

EWB-IIT visits San Claudio, Nicaragua

Cara Cummings
TECHNEWS WRITER

Conference calls, planning meetings, and endless amounts of paperwork; Lisa Stump, Tristan Larson, Sara Glade, and myself had been preparing for our trip to Nicaragua for months. Although we had amazing professional mentors helping us, IIT alumna Christina Freisinger along with James Lewan and IIT staff member Megan Mozina, it was a lot to accomplish. I was exhausted from all the work that had to somehow get done before we were able to depart during spring break.

EWB-IIT's assessment trip to the small community of San Claudio in Nicaragua would be our team's first opportunity to meet the people we are committed to for the next five years. During one short week, we would need to determine if their expressed need for a bridge is truly the best project for the community, gather technical data for design, and work on community engagement.

The day had finally arrived on March 16 2013. I packed all my clothes into my tiny suitcase, kissed my boyfriend goodbye, and departed with the EWB-IIT travel team to Nicaragua. Little did I know that I would return a short week later having fallen completely in love with the people and culture.

The night we arrived in Chacraseca, the small village where the FriendsNE (the Boston based local NGO which has been working on the community's development for many years) local compound is located, we slept in the warm night air on cots underneath the stars. When we awoke, pungent aromas were wafting toward our cots from the kitchen in the adjacent building. That breakfast was the first of many delicious, unforgettable meals enjoyed during

the trip. Ever since our return I have longed for the savory rice and beans, sweet watermelon, plantains, and corn tortillas of Nicaragua.

Throughout the week, the warmth of the Nicaraguan people surrounded the travel team. The very first time we visited the community in San Claudio, we were surprised as we stepped into a house and were greeted by representatives from every family in the community. There was never a shortage of laughter, smiles, and kisses among these people. They were family, and we were treated no differently.

During our time in the community, we were able to visit several elementary schools and meet the cute children who soon will need and use our bridge in order to cross the river and attend secondary school. We also met with the mayor of the municipality of Malpaisillo and discussed plans and funding for the bridge with him and the municipal engineer, Romulo Rodriguez. Later, we were able to relay that information and hold the same important discussion regarding expectations for the project with the people of San Claudio.

As we traveled during the week, I was in awe of the beauty of Nicaragua. The view from the peak of the Cerro Negro volcano was breathtaking, and as we ran down the side of the black ash mountain I felt both scared and empowered. Later, at the beach, I was refreshed as the powerful, salty waves crashed into me.

Our team got a lot of work done during the week, but the data collection and planning is not what I am going to remember years from now. It is the memories of the beautiful country of Nicaragua, and my love for the people there, that I will cherish forever.

If you are interested in being part of the Engineers Without Borders' San Claudio Project? Contact EWB-IIT at ewb.iit@gmail.com.

Photos by Cara Cummings



TEDxIIT celebrates another successful event

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The TEDxIIT team hosted its event for the third time in the IIT Tower from 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Last Saturday. Providing free admission, food, and drinks, we invited the whole IIT community to attend but limited it to one hundred attendees. After getting checked-in and receiving their nametags, the attendees were allowed to interact with everyone until 9:45 a.m. At 9:45 a.m., the doors opened and they were entertained with our founder and co-organizer Amy Lee Segami and emcee Bob Roitblat.

To start off the event with some enthusiasm, we pulled up a 3-minute TED video by Chris Anderson. Then we called upon speakers Sara Beardsley & Dr. Chris Drew, Cheryl Jefferson and James Howard Stone who took on the stage to talk about

topics that affected the society; reducing pollution in cities, breaking criminal traditions and achieving full employment. To energize ourselves, we announced a 30-minute break before we continued the event.

After break, 8x(tet), a band consisting of students from Chicago universities, performed jazz music pepping us up for the next two speakers. But before the speakers spoke, we pulled up another TED video, 'Abundance is our future' by Peter Diamandis. Then, speaker Nik Rokop took the stage to talk about the importance of starting a business after school. 4th-year psychology IIT student and speaker Jacqueline Roche spoke about how education saved her life. We were halfway through the event when we announced another break, but this time for lunch!

We proceeded with the event calling up speakers Avelo Roy, Neil Milsted and Dr. Nina Ellis-Hervey, whose talks were named

'Currency of Relationships', 'As We May Do' and 'Psychological Well-being: The Path to Holistic Health'. Then we announced our last 30-minute break but before that we had a surprise for the audience! Because of their patience, we called upon Daniel Guidara, tai chi instructor who taught us a few tai chi moves to refresh us!

