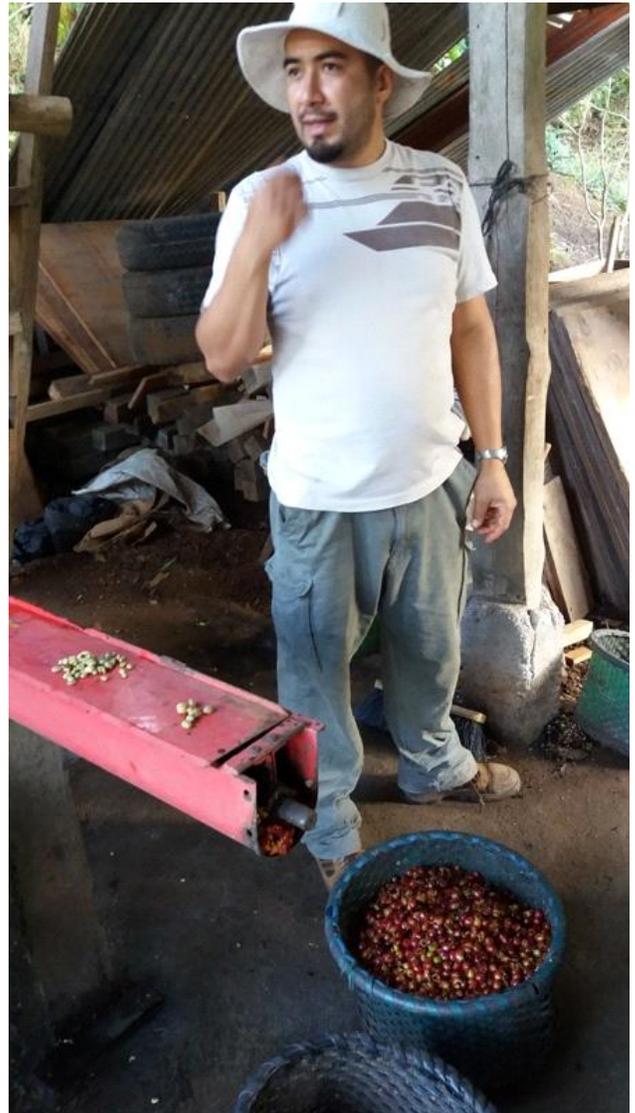
"In Atenas I am the only farmer selling coffee that is organic," said Gerardo. "Our motive was for health. It wasn't for money or a fad, it was for health. I realized that working with chemicals will lead to suffering later in life."

Gerardo then began adopting principles of permaculture – an agricultural philosophy of working with, rather than against nature. He began planting more species of trees and leaving trees in the plantation – mostly fruit-bearing to attract birds. The shade helps protect the coffee, the diversification lends balance against a monoculture, and tour participants love the bird-watching. He also plants beans and corn among the coffee trees for multiple crops.

"El Toledo Organic Coffee Tour, besides being a coffee tour, is dedicated to teaching people that we can live in harmony with nature," noted Gerardo.

The Atenas coffee tours at El Toledo are held daily by reservation. Contact them at:

<http://cafeateniense.blogspot.com/> or
<http://eltoledocoffee.weebly.com/> or on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/toledocoffeetour/?fref=ts>.



Gabriel Calderon explains coffee processing.

Cost for the two-hour tour is \$20 per person; and children under 9 years old are free. The very informative and well-done tour led by Gabriel (who is bilingual) will show you how his family grows coffee, processes the beans and roasts them into three finished coffee products, all right on their farm. You also will learn how to make the perfect cup of coffee for your personal taste. You can buy El Toledo organic coffee directly at the farm, from Gerardo at the weekly Atenas Farmer's Market, at Hotel Colinas del Sol and Vista Atenas B&B in Atenas.

For Gerardo, the tradition of coffee in Costa Rica has been a love affair his whole life. "My parents taught me to esteem and love the coffee plants because that is what gave us our livelihood," he said. "But I learned to appreciate a cup of coffee and enjoy coffee that we produce and grow here on our farm. It's the happiness of a moment drinking coffee with my family. It's love."

