



From eco-phobic... to eco-philía

Andy Slavin

Have you ever started a school? How hard could it be, right? How about a bilingual school? No problem, right? How about a bilingual, ecologically minded school in Mexico, that has an extensive scholarship program for local children. Seriously, a walk in the park, right?!

Crazy as it may sound, this is exactly what two mothers did in 2007 in the small coastal town of Sayulita, Mexico. The first year finished with 30 students, and today, our last day of school for the 2014-15 school year, there are 160 students. An incredible feat!

Meet Tamra Boltjes and Anne Menke, two extraordinary people. In 2007 their children were attending a small pre-school in

Sayulita and they were faced with an uncertain future in terms of where their children would continue their education. Both were committed to staying in Sayulita, the place both their families called home, but the prospect of their children attending public school or having to drive 45-60 minutes to a school outside of Sayulita was of no interest to either of them. So,

they did what any normal parents would do, they started a school. Welcome to the birth of Costa Verde International School (CVIS)!

CVIS is not your average international school. Though nearly half of the students who attend the school are foreigners (US, Canada, France, Bermuda, Russia, New Zealand), the true core of this school is the local students. The school is fiercely committed to offering something extraordinary to the local children of this town, and, for the past 7 years, the school has exhaustively raised money to support these children—through numerous fundraisers and the new Adopt-a-scholar program which started 3 years ago. The founders, Anne and Tamra, don't like to say no to any family who wants to give their children a brighter future, so fundraising is something we do every day at the school.

There is more to the school



than just a bilingual education. The school is firmly committed to making a difference in this community: from your usual beach cleanups to tackling some of the more serious environmental challenges of this small town, CVIS students are the new stewards of Sayulita. This stewardship does not come from a mandated curriculum, but it flows forward from the connection these students have to their local environment. Our first priority at CVIS is to nurture a genuine love



of the natural world (from eco-phobia to eco-philia), to give children the experiences where they say, "Wow, nature is so awesome!" From this connection flows a genuine desire to want to protect and nurture the things they love. We accomplish this by offering an ecology program that includes gardening, worm farming, community outreach,



participation in the Roots and Shoots program (started by Jane Goodall), and a weekly surfing program for students in grades 4-6. For us, stewardship is a natural expression of the love we have for the natural world, and from stewardship comes hope. And above all, we want our students to have hope for a better, more loving and caring future.