

Rotary World Peace Fellowship – First Report

Submitted by **Eduardo Rodrigues da Costa**

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**1 – Academic activities and progress**

I am currently enrolled in the MIDP – Master of International Development Policy, at the Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University. My classes started on August 30, 2010, following a two-week orientation period when I had the opportunity to attend orientation sessions offered by the Duke/UNC Rotary Center, the International House of Duke University, and the MIDP program. In order to attend the orientation sessions and to early start looking for housing options, I arrived in Durham on August 2.

I am currently taking the following four courses in the fall term:

- 1 - Conflict Management: The Practice of Negotiation and Mediation
- 2 – Empirical Analysis for Development
- 3 – Policy Analysis
- 4 – Academic Writing II

So far, I have been enjoying the courses and have been getting very good grades. Although I have been learning a lot in all the four courses, I would like to mention that Conflict Management: The Practice of Negotiation and Mediation, which is the Rotary Core Course for this fall term, has provided me with a totally new perspective on the art and science of negotiation and mediation. Besides having extensive experience in the fields of negotiation and mediation, Professor Kacie Wallace, who teaches this course, has outstanding classroom management skills and a natural talent to involve and engage all students in the learning process. Her superior performance in class and her passion for the subject makes all the difference when it comes to addressing issues related to preventing and/or resolving conflict.

Empirical Analysis for Development is basically applied statistics within the context of public policy; Policy Analysis for Development is mostly a collection of tools to analyze policy problems and recommend potential policy options; and Academic Writing II focuses on improving our academic writing skills.

Besides attending these courses, I have also tried to make the most of the vast array of academic opportunities within Duke University. For instance, I recently attended the following events:

1 – Professor Leila Webster, a highly-regarded expert on SME Development and the Principles & Practice of Microfinance, talked about her career with the World Bank and the IFC as well as with the US Peace Corps as Country Director in Jamaica.

2 – Mr. Chris Carmody and Ms. Sarah Kate Fishback, of the Sustainable Development Institute, talked about how “Sustainability Fellows” can work collaboratively as a coordinated team to provide services to a growing network of small businesses and non-profits interested in understanding and implementing triple-bottom line sustainability strategies into their organizations and communities.

3 - Alumni-in-Residence Career Talk: Bautista Logioco (Rotary World Peace Fellow - MIDP'04), Program Specialist, UNDP Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action, talked about his work with the UNDP and gave a workshop on how to apply for internships and jobs with the United Nations.

4 - Duke Corporate Career Fair

5 - Duke Nonprofit & Government Career Fair

Together with other Duke/UNC Rotary fellows, I also participated in a Low Challenge Ropes Course at UNC – University of Carolina at Chapel Hill. This activity was a good opportunity for us to get to know each other in a fun and relaxing setting.

In order to make a contribution to the Duke/UNC Rotary Center and to Duke University at large, I brought from Brazil a full library on Brazilian Amazon-related issues which I intend to donate to Duke University upon the completion of my studies. This library contains CD-ROMs; DVDs; books, reports, and other printed publications on issues such as sustainability, poverty, climate change, land conflict, deforestation, economic development, public policy-making, environmental conservation, energy, health, education, and culture in the Brazilian Amazon. With over 600 books, publications, and other items, I estimate that this up-to-date library is worth about \$ 50,000.00.

As I was brought up believing that we ought to put back into life more than we get out of it, I understand that donating this library to Duke University is the least I can do to return the generosity of DGE and Mrs. James R. Heinrich, the generous couple who

agreed to fund my fellowship, and many other Rotarians around the world who support the Rotary Foundation's educational programs.

## **2 – Involvement with Rotarians in my host area**

I have been in close contact with my Rotary host counselor, Mr. Phil Morris, and his wife, Mrs. Karen Morris, ever since I learned that they would be my Rotary host family. Phil is a member of the Rotary Club of Furnitureland and Karen is a member of the Rotary Club of Willow Creek.

Before I left Brazil along with my wife and daughter, Phil and Karen had already provided me with valuable information regarding housing opportunities in Durham. They went so far as to visit a few apartment complexes in order to obtain additional information and take pictures in order to provide us with very detailed information.

Phil and Karen provided us with full support until the moment we were completely settled in our new home in Durham. By mobilizing other local Rotarians, they did whatever possible to help us furnish our apartment and enroll our daughter in a local public school. For example, they got us a TV, a table and four chairs, and a large variety of kitchen appliances. They also drove us to the ESL Office (English as a Second Language Office) in downtown Durham, where our daughter took the required high school ESL placement exam. Phil and Karen also introduced us to Mr. Michael Carlone, a member of the Rotary Club of Willow Creek, who manages a furniture business in High Point. Mr. Carlone was generous enough to sell us a few pieces of furniture at a very low cost.