The National Theater of Costa Rica, The Nation's Cultural Treasure

by Michael Miller

If you ask the average Costa Rican, what feature of San José is he or she most proud, you will get two possible answers. Some will point to the national football (soccer) stadium, which is located in Sabana Park, about two miles west of the Downtown area.



The National Theater of Costa Rica is an architectural and cultural gem in the heart of Downtown San José, Costa Rica.

Others will say without hesitation, that it is the National Theater (Teatro Nacional de Costa Rica).

When you visit the National Theater, you will understand why everyday Costa Ricans are so proud of it. It is an architectural and cultural gem. And it is a vital part of the country's history.



U.S. President John F. Kennedy, on March 18, 1963. Kennedy is one of the famous visitors to the National Theater of Costa Rica

The story of Costa Rica's National Theater, and how it came to be, is a fascinating one. To understand this, you need to keep in mind that San José was not the original capital of Costa Rica. During the Spanish colonial days, the country's capital was the city of Cartago, about 15 miles to the east of San José.

When Costa Rica became an independent country in 1821, the capital was moved to San José. At that time it was a small, dusty, ramshackle town, whose economy was based on the hardscrabble agriculture that took place in the surrounding area.



The lobby of the National Theater, with marble floors and columns, offers a stunning first impression.

Then, in the middle of the 1800's, something amazing happened: The world discovered Costa Rican coffee!

Once that occurred, money started pouring into the Costa Rican countryside. Within a couple of decades Costa Rica's farms and plantations that had, for centuries, been barely surviving, suddenly discovered prosperity.

The successful coffee farmers, now flush with cash, typically did two things with their newfound wealth: 1. They built beautiful town-homes in the new capital city of San José, mostly in the area known as Barrio Amon. And, 2, they sent their children to Europe to be educated and to tour the continent.



Statues by Italian and Costa Rican artists adorn the lobby of the National Theater.

The rise of the plantation owners (known collectively as the “coffee barons”), created a class of sophisticated, educated and well-travelled residents of Downtown San José. As their numbers grew, these residents became keenly aware that their city was an economic and cultural backwater, especially when compared to the artistic and intellectual centers of Europe. They yearned for the finer things in life.

After many years of talk, persistence paid off, and the nation of Costa Rica finally decided to build a national theater. Initially, it was to be funded by a tax on the exported coffee. Later, a general tax was imposed to cover construction costs. Historians tell us that this is an important point, since it meant that all Costa Ricans helped to pay for the new National Theater.



Ornate marble staircases are decorated with paintings and gold leaf detail.

Construction began in 1891. After three years of mis-steps, cost overruns, and missed deadlines, Costa Rica hired a famous Italian architect who was an expert on building theaters. Under his guidance, the nation created a masterpiece.

When you visit the National Theater today, the first thing that will strike you, will be the beauty and elegance of the lobby. The floors and the columns are made from Italian marble, there are statues from Italian and Costa Rican artists, the ceiling panels are hand painted, the doors to the interior feature etched French glass. The effect is breathtaking.

You can visit the lobby for free. From there, you can go to the gift shop on the right or the coffee shop to the left. If you want to see the rest of the theater, you must either take a guided tour or attend a performance.



The most famous painting in Costa Rica, titled "The Allegory of the Coffee and the Bananas" was supposed to be a composite of typical scenes in the country.

When you walk through the French doors, into the interior, you will continue to be enchanted. Majestic marble staircases go up either side of the interior lobby. The walls are adorned with gold-leaf details. There are antique bronze lamps, which your tour guide will be sure to inform you, were electric lamps since the Theater's beginning. (Ticos are very proud of the fact that San José was the third city in the world to have electricity, after New York and Paris.)

Take the stairs to the second level and you will see the most famous painting in Costa Rica. It is "The Allegory to the Coffee and the Bananas," by Italian artist Aleardo Villa. This image has been reproduced in several places, most notably on the back of the 5 colones bill (that's right, a 5 *colones bill*) that was in circulation in the 1980's.

