



COMMUNITY INFO SHEET

Puerto Rico

YouthWorks partners specifically with the community in Arecibo (ah-re-see-bow)

Things Arecibo, Puerto Rico is known for:

Arecibo is considered one of the oldest colonial towns on the island. Arecibo offers an extremely diverse terrain, including beaches, mountains, and the “campo” farmland. Arecibo, as well as other neighboring communities, come alive in the summer with festivals to celebrate cultural heritage, saint’s days, and other holidays. These festivals offer opportunities to celebrate the unique culture and history of the island.

Arecibo History:

When the Spanish arrived, they found the area occupied by the indigenous Taíno, led by Xamaica Arasibo, Cacique (chief) of the yucayeque (town) then named Abacoa. Spanish colonists settled Arecibo in 1556, which they named for the cacique (chief). It was their fourth settlement on the island, San Juan, San German, and Coamo. Arecibo was officially founded as a town by the Spanish on May 1, 1616, under the governorship of Captain Felipe de Beaumont y Navarra, when the King of Spain granted the land (and the Taino living there) to Lope Conchillos. This gave the city its nickname The Village of Captain Correo (La Villa del Capitan Correa).

History of YouthWorks in Arecibo:

YouthWorks has been part of the Puerto Rico story since 2003. Since this time, we have worked alongside many different local churches and organizations. In 2008, we began housing at Comunidad Cristiana, which is where we have been since. Comunidad Cristiana has become a great support to Youthworks over the years, and we continue to deepen our relationship with their staff and congregation. Several young adults at the church have gone on to become Youthworks summer staff.

Our partnerships on the island have deepened summer after summer and in 2012, at the request of community friends and partners, Youthworks began running more intentional programming to help participants engage with local culture and language.

We have intentionally adapted the traditional YW schedule, integrating more cultural activities, and even incorporating traditional Puerto Rican food into the weekly menu. These shifts mean that we can serve the community more respectfully, which has always been our top priority. Many partners in Arecibo directly spoke into the setup of these adaptations, which has allowed us to have deeper rapport with the community.



Arecibo Stats

POPULATION: 87,754

PUERTO RICO POPULATION: 3.7 million

POVERTY RATE – 47.4% of people live below the poverty line

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME – \$18,647

WEATHER – Puerto Rico has a tropical climate, with hot and humid days and warm nights. Though rain is common, be prepared for sun and wind as well. Strong storms are a possibility, which we will be continuously monitoring.

Why is Youthworks in Arecibo?

Serving in Puerto Rico offers participants a rich cultural immersion through service, language, and learning opportunities. Being immersed in a place where Spanish is the primary language gives participants an opportunity to step into a genuine cross-cultural experience. Throughout our time in Arecibo, our programming has been shaped by local leaders and current socioeconomic situations. We continue to lean into these relationships as the site continues to develop post-Hurricane Maria in 2017. There has been progress, but substantial damage is still evident around the island. YouthWorks strives to continue to ask questions of and listen to our partners and friends as they navigate aiding with recovery and redevelopment work in the context of their community.

Issues in Arecibo:

There are several social and systemic problems in Arecibo that have led to a high poverty rate in the community. When Hurricane Maria hit in the Fall of 2017, this natural disaster only perpetuated problems that already existed. Compared to other American cities hit by major natural disasters, the amount of aid Puerto Rico received was significantly less than other areas and arrived at the island at a delayed rate. Internal, local governmental corruption also created a significant delay in the distribution of this aid.

Although participants will be serving years after the hurricane tore through the island, they will still see the ripple effects of the physical and psychological damage that was done. Serving with our partners this summer may mean doing physical and relational work. Puerto Ricans are very relational. This may mean running children's programming or sitting and listening to community members tell their stories.

Positive Opportunities & Why Serving in Arecibo, Puerto Rico Matters:

BREAKDOWN STEREOTYPES

Those coming to Puerto Rico will be thrown into the mix of a truly diverse culture, possibly for the first time. Staying in Arecibo and serving throughout the community will bring opportunities to see, hear, smell, and taste new things. This is an amazing time to see the beauty of diversity and culture, shape perspectives, and become educated about local issues.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVE

Everyone has their own perceptions of Puerto Rico and what it looks like to serve in an area that has experienced a natural disaster. During the week you will have the chance to share what you are learning about the community, talk about the incredible things you see happening in Arecibo and to be a part of the ongoing work God is doing on the island.