

ATENAS TODAY



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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 350 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at fredmac222@yahoo.com.*

Compositions from back issues are archived by category on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, www.atenascatuca.com. Click on the English version and then [Atenas Today](#) on the business page.

Atenas Today Interviews Roxana Gonzales and Fred Ball

Members of the Foundation for Helping Abandoned Animals in Atenas

AT: Do we have a big problem with homeless animals in Atenas?

Roxana: You wouldn't believe the number of dogs and cats that are abandoned everyday in Atenas. If we had the ability, the seven or eight members of our group could each take in five animals every day.

AT: How many animals do you have?

Fred: Right now we have ten dogs, including this little puppy that was fished out of a trash can, along with his five siblings.

AT: He is so cute and so loving. How can people do something like that?

Roxana: I am a Tica, and proud of my country. But people here do not have the same sense of responsibility toward animals that you find in other places.

Fred: I think it's also a matter of economics. Most people here cannot afford to pay the food and vet bills. The obvious solution is limit the population of dogs and cats by having them neutered, but that costs money.

AT: Do you both have backgrounds in animal care?

Fred: No, I am a semi-retired marine biologist and airline pilot, and Roxana is a botanist. We just like dogs.

AT: How did you end up in Costa Rica?

Fred: I was a pilot for Eastern airlines and was familiar with the advantages of life in Costa Rica. When Eastern went bankrupt in 1991 there were few jobs for pilots, so I decided to go back to my early profession of teaching marine biology, and I chose Costa Rica. It was at the University of Costa Rica fifteen years ago that I met Roxana.

Roxana: Until I married Fred, I worked as a botanist in Costa Rica. I was born in Alajuela, and my family is still there. Now I take on contract work.

AT: What kind of things does a botanist do in Costa Rica?

Roxana: Well, I have worked on projects for the natural history department of the National Museum, and have taught tour guides throughout the country about the natural history of Costa Rica.

AT: Where have you lived other than Costa Rica?

Fred: After we were married, we spent five years in the Marshall Islands, where I worked as a pilot under contract to the military.

Roxana: And I worked as a botanist, creating a botanical garden and helping the native people develop plants for food and medicine. We enjoyed our time there, but were glad to return to Costa Rica. Our daughter is now 13, and this is where we wanted her to grow up.

AT: How did you become so involved in helping abandoned animals?

Roxana: I can't stand to see animals mistreated. Someone once said you can tell a lot about a country by the way the people treat their animals, and I believe that. My whole heart is in this project

AT: Who else is involved in this effort?

Roxana: Many people. There is Dora, who lives near the Atenas dump where many animals are abandoned. She has 16 dogs and cats. There is Tammy in Sabana Larga with 14 dogs, and Isabel in Los Angeles with 15 dogs, and Virginia and others. All together we probably have seven or eight people who have provided homes for sixty or seventy dogs and cats.

Fred: We also get support from several of the veterinarians in Atenas, who will neuter animals and give shots at greatly reduced rates. Lleana, the vet near the feria, and Fernando Carvajal, the vet next to Roes, have been particularly supportive.

AT: Are you looking for monetary contributions to help with the vet bills?

Fred: We are in the process of creating an official non profit foundation, so that we can solicit contributions. Until we get this status, we have to ask people to give money directly to the vets. But most of it is coming out of the pockets of group members. The support we really need is for people to adopt the animals we have saved.

Roxana: Yes. In fact we are having an Adoption Fair in the central park of Atenas on Sunday, July 29, beginning at 8:00am. There will be many dogs and cats of all types and ages who are looking for permanent homes.

Fred: Even if you are not thinking of adopting an animal, please come. We will be holding a Patio Sale and a Food Bazaar to raise money to help with the vet bills