Ticos have a love/hate relationship with this painting. It is supposed to be a composite of typical scenes in Costa Rica. But your guide will point out that the artist never set foot in Costa Rica, and that there are a number of "mistakes" in the painting, including the bunch of bananas that the artist portrayed upside down.



The Foyer, which is on the second floor above the lobby, is an elegant room used for receptions and recitals.

At the top of the stairs is The Foyer, an elegant room that has been used for meetings, receptions and recitals. Here are more classical statues, elegant ornaments and angelic ceiling art. You will also see that the ceiling has a coat of arms for each of the seven provinces of Costa Rica.

Finally, there is the auditorium. This is laid out in the style of European opera houses, with seating in a horseshoe shape, that will accommodate just over 900 theater-goers. This is a small theater, compared to the grand concert halls of Europe and the U. S. But it's small size assures you that there is not a bad seat in the house. No matter where you sit, you are close and intimate to the performers.



Some of the angelic ceiling art in the Foyer.

The best way to visit the National Theater is to see a performance. I can tell you about a concert I attended a few months back. I was the guest of Jerry Ledín, a fellow member of the Association of Residents of Costa Rica. Jerry is an expat from San Diego who has season tickets to the National Symphony Orchestra performances. We sat on the second level balcony, not far from the Presidential Box, and had a sweeping view of the entire room.

During that concert, I watched as two symphonies were performed. The first was an exquisite piece by Joseph Haydn that required only strings. That was just the warm-up act for the main event: Beethoven's 9th Symphony.



The auditorium is designed in the classical horse-shoe shape, so that virtually every seat has a great view.

After an intermission, the entire orchestra assembled, along with a fifty-voice chorus and four soloists, to perform Beethoven's last symphony. From the powerful first movement, to the triumphant final *Ode to Joy* movement, it was clear why this work has inspired millions for nearly two centuries. I found myself shaking as Costa Rica's National Symphony Orchestra brought the work to its exciting conclusion.

The National Theater of Costa Rica hosts more than classical music. During any month, you may find performances of Japanese music, plays, folkloric dance numbers done by Costa Rican school children, or conversations with noted speakers such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias. The Theater has been the venue for meetings with U. S. President's John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan.



Costa Rica's National Symphony Orchestra, along with a chorus and soloists, bask in the applause after a fabulous performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

On the evening of October 21st, 1897, thousands of citizens of San José crowded the dusty streets and sidewalks near the new National Theater of Costa Rica. This was the night of the grand opening.

It was a glittering event that was attended by the city's elite citizens, by visiting diplomats, and by military men in full dress uniform. Costa Rica's president, Rafael Iglesias, and his wife, decided to walk from their house to the theater, and they were cheered by the crowd.



Soloists and conductor take a bow after Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

The performance that night was an opera version of "Faust" by the renowned Aubry French Opera Company. By all reports, it was a great success. . . . the first of many great successes at the National Theater.



U. S. President John F. Kennedy, makes his way through a cheering crowd and arrives at the National Theater, March, 1963.

The National Theater is one of the most treasured buildings in the country. Costa Ricans of all classes take great pride in it. For visitors to the Costa Rica and for expats living here, I will tell you this: If you care about Costa Rica, if you want to learn about the people, if you want to learn a little about their history and about their culture, the National Theater of Costa Rica is a must-see.



Members of the Costa Rican National Symphony Orchestra pose in front of a statue of Ludwig von Beethoven.

The National Theater of Costa Rica is located between the Plaza de la Cultura and Avenida Segundo (2nd Avenue). The Theater faces Calle 3 (3rd Street) which is a pedestrian walkway at this point. It is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Guided tours in different languages are scheduled throughout the day, and cost \$10 U.S. To learn about upcoming performances, visit the Theater's website at: teatronacional.go.cr

Michael Miller is the author of the only guide book that focuses on Downtown San José Costa Rica, titled: [*The Real San José*](#). Paperback copies are available at many locations around San José. An electronic version is available on Amazon/Kindle.