We are always in contact with Phil and Karen and feel that they are really happy for being our host family. They do care about us as if we were true members of their family and we have no words to say how grateful we are for having Phil and Karen as our extended family in North Carolina. In order to keep us updated on the latest Rotary news, they have been sending us the online newsletters of their Rotary Clubs on a regular basis.

A few weeks after my arrival in Durham, Phil and Karen invited me to attend a meeting of the Rotary Club of Willow Creek. I had a great time and really enjoyed meeting and interacting with the members of the club.

The District Leadership has just invited me, my wife and my daughter to attend as guests of the district the annual District 7690 Rotary Foundation Banquet, to be held on Thursday, November 18, 2010, at the High Point Country Club. We are looking forward to participating in this event and hope to meet and interact with new members of the local Rotary community.

I would also like to mention the important support that my family received from Phil and Karen Morris and Barry and Diana Phillips when we were robbed at gun point in late August inside our apartment complex, in Durham. Their support was very important to provide us with orientation and to help us overcome the inevitable consequences of such a sad and unexpected event.

Finally, I would like to mention that I have been learning a lot about Rotary from my host counselor, Phil Morris. Ever since we first met here in Durham, Phil has been sharing with me lots of valuable information about his volunteer work as a Rotarian and about his passion and commitment to Rotary's mission. Besides being a great host counselor, Phil has also been my "Rotary Professor", guiding me into understanding the core values that drive the activities of Rotary International and the Rotary Foundation.

### **3 – My impressions of the program**

#### **a) MIDP Program**

My initial impressions of the MIDP program are very positive. The program is very well organized and I have been able to establish very good relationships with other fellows and faculty members. The Sanford School really provides fellows with state-of-the-art facilities, from multimedia classrooms and modern computer labs to a fully equipped resource room. In addition, we can make the most of Duke University's libraries and participate in academic events in other schools such as the Law School, the Fuqua School of Business, and the Nicholas School of the Environment.

Another extremely positive aspect of the MIDP program is its international student body. As most of my classmates are international students, they usually share their home-country experiences during the discussions in class, providing us with the opportunity to understand and learn a lot about the local aspects of international issues. Whenever possible, I also try to share with other fellows my experience as a development economist, business leader and social/environmental activist in the Brazilian Amazon.

#### **b) Rotary World Peace Fellowship**

At this point, I would like to share my personal opinion about a very special feature of the Rotary World Peace Fellowship. It is my understanding that the financial aspect of the scholarship, which covers travel, tuition, fees, accommodation and other related living expenses, is a very important part of the fellowship. However, I believe that the one feature that positions the Rotary World Peace Fellowship miles ahead of other similar scholarship programs such as Fulbright, Ford Foundation and Kellogg Foundation, is the fact that Rotary fellows receive support from local Rotarians and from the local Rotary Center coordinator. In my opinion, this is the most precious aspect of the Rotary World Peace Fellowship.

In my specific situation, relocating my entire family and adapting to a new life in a foreign country would have been far more complex and difficult without the support I have been receiving from local Rotarians in North Carolina and from Susan Carroll, the coordinator for the Duke/UNC Rotary Center. Allow me to provide you with a few examples to support my opinion.

Susan Carroll made it so much easier for us to choose a high school for our daughter. Following her recommendation, we enrolled our daughter in the same high school where Susan's son studies, Jordan High School. Susan has also performed a key role in terms of keeping me informed and updated on academic opportunities within Duke and other universities in the area.

Finding a place to rent and furnishing it at a very low cost would have been much more difficult without the generous support of local Rotarians such as Phil and Karen Morris and Michael Carlone.

Right now, Phil is helping me to find an inexpensive used car. He and Karen have driven me to a few dealerships in the past few weeks and Phil is currently mobilizing other Rotarians who may be able to identify other opportunities for me to purchase a low-cost car.

The more I interact with the Rotary Foundation staff, with my Rotary host family, with Susan Carroll, and with other local Rotarians, the more I realize that I have not only been awarded a significant amount of money in order to attend a master's program in Peace Studies and Conflict Prevention at Duke University, one of the leading universities in the world. Above all, I realize that I have been awarded a window of opportunities to learn about Rotary and to become a member of the Rotary community. I have no doubt that, together with my educational training at Duke University, the relationships I have established and will continue to establish with Rotarians in the future will certainly make an important contribution to my work as a development economist, business leader, social activist, and peacemaker in the Brazilian Amazon Rainforest.

#### **4 – A description of my successes and challenges as a Rotary World Peace Fellow**

Although I have just started the program, I believe I have already achieved a few positive results as a Rotary World Peace Fellow.

Prior to leaving Brazil, as a Professor in the Program of International Relations at UNAMA - Amazonia University, I gave a lecture on the Rotary World Peace Fellowship to both graduate and undergraduate students of the university.

The fact that I am the first Rotary World Peace Fellow from District 4720 also represents an important accomplishment for the Brazilian Amazon, a region which has been traditionally underserved and underrepresented in terms of international educational opportunities.