Whole Planet Foundation (WPF) funds microlending programs in Costa Rica where EARTH University grows Whole Trade bananas, which are sold in Whole Foods Market (WFM) stores. WPF is a WFM nonprofit whose mission is to alleviate poverty by funding microlending programs where WFM sources products as a way to alleviate poverty and give back to our global communities.

Through the WFM Team Member Volunteer Program, WFM gives Team Members the unique opportunity to travel abroad to learn about WPF and meet microcredit clients, see where and how WFM products are grown, provide community service, experience and learn from other cultures, and challenge themselves by exploring exciting countries around the globe.
Visit with WFM supplier partner New Chapter at their biodynamic farm, Finca Luna Nueva, in Chachagua.

Rest and relaxation on the Pacific at the end of the program.

Community service project with WFM supplier partner EARTH University and visit with WPF microlending partner Asociación Costa Rica Grameen in Guácimo.
14 WFM Team Member Volunteers traveled to Costa Rica to volunteer in La Argentina, a community near EARTH University, where WFM sources Whole Trade bananas. The volunteers refurbished a Women’s Community Center. They visited with microcredit clients of WPF partner Asociación Costa Rica Grameen and learned about the Whole Trade bananas grown at EARTH University, which are sold in WFM stores. They also visited New Chapter’s original biodynamic farm where they learned about the properties of many medicinal plants and biodynamic farming. Team members took Spanish lessons and gained knowledge about Costa Rican culture, food, traditions, and dance.

**TEAM**

Caitlin O’Donnell, Rocky Mountain Region, SouthGlenn Store  
Daniel Metzger, Northeast Region, Manhasset Store  
Erin Beattie, Midwest Region, Midtown Detroit Store  
Jillian Tkachuk, Mid-Atlantic Region, Plymouth Meeting Store  
Julie Hayward, South Region, Asheville Store  
Katherine McKenzie, Pacific Northwest Region, Burnaby Store  
Kathy Nordstrom, Midwest Region, Saint Paul Store  
Kinsey Helfrich, Rocky Mountain Region, Fort Collins Store  
Lynn Bowers, North Atlantic Region, Nashua Store  
Robin Heiner, Pacific Northwest, Interbay Store  
Shaun Christiansen, Southern Pacific Region, Oxnard Store  
Meredith Danielle Earles, Florida Region, Winter Park North Store  
Karissa Rapp, Rocky Mountain Region, Cherry Creek Store  
Jessica Nelson, Southwest Region, Highland Park Store

**GROUP COORDINATOR**  
Christopher Picado

**GUIDES**  
Christopher Picado  
Mario Davis  
Victor Rodriguez

**PROJECT COORDINATOR**  
Christopher Picado

**WFM TEAM MEMBER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGER**  
Genie Bolduc
2018 COSTA RICA ITINERARY
AUGUST 20 - SEPTEMBER 3

ITINERARY- 2 WEEKS

Day 1 - Monday, August 20 - Arrived in San José and were transported to EARTH University near Guácimo.

Day 2 - Tuesday, August 21 - The volunteers visited the banana plantation and banana packing plant, learning about the relationship between EARTH University and Whole Foods Market. In the afternoon they visited the organic farm and the integrated dairy farm, had dinner, and then attended Spanish class.

Day 3 - Wednesday, August 22 - The team participated in an EARTH University workshop and then visited with Whole Planet Foundation micro lending partner Asociación Costa Rica Grameen and microcredit clients whose loans were funded by WPF in Guácimo. In the evening they attended Spanish lessons.

Day 4 - Thursday, August 23 - The team visited and learned about the waste management program at EARTH University. They attended a workshop at peri-urban agriculture project and later visited with Whole Planet Foundation micro lending partner Asociación Costa Rica Grameen and microcredit clients whose loans were funded by WPF. In the evening, the team was part of a special dinner and cultural celebration.