It's A Dogs Life...REALLY!!



Stories from Mr. BudBud, Primero Perro of Lighthouse Animal Rescue. They were written 11 years ago when he first came to Costa Rica for a house sitting job.

05-03-05

GUESS WHAT!?

Mom met an angel!!!!

On our trips around Grecia, when Mom would explain about doing rescue, people would tell us there was another woman here in Grecia "like Mom."

People had told us that there is a woman who takes in the street dogs and cares for them and finds them homes.

Well Mom finally found her!

Mom said her house was just FULL of perros!! She has gatos (cats) too!!!

Just like our house used to be in the states!!

She has some fur babies that are deformed, some that have been abused, some that are just throw-aways because they are too old to breed any more.

It sounds so much like what we used to have back home!!!

The woman has a daughter, son, and husband who ALL help out with the fur babies.

They are very poor but this woman spends what little money she has to have every animal spayed or neutered before she allows them to be adopted.

She has an arrangement with a local vet to have the street dogs spayed/neutered for 6,000 colones each. Mom says that is \$12.79 in dollars!!!

Mom is just SOOOOOO happy!!!! When she left their house she went to the feed store and bought two HUGE bags of dog food and a big box of treats for them!!!!

She is going back again this week to help the woman.

Mom can't speak Spanish and the woman can't speak English...but Mom says

"When your hearts are that closely matched you do not need words."

Today we went back over and took medicine and money to help spay/neuter some of the animals.

Mom says we need to tell you that the rest of this e-mail is pretty sad because it tells about some of the dogs she has there.

If you want to know the history of some of the dogs read on!!

One little dog has only one eye. Olga took him off the street after she saw someone kick him. When she got to him his right eye was hanging out. She took him to the vet and got him taken care of. Mom calls him "Uno."

One was born with her front feet deformed. Olga found her on the streets almost dead because nobody would care for her.

She runs on her hind legs but she walks on the wrists of her front feet.

She stands on her hind legs when she barks. She barked at MOM!!!! Mom just told her what a good girl she is to protect her mom like that and then made friends with her.

One dog just loves to lean on the wall!! Sometimes he walks along and scratches his sides on the wall.

Somebody dumped a mama dog and two puppies at her house two days ago. The mama died but the pups are doing fine and are REALLY cute!!!

Then Olga found three really little pups on the street and brought them home.

Someone found a black pup in a sugar cane field. They brought it to Olga this morning.

It was really skinny and it was eating the remains of another dog when they found it.

Mom says it was probably the poor pups' mom that had starved to death trying to feed her pups.

Mom says it reminds her so much of what we saw back home. Animals that nobody would help.

Anyway.....it looks like we are back in the rescue business!!

Mom couldn't be happier!!! She feels like she is doing something again!!!

Me and Mom are going over tomorrow to take more medicines for worms and fleas and stuff.

Talk to y'all again soon!!!!

BudBud the rescue helper!!!

Reading and Community



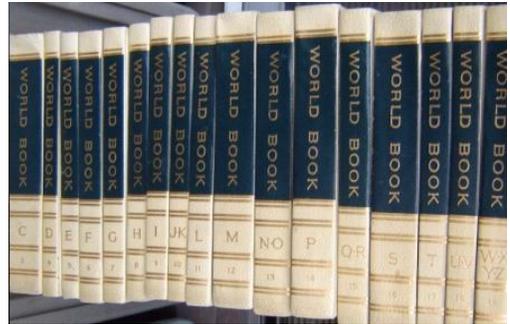
by *Marietta Arce*
marietta.arce@gmail.com

In 1965 my parents made a major investment when they purchased a complete set of the World Book Encyclopedia. I was too young to know whether it was a door-to-door salesman who approached them or whether they learned about it from the school we were attending. What I do know, however, is that the many monthly installments they made were given the same importance as paying for rent, food and tuition.

