
Project leader: Almendra Kovac, Argentina, UWC Atlantic College. Team member: Valeria Guerra-Garcia, Peru, UWC Dilijan.

Peace is a sense of community and belonging. It’s having a support system to rely on, and knowing that one will be safe and cared for. Our idea of peace can be achieved through education and recreational spaces which open doors for a different future from the one imposed onto impoverished communities, providing hope and strengthening social bonds.

Argentina is a country devastated by high levels of poverty. 43.1% of people in Argentina are below the poverty line, according to official data. This economic crisis exists due to government corruption and the consequences of the Military dictatorships that tormented Argentina from 1930 till 1983. The “Algarrobal Abajo” is a community harshly affected by this situation, located in Las Heras, Mendoza. They lack proper access to many basic necessities like food, healthcare, water, electricity, and infrastructure. Most of the population of Algarrobal consists of Bolivian immigrant families who can’t vote, which means that the government tends to ignore their necessities. This community is located very near a brickyard, where the majority of the people work to survive. They are exposed to dangerous health conditions from their daily labor and are left exhausted and oftentimes sick. This leaves working mothers unable to care for or engage with their children as they are too weak to physically do so. They lack a space where the children can safely spend time while the families work, which, alongside scarce access to transportation, has led to an increase in child labor as the kids start working alongside their families in the brickyards. The younger population of El Algarrobal is exposed to stressful living conditions which often makes them turn to alcohol and drugs as an escape since there are no other outlets. This creates a pattern of alcoholism in adulthood that eventually can turn into violence and domestic abuse, continuing the cycle generationally. We hope our project can provide a safe space where the people of El Algarrobal can focus on their community, their education, and their health, helping to break the cycle and achieve a more peaceful future.

Katy Javier, a Bolivian woman who has lived in El Algarrobal almost her whole life, is immensely involved with her community and has been trying to create a space in her plot of land for people to enjoy and share activities. However, despite her hard work, her budget and resources are very limited. The space in which we will work has already been addressed by the "Mauricio Lopez" project in the past, with a budget provided by the UNCUYO. However, the resources obtained were few and many are now outdated. This is where “El Lugarcito” comes in: A space that builds onto what Katy has already created, taking advantage of the small building already owned by Katy’s family which she has opened to her community. She wants to see the children grow into people with dreams and aspirations who can see a way out of the brickwork and the poverty. The space currently has 20-25 children coming in daily, but it doesn’t have enough resources to maintain itself and reach more children.

Main Focus:

Our goal is to advocate for peace through education, community-building, recreational activities, and the incentivization of creativity. We want to create a recreational and educational center within the structure already provided to the community of El Algarrobal by Katy. This would serve our three main objectives.

• **Providing** a permanent educational and recreational space for children where they can stay while their parents are at work, therefore reducing the levels of child labor among the families and building peace through safety, reducing exposure to dangerous situations. Additionally, providing access to sports equipment, books, and school materials will be another way for children to explore creativity and receive educational support. Our goal is to reach and be able to provide materials for at least 50 children.

• **Facilitating** a series of workshops and activities in the improved multi-purpose space, which will encourage a sense of community belonging, empower its members and feed artistic vocation, adding to the peacebuilding process of breaking cycles of educational neglect in children, leading to a decrease in generational poverty, child labor and substance abuse in the long-term.

• **Providing** resources and a place of rest for the women and working mothers of El Algarrobal. These women, who are the community leaders of El Algarrobal, gather to make traditional costumes, organize sales and sew clothes together but are lacking the resources to support them. This space will hold the tools they need to continue their community activities and encourage them to keep connecting, allowing them to escape homes in which they might be suffering domestic abuse. We want to provide support for at least 20 mothers.
"El Lugarcito": A better future through community building and learning. Mendoza, Argentina. Ringling College of Art and Design.

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How will this project be carried out?

A. Working in an already-acquired space, we will develop a recreational center for the community. It will be filled with supplies purchased with the grant to motivate the arts, sports, and studies. We will work alongside two representatives:

- Katy Javier: As a community member, she has a deep understanding of how to best motivate and engage with the community while meeting their expectations and needs. Her role will be to act as a link from us to the people of El Algarrobal, to enable effective and active communication. She is also the owner of the space that we will be building onto.

- Rosana Vazquez: A project manager who has been heavily involved in working with this community for years, helps Katy connect with the legal and bureaucratic framework of Mendoza to achieve support for necessary projects.

B. The money obtained from the Davis grant would directly go into:

- Purchasing educational materials, toys, and art materials to incentivize creativity.
- Purchasing hygiene products.
- Transportation of teachers from local Mendoza schools as well as other volunteering educators during the training and workshop facilitation portion of the project.
- Infrastructure elements that are needed, such as chairs, tables, shelves, and a small oven.
- Purchasing a sewing machine for the women of Algarrobal to continue their community-driven projects.
- Any remaining money will go directly to the community to use as they see fit.

