

# TechNews

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## Office of Campus Life prepares Welcome Week

**Kori Bowns**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Every fall, to kick off the new school year, Illinois Tech's Office of Campus Life (OCL) organizes Welcome Week, a week of fun events that help new students get a taste of what IIT's campus community has to offer as well as help returning students get more involved and meet new students.

This year's tentative Welcome Week schedule is even fuller than last year's, currently including over 50 events spaced out over the 10 days before classes begin. This year's new and

returning students will have plenty to keep them from becoming bored before classes get started. Events for this Welcome Week include a good mix of events that will introduce students to what IIT has to offer, trainings for new students, performers being brought to campus, and social events hosted by student organizations. Some returning favorites on the tentative schedule include Playfair, an event featuring a collection of high-energy ice-breaker games, a pep rally, and shopping shuttles to nearby retailers.

Ryan Miller, Associate Vice Provost for Campus Life, had a few thoughts to share

regarding the purpose of Welcome Week. "The goal of Welcome Week is just what it sounds like. We know that coming back to classes isn't always the most fun thing in the world, but our goal is just to make everyone feel welcome at IIT," said Miller. "We hope that by providing a few fun activities mixed in with some more official ones, we can get everyone acclimated to campus and making a friend or two before the grind of class starts up."

Even more than with years past, this year's Welcome Week events aim to kick start the formation of the IIT community that students love. All students who participate will

have the chance to make some great friends, learn something new, and maybe step a bit outside of their comfort zone.

The Office of Campus Life is also planning a few additional events that will take place during the first week of classes that will also be helpful to new students. Throughout the academic year, keep your eyes open for even more events facilitated by IIT's Office of Campus Life. The office plans many activities during the school year to keep campus fun and also works with student organizations to plan even more events for students.

## MEDLIFE-IIT starts Summer 2015 in Riobamba, Ecuador

**Egle Malinauskaite**  
TECHNEWS WRITER

After months of planning, grant-writing, and fundraising, IIT's MEDLIFE Chapter embarked on their journey to the May 23-31 brigade in Riobamba, Ecuador. This year, the chapter sent nine students, four alumni, and one faculty member to a mobile clinic visiting indigenous communities outside of the city.

MEDLIFE is an international NGO helping various Latin American and African communities achieve freedom from the constraints of poverty, empowering them to live healthier lives. The organization believes access to quality healthcare is a basic human right and should be addressed in a comprehensive application of MEDs: Medicine, Education and community Development. Since IIT's chapter's launch in 2013, they have championed MEDLIFE's commitment to addressing the root causes of disparities worldwide. Just like last year's trip to Lima, Peru, their experience in Ecuador was an eye-opening juxtaposition to Chicago.

The communities outside of Riobamba identify strongly with the Native American Quechua culture; residents are typically fluent in both Spanish and Quechua. With an economy based on agricultural goods

that continue to decline in value, lack of access to many basic resources, including transportation and sanitation infrastructure, is common. The hard physical labor of mountain farming from an early age, coupled with malnutrition, can lead to premature health problems. However, the cost of lost productivity and traveling to the nearest city for financially unobtainable medical treatments prevents most residents from obtaining adequate medical care.

This is where IIT's MEDLIFE students came in. During the daily mobile clinic, they volunteered in rotations under the guidance of local healthcare professionals to provide free medical services and educational tools for hygiene. The stations included triage, general medicine, dentistry, obstetrics/gynecology, pharmacy, and education. One of the most popular rotations was tooth brushing - teaching children as young as 3 oral health with free colorful brushes, a large teeth model, and tons of spit. Each rotation was a humbling lesson in doctor-patient relationships and privilege. At the end of the week, they helped the brigade tend to a total of 444 patients.

One of the communities visited was Galte Yaguachi, in the region of Guamote, Ecuador. In addition to the mobile clinic, students worked alongside the locals on a development project: sanding and priming the walls of a new classroom that would eventually serve over 100 children and five teachers.

According to IIT student Dawlat Mohamed, B.S. Biochemistry '15, it was "an experience unlike any other. While you're working with the community members, you are constantly learning valuable lessons from them: humility, gratefulness, perseverance, contentment, and strength. . . One woman even had her baby strapped to her back while I was helping her carry cement back and forth. The strength I saw from this community was incredible, and inspired me to push myself even harder in all that I do. These people have given way more than I would have ever hoped to give them." On the last day of the trip, the classroom's inauguration was a full-out celebration, complete with delicious snacks, games, and dancing. Yet the most heartwarming moments came when the community sang Ecuador's national anthem in unison and the children handed out hand-woven baskets as gifts to all the volunteers. To say it was a beautiful display of humanity doesn't do it justice.

The 11 days spent in Ecuador are defined by moments like this. Of course, students also had plenty of time to explore the country's culture and conquer plenty of fears. They climbed to the top of the Basilica Del Voto Nacional, the largest neo-Gothic basilica in the Americas, located in the historic center of Quito. They rode the Quito Teleferico gondola, one of the highest aerial lifts in the world, to Pinachicha Volcano. They ziplined

upside down over waterfalls in Banos de Agua Santa. They took turns milking a cow and riding a donkey literally in the clouds while in Guamote's mountains. They visited the Mitad del Mundo museum at the equator. They even ate guinea pig (pronounced "cuy" in Quechua for their high-pitched sounds), a national delicacy! As Courtney Rouse, B.S. Mechanical Engineering '15, put it, "The MEDLIFE brigade was a great way to experience the unique culture of a different part of the world all while contributing service to provide free healthcare and improve education in a third world country. It was truly an unforgettable experience and I would recommend it to anyone, whether you're looking to go into a health related field or not."

MEDLIFE at IIT would like to thank everyone in the IIT community who supported this trip financially, especially Dean DePaola from Armour College of Engineering, Dean Betts from College of Science, the Student Activities Fund, and all who participated in their fundraisers. If you're interested in getting involved with MEDLIFE-IIT, please email [medlife@iit.edu](mailto:medlife@iit.edu) and make sure to stop by the organization's informational table during Welcome Week's Student Organization Festival. The organization looks forward to see where next year's medical brigade will take them and they hope you can join!



Photos courtesy of Egle Malinauskaite