The complete set and its annual updates occupied an honored spot in a bookcase that moved from Brooklyn to Queens many years later. During our school years, my siblings and I reached for the books often because our teachers assigned homework on subjects that were not normal topics of conversation at our dinner table. I can even recall that many pages suffered encounters with scissors as I attempted to make my reports more dazzling than those of my classmates!

I am sure that if my parents were aware of how many pictures and texts were missing in those pages, the outdated and beautifully bound books would have found their way to the recycle bin long ago.

Instead, they still occupy a section in the garage in Queens that I was unable to tackle when I hired the 1-800-JUNK men to help me declutter a few months ago! Looking at their dusty pages brought back many childhood memories of simpler times.



Because I was brought up in a household where reading for work and pleasure was taken for granted, I was surprised to learn that Ticos don't read unless they have to! In recent years the Ministry of Education (MEP) and other organizations have made efforts to encourage reading but it seems we have quite a way to go. I was appalled to learn that there are only 58 public libraries in Costa Rica; that means there are too many counties without a single one. This is an issue that needs to be addressed. I now have a better understanding of why donating books to some households is not really considered a gift!

I have tremendous respect for librarians. I love to visit the library when I get to Queens because it is a safe and comfortable haven away from my home and its responsibilities. Visiting the library reminds me that being "quiet" can be a good thing, although in recent years as printers, cell phones and computers share the space, libraries are not as quiet as they once were.

The librarians in the Atenas branch are wonderful examples of love and dedication to books and to people. They team up with the local schools and the municipality each year to promote and celebrate reading and books. Limited space, however, means they need to constantly evaluate the books they can store on their shelves for patrons.

While doing informal research on foreign residents recently, I learned that some newcomers (especially those with young families) leave because of a lack of social and cultural offers that stimulate and entertain them. This is particularly true in areas where there are no beaches and limited culinary options.

Atenas boasts a rather large expat population coming from all corners of the world. Many are in search of adventure or just a different (quieter) lifestyle. These arrivals and departures in the last decade have yielded hundreds of books in English and other languages that have made their way to two places (Kay's Gringo Postres and La Carreta Restaurant) in our little paradise.

These two free lending libraries have made it possible for expensive reading material to be enjoyed by others instead of gathering dust in some box until transporting them becomes feasible or worse: they end up in the trash with yesterday's leftovers!



It is wonderful to see people enjoying the food at the restaurants and then taking books to read on a short-term basis and swapping them later for another literary experience.



Moreover, it is encouraging to witness how these two (and hopefully more future) venues are successfully repositioning themselves and becoming centers of culture and bridges to the local community. Recognition and thanks must be given to the restaurant owners for providing the space and to the volunteers who generously donate their time to label and stock the shelves for patrons who make reading an important part of their lives.

<http://www.sinabi.go.cr/bibliotecas/index.aspx#.WFwvJWQrI1g>
<http://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet01>