Then we had our last three speakers Ann F. Clark, Dr. Manu K. Vora and Retired Colonel Jill Morgenthauer. Ann F. Clark explained how future architects can contribute to rebuilding the community in a third world country by bringing in her experience in working in Haiti. Dr. Manu K. Vora explained how he founded the Blind Foundation of India to harness exponential power of gift of sight. And our last speaker, Retired Colonel Jill Morgenthauer shared one major leadership secret that showed us how to exponentially increase one's performance as a leader. After that we had a reception where people were

encouraged to network.

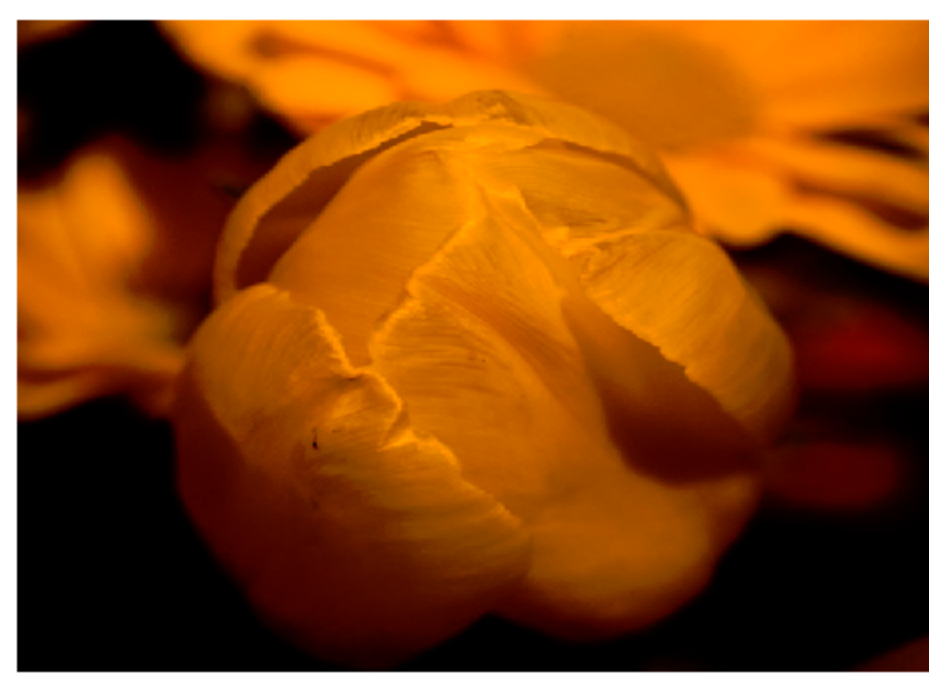
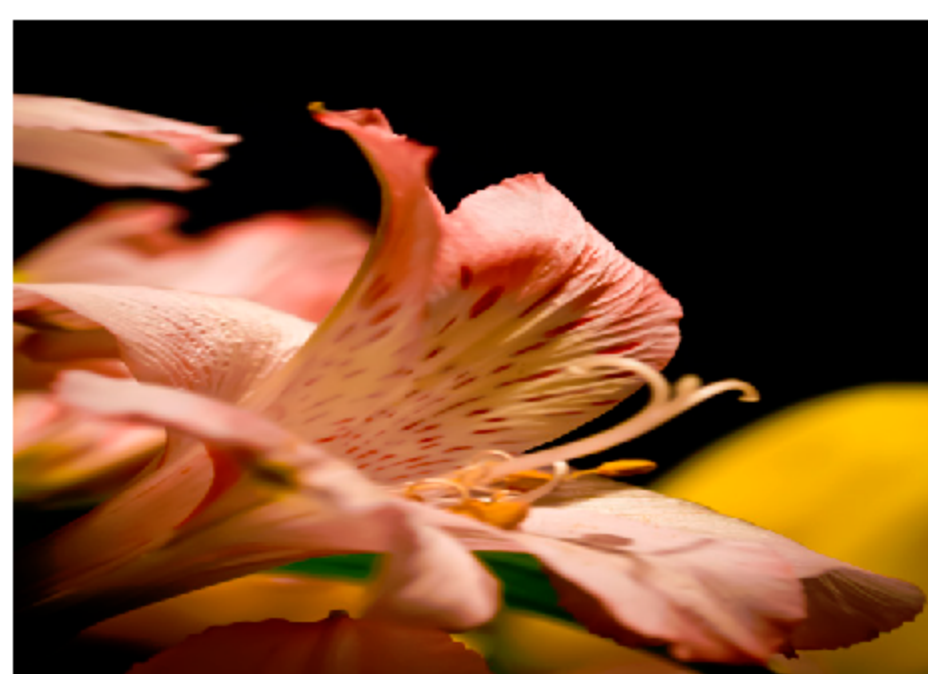
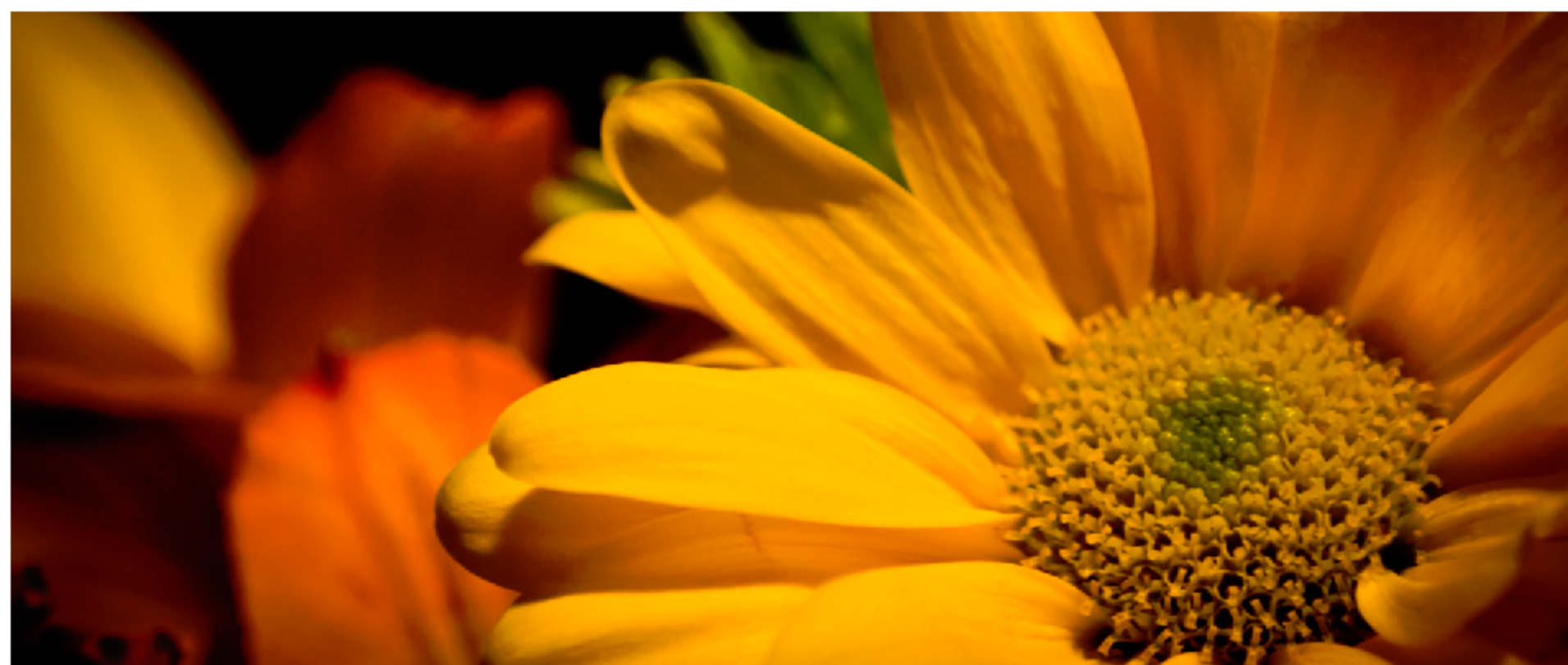
The response and feedback we got from the Chicago and IIT community was AMAZING! Some of the compliments included being 'blown away', well-organized student-run event, inspiring speakers and worth the full days' time!

We had 1242 views on live streaming and 1974 views on our live stream page from Canada, India, China and a total of 13,587 page views!

The best part, our Webmaster Ethan received a call from a student in India who had seen TEDxIIT 2013 online. He said that he got admitted to IIT to pursue his graduate education but wasn't sure if IIT was the right choice. But after watching TEDxIIT 2013 all the way from India, he felt that IIT would be his perfect college!

Inspiration really does take you far!

April showers, bring May flowers to campus



Photos by Nick Caldwell