

MAKING OPPORTUNITY

Learning through Service



Hunter Tanous '11 and Domenica Peterson '08 with children from the Hogar San Francisco Xavier Orphanage in Guatemala

Hunter Tanous' experience with social entrepreneurship demonstrates the multitude of ways learning can be enhanced and stimulated through experiences outside the classroom. It also changed his life.

BY SHERI GRIMES

Hunter Tanous '11 wants to make a difference. The sophomore from Carmel, Calif., says he had always been interested in people, in different languages and cultures. He wants to work in a humanitarian field, with people who may not have had the same opportunities or background. So Tanous looked at various international studies programs, and after exploring the qualities of Pacific's School of International Studies, he made his decision: "I knew I had to come here."

Tanous is now the head of the Pacific Chapter of Ties to the World, a non-profit social entrepreneurship organization founded in 2006 and based in Lafayette, Calif. The organization's goal is to help orphanages become sustainable.

After learning about Ties to the World

through the Council of University Social Entrepreneurs in Pacific's Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship, Tanous and Domenica Peterson '08 cofounded the Pacific Chapter. They are working on a pilot project serving Hogar San Francisco Xavier orphanage in Guatemala. The orphanage, home to about 90 boys, also operates a school that serves 225 boys and girls from the surrounding community.

In early 2008, Tanous traveled to Guatemala with a small group to learn about the orphanage, meet the leaders and the children and explore business ideas to make the orphanage financially sustainable. Last summer, through a Pacific Fund Grant that covered the cost of his trip, Tanous was able to lead another group to Guatemala where they worked

on renovation projects at Hogar San Francisco Xavier and assisted in the school to allow the teachers to participate in a teacher training program provided by Ties to the World.

The group also came away with three goals for sustainability: to enhance education so the children would be better equipped for employment; to make the orphanage environmentally responsible; and to assure the orphanage becomes financially sustainable.

The business idea they are now developing was born out of some of the additional activities they did on the weekends, like going to a nearby lake and visiting an organic farm. They are doing a feasibility study to develop cultural immersion tours that would provide revenue for



the orphanage and allow some of the boys in the orphanage to apprentice as tour guides.

Tanous is amazed at what he's learned through this process. It has even made him appreciate new aspects of his education. "I'm not into math and was never interested in business," Tanous says. "But all the work we've done has really given me an appreciation for business." He added business and economics classes to his course plan.

Tanous says his experiences have helped him see the importance of setting clear goals, as well as learning to be open to new possibilities. Long term, he hopes to apply all the knowledge and experience he's gained through Ties to the World to working with refugees in the Middle East. He plans to study Arabic in Amman, Jordan next summer.

"They need programs like this," Tanous says. "Some refugees have been in the camps for multiple generations." They've been given food and water, he points out, but not independence.

"It's better to help them improve their personal capital," he says. "The things I'm learning now will help wherever I go. It all fits together."



PACIFIC FUND

Gifts to Pacific Fund support hands-on learning through grants for experiential learning, study abroad and community service. See www.pacific.edu/pacificfund for more information.

Top: Tanous poses with the boys after playing a game of soccer.

Center: Tanous on a boat trip with some of the other students on the Guatemala trip. Front row: (l.to r.) Kate Casey '10, Hunter Tanous '11, Domenica Peterson '08, Alana Pennington '11. Back row: Caroline Fantozzi '11, Molly Duran (University of Pennsylvania) and Jessica Garland '11.

Left: Tanous plays with four-year-old Eddy, the youngest boy at the orphanage. He was dropped off at the orphanage during Tanous' visit.