The Atenas Today Art Gallery

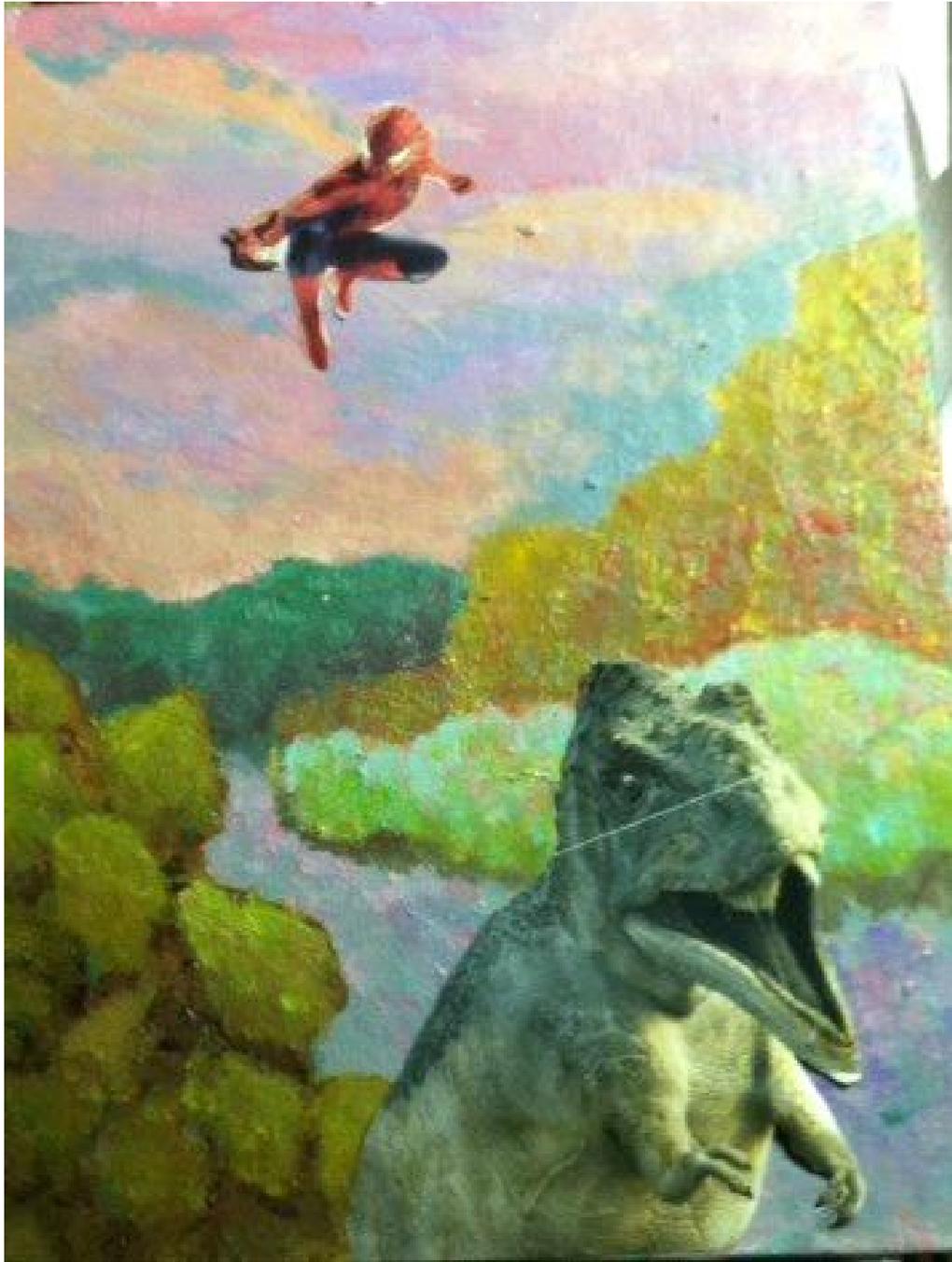
The Art Gallery is a regular feature of Atenas Today. Local artists are encouraged to submit photographs of their works to be included in the gallery, and to send a new picture each month. The artists may be contacted via the email addresses shown.



A Montage of Paris
30" x 38"
Oil on Linen

Artist's Statement: Paris, like Rome, is a city of art. I tried, in dream like painting, to get that overwhelming sensation.

Al Alexander
email: jeanandal@gmail.com
website: www.alalexanderartist.com



ANACHRANISM
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COLLAGE AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

Harriet Sheppard
hweyman@gmail.com



Artist's Statement: Just a little sketch!

Diana F. Miskell
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For the bloggers...