Day 5 - Friday, August 24 - The team started their home stays in the La Argentina community and provided community service in the Río Jiménez Community, rebuilding a Community Center.

Day 6 - Saturday, August 25 - The team started their home stays in the La Argentina community and provided community service in the Río Jiménez Community, rebuilding a Women’s Community Center.

Day 7 - Sunday, August 26 - The team participated in home stays in the La Argentina community and provided community service in the Río Jiménez Community, rebuilding a Community Center.

Day 8 - Monday, August 27 - The team participated in home stays in the La Argentina community and provided community service in the Río Jiménez Community, rebuilding a Community Center.

Day 9 - Tuesday, August 28 - The team participated in home stays in the La Argentina community and provided community service in the Río Jiménez Community, rebuilding a Community Center.

Day 10 - Wednesday, August 29 - The team members left for Finca Luna Nueva, New Chapter’s biodynamic farm, where they participated in a sacred seeds tour.

Day 11 - Thursday, August 30 - The team had a farm tour, a chocolate tour, and a night jungle nature walk at Finca Luna Nueva.

Day 12 - Friday, August 31 - Team members left for the beach on the Pacific coast.

Day 13 - Saturday, September 1 - The team spent a day of free time at the beach together.

Day 14 - Sunday, September 2 - They got to spend a half day at the beach and headed back to San José for their morning flights.

Day 15 - Monday, September 3 - Everyone headed home from San José.
Asociación Costa Rica Grameen (ACRG) began operations in 2006 as a partnership between Grameen Trust and Whole Planet Foundation. Whole Planet Foundation was the original ACRG startup funder and has disbursed over $3.6 million to ACRG since 2006. After the start of the project ACRG has been able to raise funds from other sources such as the Costa Rican Development Bank and Oikocredit. ACRG borrowers mainly participate in small enterprise, mostly commercial activities such as small stores, raising pigs and chickens, cheese-making, handicrafts or food preparation.

The team visited microcredit clients whose loans were funded by WPF through Asociación Costa Rica Grameen, with the opportunity to ask them about their businesses, their challenges, and successes.

Whole Planet Foundation has supported Asociación Costa Rica Grameen since 2006, funding $3,612,129 to support their microlending programs in Costa Rica. ACRG has a 98% repayment rate and WPF helped fund 18,054 new borrowers. The dollars continue to circulate in the community with 5,988 active borrowers as of December of 2018.*

*As of 12/31/2018
In 2008 WFM provided funding to EARTH University to research organic banana farming methods. The goal isn’t necessarily to get to 100% organic, but rather to change some of their practices. The bananas that Whole Foods Market imports from EARTH University are not classified as organic. However, EARTH University’s non-organic farming practices are safer and more sustainable than conventional organic methods.

The Whole Foods Market Board of Directors visited EARTH prior to our partnership, and came to understand, respected, and support what they saw at EARTH. The board respected EARTH’s mission of education, fair trade, and sustainable practices and chose to buy bananas through EARTH to be sold in WFM. When WFM customers buy EARTH bananas, they are supporting scholarships for students from all over the world to learn sustainable agricultural practices and to bring those practices home with them.
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
CACAO FERMENTATION

