

GPSA Sites for Medical Fellows

Belize



GPSA works in the villages around San Ignacio in the Cayo district. Because of its proximity to Guatemala, there are many Central American and Mexican immigrants who have moved into this area during the past decades seeking refuge from social unrest or civil wars. While English is the official language of the country, many families speak their mother tongue at home (e.g. Spanish, Maya, Kriol). Traditional Mayan medicine is very common in Cayo district and volunteers will likely have the opportunity to learn about it and visit medicinal gardens that exhibit a variety of native plants. Moreover, Belizean people are tremendously hospitable and courteous, which will certainly leave an imprint on visitors.

GPSA works in villages surrounding the city of Quetzaltenango in the western highlands. The villages are inhabited by mestizo, Maya-Mam and Maya-K'iche' peoples. While Spanish is widely spoken, many families speak a Mayan language at home as well. Mayan culture is in display everywhere, particularly in women's dresses. But Catholic celebrations and rituals are also very prominent. Volunteers will have the opportunity to learn more about this mixed cultural heritage and visit nearby markets exhibiting handwoven textiles and locally grown vegetables, among other things. Guatemala is a country of striking features, a rich cultural history, incredible natural beauty, and immeasurable economic potential contrasted against a troubled history. But generosity, optimism, and determination best describe the remarkable people of this place.

Guatemala



West Virginia



GPSA works in the remote village of Williamson, West Virginia, close to the Kentucky border. Williamson is a town of about 3000 inhabitants deep in the beautiful Appalachian mountains of West Virginia, USA. These rugged inhabitants have been devastated by natural disasters and economic hardship. Only recently has the city been protected by a floodwall in response to deadly flooding along the Tug Fork River in 1977 and again in 1984. The local economy is largely fueled by coal mining, an industry in rapid decline. The decline is so severe that it recently brought former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the city to discuss the problems of poverty and healthcare in this community. Despite their economic troubles, the local people are kind and welcoming hosts.