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<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>PROCESS</th>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOME</th>
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| Week 1-2 | **Before arrival:**  
| Days 1-7 | • Organizing a detailed calendar of activities.  
| Days 8-14 | • Purchasing necessary goods.  
| Days 1-7 | • Arriving in the community and checking in with Katy.  
| Days 8-14 | • Distribution of materials between Katy’s space and Gesti6n Nativa: Preparation of the space to receive people.  
| Days 1-7 | • Re-establishing contact with selected Mendocinian artists and professors with teaching experience who will be helping us to facilitate workshops.  
| Days 8-14 | • Facilitation of the first workshops and activities, including but not limited to: Creative writing, Arts and Crafts, Theater improvisation, Sports, and Games.  
| Days 1-7 | • To obtain supplies deemed necessary by the volunteering teachers for workshop facilitation.  
| Days 8-14 | • Purchasing books, art supplies, toys, and sports supplies to create an enjoyable space in which children can be children.  
| Days 1-7 | • To have El Lugarcito be a functioning space with all the purchased materials in place and ready for use.  
| Days 8-14 | • Starting to establish wider and more prevalent community relationships and support nets. |
| Week 2-3 | • Continuation of training and workshops.  
| • Identification and problem-solving meetings of possible issues that might arise.  
| • Dialogue and checkpoints with the Algarrobal community to receive direct feedback.  
| • Furthering skills that can be helpful for young people’s empowerment, opening them to career opportunities different from the imposed hard manual labor.  
| • Accountability and understanding of the community response and possibly overlooked needs or complications. |
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<th>Week 3-4</th>
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<td>• Finalization of training and workshops.</td>
<td>• A more connected community with broadened horizons and learning possibilities that will be more likely to continue building onto the space.</td>
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<td>• Wrapping up, conversing, and establishing the availability of the space for everybody’s continuous use.</td>
<td>• A functional and multi-use space for El Algarrobal.</td>
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<td>• Final art activity in which the space will be decorated by facilitators and children in the form of a simple mural.</td>
<td>• A space where children can spend their time instead of having to work, reducing the possibility of becoming endangered both physically and psychologically.</td>
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<td>• Encouragement and provision of materials to continue learning.</td>
<td>• A space where the women of El Algarrobal can gather and access resources to continue their community-driven activities.</td>
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Future Impact:

• Improve mental and physical health, socialization, and schooling of the children and teenagers of El Algarrobal.
• Building peace through safety by reducing child labor, alcoholism, and drug abuse, leading to less prominent domestic and street violence.
• Empower the women of El Algarrobal and make them feel supported in their efforts to help their community.
• Facilitate the empowerment of community members who feel like they do not influence their present and future.

Sustainability:

• The participation of highly motivated community members and outside supervisors will ensure that the space continues fulfilling its purpose and that the resources are utilized effectively to increase the economic income and to support future funding. Katy has already led football matches, bake sales, and clothing sales but has expressed a need for new resources with which to work, and for support to gather and encourage other community members.
• The collaboration with Gesti6n Nativa (a non-profit organization already working with El Algarrobal) and a nearby high school will facilitate secondary spaces for the storage of goods and the conduction of some workshops and activities, as well as another layer of accountability.
• Photographic and video documentation of the process to facilitate obtaining future grants and organizations’ support aided by the project leader’s previous documentary experience as a Ringling College Film student.

Personal connection and role:

• Being from Latin America, with the project leader being from Mendoza, we have an already established cultural understanding that will help make the project grounded and community-based. This will also allow for there to be no language barrier, making communication easy and effective.
• Having volunteered with El Algarrobal previously, and visited during the Winter break, while maintaining constant contact with the community members, has provided us with an understanding of their situation and their desires.
• The project leader, Almendra was born and raised in Mendoza. Therefore, she has a deep-rooted connection to its population and culture, along with a strong desire to make a difference in the poverty, neglect, and injustices she observed growing up. She is aware of her privileged situation in which she has been able to obtain full scholarships to study abroad and wishes to take advantage of this privilege to bring back to her community.
• Valeria, the team member, has worked in organizations helping Latin American children for a long time. Having grown up in Peru, a place of deep economic instability, she has seen the effects of hopelessness, poverty, and government neglect in similar communities. Having worked as Operation Smile’s Latin American Student volunteer group’s Peruvian representative, she has directly seen the need for Latin American countries to support each other and has learned the importance of non-invasive community work which comes from a place of mutual understanding, open communication, and no hierarchies.
• Our role will be to help facilitate the workshops planned and to bring in the materials that the community needs, checking in on their impact and durability afterward. It is part of the project’s objective for it to be community driven, therefore ensuring that it will not be invasive to El Algarrobal.