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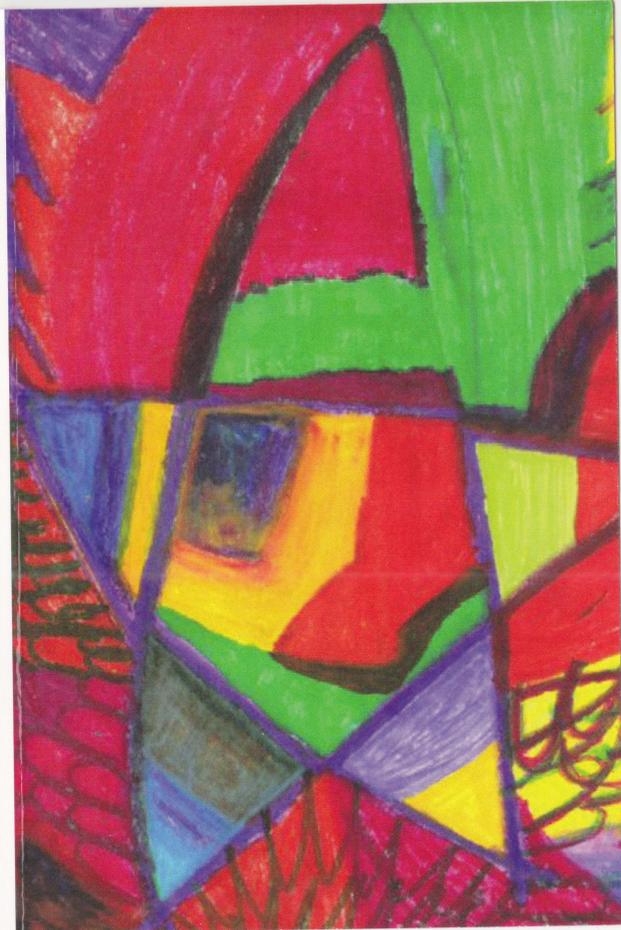
By Jocelyn Farquhar



JOCELYN is a lively and creative young woman who lives with her family in Costa Rica. Faced with developmental challenges, her imaginative illustrations are a form of expression that has continued to impress her family and friends throughout the years. Squibbles, a family nickname, is a collection of her whimsical designs. Part of our proceeds go to organizations that help others who face challenges lead bright and fulfilling lives.

JOCELYN es una señorita vivaz y creativa, quien vive en el hermoso país de Costa Rica con su familia. Haciéndole frente a los retos de su desarrollo, sus obras imaginativas sirven como forma de expresión que año tras año han impresionado a su familia y amigos. "Squibbles", un apodo familiar de Jocelyn, es una colección única de sus diseños vibrantes y llenos de fantasía. Una porción de todos los ingresos recibidos se designan a organizaciones que ayudan a otros a superar retos.

www.jocelynfarquhar.com





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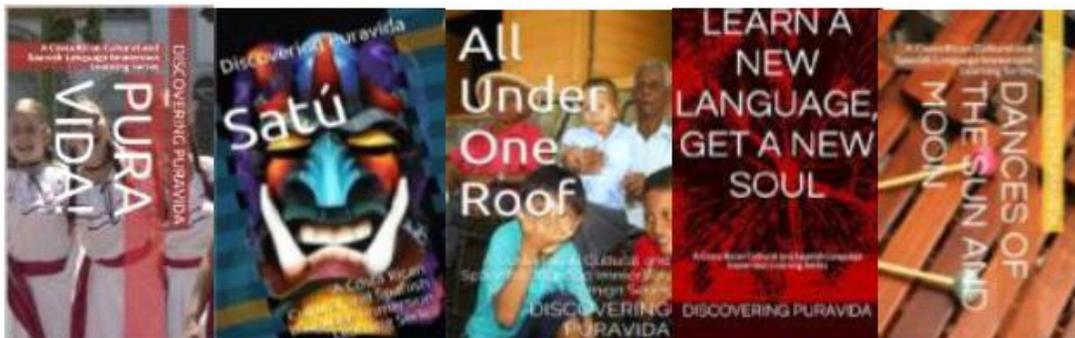
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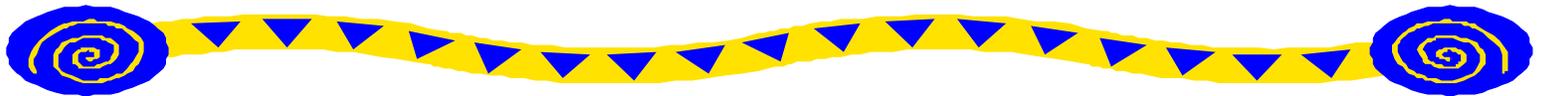
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