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

WHOLE PLANET FOUNDATION®
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
EARTH University is full of natural wonders which the staff of EARTH shared with the team through nature walks to observe natural phenomena.
The team spent time at Finca Luna Nueva, New Chapter’s original biodynamic farm where they learned about the properties of medicinal plants and biodynamic farming, participated in a night nature walk and experienced all the natural wonders of this beautiful property adjacent to a nature preserve. At the Turtle Conservation Project they helped release baby turtles into the ocean.
The volunteers refurbished a women's community center, Casa de la Mujer Grupo “Amagra”, in the small town of La Argentina, which is used for entrepreneurial activities such as jewelry making and crafting. The team replaced the ceiling, built a patio and awning, did lots of sanding, scraping, and cleaning, and painted inside and out, including the creation of a mural.
THE HOME STAYS & CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Team members were split up and housed in 8 different fincas (farms) in the La Argentina community. “Going into it was nerve racking and I thought it was going to be the longest five days of my life. I was wrong. Very wrong. Chepita, our house mother was the sweetest, most patient and giving lady. The language barrier became less and less of an issue, and we found our own ways to communicate with each other. We learned, laughed, and definitely ate with each other like we had known each other for years. While staying in the community, we were given so much, not just materially, but more importantly, emotionally and mentally.” The team also participated in Spanish lessons and were enriched with additional cultural experiences such as the introduction to Costa Rican cuisine during their home stays.
“It was such an amazing, life-changing experience. It opened my eyes and made the world a smaller place. Meeting and spending time with the women that receive the microloans was my favorite part. The joy and happiness that I could feel from them was so heart-felt. Hearing their stories and how a tiny amount of money can impact these women and their families, it’s just amazing and inspiring. Seeing that we have an impact on people halfway around the world, and these women were so appreciative, it really was impactful. I loved meeting the microcredit clients and going to an actual meeting and seeing the repayment collection process, seeing the voting process by the women for a new microcredit loan. I learned that the group lending process is really successful because the women in their groups of 4 or 5 women can support each other and they want each other to succeed. Such a little amount of money can impact someone’s life so much and they are forever grateful. The love that you send with your donations to Whole Planet Foundation, the recipients feel, and they send it right back out into the world. It’s full circle.

I will treasure the people I met on this trip from the microcredit loan recipients, my homestay family, my fellow WFM TMs and our guides. Everyone had an open mind and an open heart. I really appreciate this opportunity. I can't express how grateful I am for the experience.”

― ROBIN

“Exceeded my expectations! I am extremely grateful to have gone on the WFM TM Volunteer trip to Costa Rica. I learned so much about sustainable agriculture from the bright, international students at EARTH University. It was amazing to learn about and see the bananas that we sell at WFM being harvested and prepared for shipment to our stores. EARTH University also has significant impact in the community. We saw the sustainability practices that we learned about at EARTH living and breathing on the local family farms of the La Argentina community. I couldn’t imagine sharing this experience with any other group of people. The WFM volunteer group all got along so well together! It is something I will cherish forever. Thank you!”

― KATIE

“The Volunteer Program was very well organized from start to finish. It was rewarding, challenging and stretched myself to challenges I would not have done on my own. It gave me a better understanding of how important Whole Planet Foundation is.”

― KATHY

“"The highest impact of the trip for me was learning about the whole mission of EARTH University which has reigned my passion for Whole Foods Market. I have learned countless things that I was able to bring back to not only my store but to my community and home life!”

― SHAUN

“I just wanted to thank you soooo very much for the amazing opportunity to go to Costa Rica! It was definitely an eye opener on how resourceful people are there. I've also learned so much that I plan on implementing into my home life as well as into my work. The whole group of people I was with are such amazing people and I'm very happy to now have them in my life.”

― JESSICA

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― KINSEY

“Every day got better and better! It was such an educational and eye opening experience!”

― JILL

“This was one of the most amazing things I have done so far in my life. To be able to help these people on a daily basis and to see how we can impact their lives is just incredible.”

― DANNY

“I just wanted to thank you sooooo very much for the amazing opportunity to go to Costa Rica! It was definitely an eye opener on how resourceful people are there. I've also learned so much that I plan on implementing into my home life as well as into my work. The whole group of people I was with are such amazing people and I'm very happy to now have them in my life.”

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― JESSICA

“Every day got better and better! It was such an educational and eye opening experience!”

― JILL
2018 WFM TM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM IMPACT
COSTA RICA

- 14 Team members traveled to Costa Rica
- 23 Microcredit clients met
- 1 Women’s Community Center refurbished
- Dozens of baby turtles released to the sea
- 4 Hours of Spanish language classes taken

Whole Planet Foundation