

# World Centres Pursuing Excellence

## Our Cabaña

At **Our Cabaña** in Mexico, one of the four World Centres of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the theme of leadership training continues to develop.



Diana Castellanos, 21, from Ecuador, first went to Our Cabaña in 2001 with a scholarship and since then she has participated in different leadership events. She explains the skills she has developed: *"I have learned many ways to express myself, to better understand others and to establish a proper relation for communication. One of the other skills developed is to recognize value and grow in diversity. This has been an enormous contribution, since now it is much easier to work in groups and take maximum advantage of diversity, in order to obtain better results. All these skills have helped me very much in my daily life."*

She describes what Guiding has meant in her life and says: *"Guiding has become my lifestyle; it is the space that has allowed me to find out who I really am, and personally grow in order to be of service. It has been an experience of constant joy, fun, games, challenges, and achievements. It constitutes the greatest contribution that can be given to the world. It represents what I am and what I will always be a Guide."*

One of the events at Our Cabaña in 2006 was the programme **Rights for All**, with service projects aimed at improving the lives of some of the thousands of children, young people and senior citizens who live in and around Cuernavaca, where Our Cabaña is based. The projects include visiting schools, making blankets and sweaters and holding workshops and activity days. A group of around 270 girls and young women also helped to build new homes for local families with low incomes. The housing project was organized in conjunction with the global charity **Habitat for Humanity International**, as part of Our Cabaña's Girl Friendship programme.

In addition, Our Cabaña launched its new micro website [www.ourcabana.org](http://www.ourcabana.org), featuring key information about the experiences offered at the World Centre.

## Our Chalet

At **Our Chalet** in Switzerland girls and young women are also able to develop their leadership skills. Alex Fleming, 20, is from Ireland and has been a Guide for 13 years. She spent time at Our Chalet as a programme coordinator in the summer season and describes her experiences: *"I feel I have come such a long way from when I first arrived at the World Centre. I have gained such confidence in my abilities. I thank Our Chalet for pushing me to do things I never thought possible. As a leader, though this may seem contradictory, delegation of responsibilities is a key part. It comes back to recognising people's strengths and maybe even your own weaknesses. Total control over a situation will only disrupt progress. As a leader your team is not there to help you, you are there to help the team."*

Alex thinks it is important to develop leadership skills. She says: *"Though girls and young women enter a world where many believe the modern woman today possesses equal liberties in all parts of society, gender statistics for leaders in the work place and politics do not reflect this view. Every girl and young woman must become her own leader if she wants to direct her own life or direct a multinational."*

The **Ready Steady Go week** at Our Chalet, held in May and November focused on team building and leadership training. Girl Guides, Girl Scouts and Scouts were asked to volunteer to help with household tasks at the World Centre, in exchange for free board, lodging and exciting activities in the Swiss Alps.

Twenty-six young women attended the **4th Helen Storrow Seminar**, held at Our Chalet in April. The seminar focused on the theme '**Our Rights, Our Responsibilities**'. The participants were selected from 19 countries around the world because of their potential and energy to make changes to help develop our Movement.





## girls worldwide say

### Pax Lodge



**Pax Lodge** in London UK, the newest of our four World Centres, celebrated its 15th Anniversary in 2006. Established in 1991, Pax Lodge is an international gathering place for members of WAGGGS, providing opportunities for friendship, education and accommodation.

As part of the programme of developing Girl Guides and Girl Scouts' skills, a new role has been created to promote leadership through the volunteer programme. Anna Swisher, from the US, was one of the first **coordinators** to take on more responsibility for the day to day running of Pax Lodge and its team of resident volunteers. She held this position for a month and describes her experience. *"It has made me a much stronger leader. Before I tended to look at things from only one point of view or I would take a long time to think things through before acting,"* she says. *"I feel that I am now able to act quickly under pressure and to make the right decision in the end. I have also learned to look at things from multiple perspectives, to listen instead of dominating what is being said, and to exercise a great deal of patience."*

She adds: *"Sadly not all young women are privileged enough to come from a background or culture that supports their natural rights. By being given the chance to develop leadership skills, young girls and women are able to make an impact upon individuals, culture and world. With these skills they are also given the chance to voice their opinions, enact change and obtain for themselves a positive lifestyle."*

A group of 54 Girl Scout volunteers, also from the US, completed a **community service** project in June in Hampstead Heath, one of London's best-loved parks. Working with a local volunteer group, they learned about conservation work and environmental issues.

Continuing its role as a centre for training, Pax Lodge hosted the **Managing for the future seminar**, for young women in WAGGGS. Twenty young women, aged 20 to 35, from around the world took part, sharing their ideas and experiences through group discussions and workshops. They successfully returned to their associations with practical ideas to implement.

### Sangam



**Sangam** in Pune, India, celebrated its 40th Birthday in 2006. The World Centre offers an exciting experience for self-development in a multicultural environment. Sangam also hosted the **Juliette Low Seminar**, with 44 young women, aged 19 to 27, from 43 countries attending. The prestigious seminar, which occurs twice each triennium, had the theme **'Values-based leadership in an international setting'**. Participants worked on a model for leadership, which incorporated vision and leadership styles through a mix of theory and practice.

One of the participants, Miriam Otieno, 21, is from Kenya and joined Guiding in 1993. Talking about the importance of learning about leadership skills, she says:

*"Women still remain a vulnerable group in our communities in various ways, thus there is a need to train them especially so that they may develop assertiveness and be in a position to handle challenging circumstances, such as when they are in decision-making. This is also important in the fight against HIV/AIDS because they will learn to be assertive and say No."*

Miriam describes how she is able to use the skills learned at the seminar back at home. *"In my country we are having elections and one of the challenges that we are faced with is that of poor leadership. Many young people opt not to vote because they feel there is no leader worth voting for. I have been challenged to encourage the youth to vote as they form a greater part of the population. The training that I acquired at the seminar has been of great input to assist me to facilitate these discussions, as I have been able to help the youth in my community to reflect on the various styles of leadership."*