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Building Sustainability in Rural Puerto Rico

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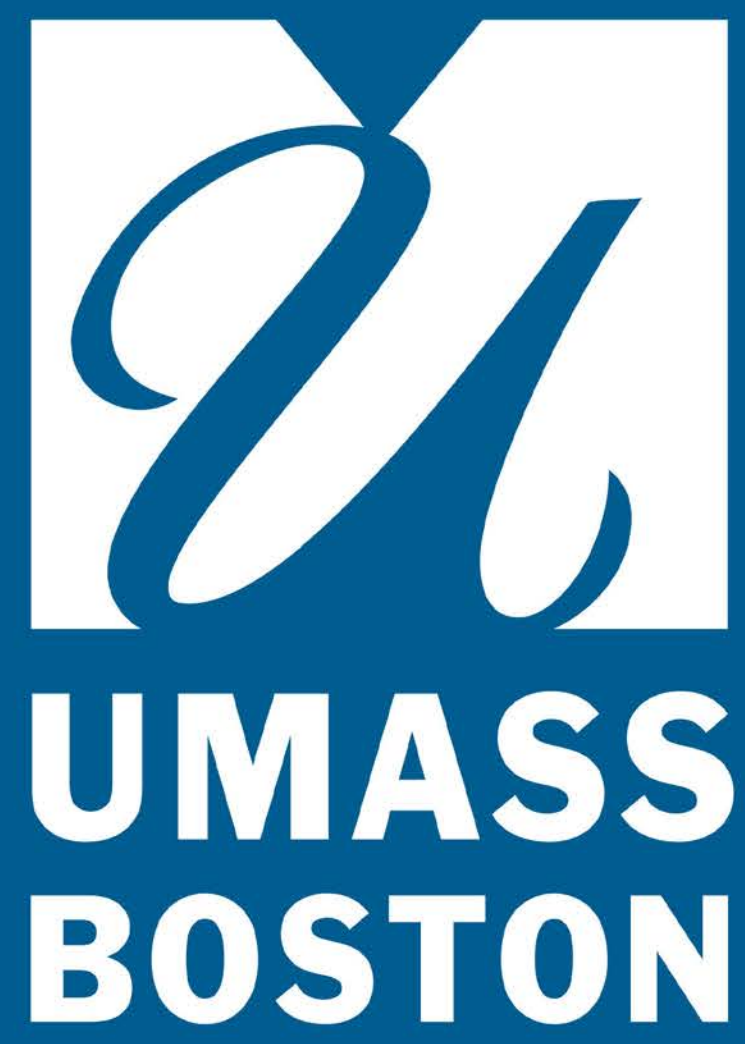
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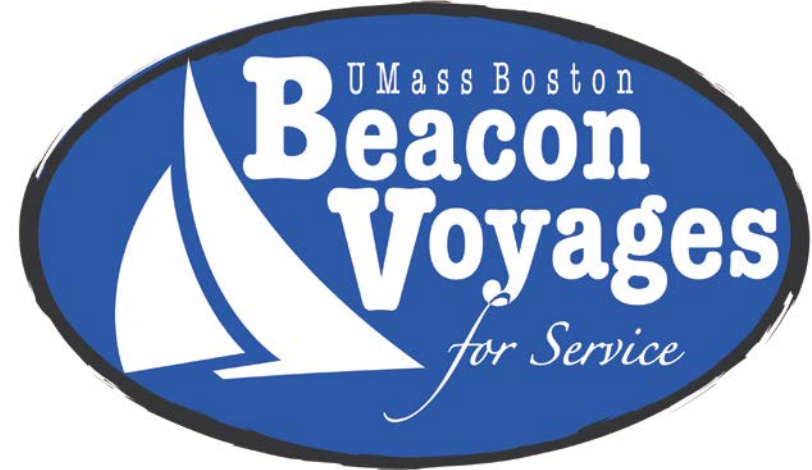


Building Sustainability in Rural Puerto Rico

Beacon Voyages for Service

Plenitud Eco-Educational Initiatives Tres Amigos Farm

Project Description



Beacon Voyages for Service (BVS) is a program within the Office of Student Leadership and Community Engagement that coordinates Alternative Break programs. BVS Puerto Rico traveled to Las Marias, Puerto Rico. This group of students partnered with Plenitud Eco-Educational Initiatives to learn about sustainability through organic farming and permaculture practices in rural areas of Puerto Rico.

Goals and Objectives

Students learn and practice working in a community and receive encouragement to use their skills and education to help contribute to solving problems our society currently faces. They make a change in their lives, learning more about how their actions affect others, and experience an enjoyable time spent in Puerto Rico.



Approaches and Methods

Students participate in intense formal training in permaculture and water management to better learn how to support the communities within Las Marias, Puerto Rico. Trainings include:

- 6 hours of theoretical training in ecologically responsible water management, soap making and food security
- A 3 hour theoretical and hands-on workshop on the music and dance of Bomba—an essential part of Puerto Rican Culture with African Roots
- Bamboo harvesting and processing for mulch, lumber, stakes, and poles.



Impact



Students completed several projects at Plenitud's Tres Amigos Farm in Las Marias, Puerto Rico including:

- Painting a classroom area with a mural symbolizing a food forest system
- Preparing and working on campsites to improve access to and establish productive and functional garden beds. This included 10 tire steps, weeding and sheet mulching beds, and improvements of drainage ditches
- Installing a 15 cubic foot greywater system to process and infiltrate greywater from bathroom sink in the classroom
- Building soil with layers of organic matter in previously double-dug beds in the chicken coop area
- Planting leguminous trees, seeding ground covers, and transplanting slope-stabilization vetiver grasses on a water-harvesting terrace
- Site preparing and planting a newly established garden, which included aerating the soil, layering in organic matter, mulching, and planting

Conclusion

Students made an impact on the citizens of Las Marias, PR through their service. In addition, they truly engaged in Puerto Rican culture. Students engaged and learned sustainability techniques that can be applied to projects in the Boston community and further complement their academic studies. Many students learned life-long lessons that promote global social change.

References and Resources

Plenitud Eco-Educational Initiatives
www.plenitudpr.org

BreakAway – Alternative Breaks Active Citizen Curriculum
www.alternativebreaks2013.org

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