

Why, Why Not?

"There are those that look at the way things are and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"

- Robert F. Kennedy

Robotics Program

This story begins with a man named Joe Sestak, a retired US Navy Admiral and former Congressman from Pennsylvania's 7th Congressional District (2007-2011). He is presently the President of [FIRST Global](#). *FIRST* Global intends to host the first ever, international, annual, Olympics style, robotics competition for youth aged 15 to 18 in Washington, DC this July. We don't know how Joe Sestak learned about Shoulder to Shoulder or our President, Atty. Wayne Waite. Sometime in early January of this year, Joe gives Wayne a call. He says he has heard that Wayne is a man that can get things done in Honduras. Could Wayne manage to form a robotics team to compete at the *FIRST* Global Challenge in July 2017? Wayne, never one to back away from a challenge, immediately says yes. Wayne initially believes that the American School, a private, bilingual school in Tegucigalpa with tremendous resources, will be the school to form a team. Perhaps one or two kids from the Frontera could be part of the team as well. But the American School declines because they don't feel they could pull it off, citing a rather busy schedule and commitments.



Click photo above to go to Team Honduras website

At this point, the sane thing for Wayne to do would have been to return the call to Joe and tell him he tried, but it wouldn't work. Perhaps Wayne was channeling Robert F. Kennedy, dreaming of things that never were (and most would say 'never could be'), and asking, "Why not?" He decided that the robotics team would be made up of students and coaches exclusively from the Frontera. How crazy is that? We don't have roads here. We don't have running water and often don't have electricity. The internet is horrible. The students at the High School in Camasca don't have resources. There are just a tremendous amount of 'things that never were.' For all of it, Shoulder to Shoulder put together a team including five students from Camasca, two from Concepcion, Daniel Marquez, the math teacher as the coach, and Nora Diaz, the English teacher as the assistant coach and official translator.



First Global Team Honduras
Click photo above to see video on the team

Dionisio Bautista is one of the students. His family lives about an hour's walk from the town of Camasca where he is finishing High School. His father works the land to support his family and is a leader in his church community. His mother takes care of the home and makes pottery to supplement a meager income. They are extremely poor, and yet Dionisio's two older brothers were both able to finish High School. Dionisio too is determined to complete his education, and dreams of the possibility of further education. Every day he walks to school and walks back, literally climbing and descending a mountain to arrive and return. He does not fear challenges. Challenges are a part of each day of his life. Dreaming of 'things that never were' is all Dionisio has to dream. Maybe it's best that the well-resourced American School said no. Maybe it's time that Dionisio and others like Dionisio be given the shot. Why not?

Education Mission / CREE Centro Regional para Excelencia en la Educación

The story of Shoulder to Shoulder's Robotics Program serves as a paradigm for an appreciation of what we are accomplishing in our education mission. Over the past few years, Shoulder to Shoulder has recognized that our ongoing mission in health has become sustainable on the Frontera. With the contract with the Honduran Ministry of Health, basic health care is regularly available to the 70,000 residents in the seven municipalities that Shoulder to Shoulder serves. This health care is supplemented by the commitment of our partners in health care who send health professionals and students on service trips regularly. We are attentive to this critical, ongoing health mission, but our energies in development need to shift focus so that Shoulder to Shoulder will continue to serve the critical, emerging needs of the people in the Frontera. Education is the key to that development.



Students at the Good Shepherd Bilingual School

We call our education mission CREE. In Spanish, “cree” is the second person (formal) or third person singular form of “believe” in the present tense, such as “You believe” or “She/He believes.” It also can be the command form of believe as in “Don’t despair, but believe!” So we believe our education program is aptly named, it is indeed a question of believing. The acronym “CREE” stands for Centro Regional para Excelencia in Educación, or in English, Regional Center for Educational Excellence. A regional center for educational excellence demands that all involved (administrators, educators, students, families, and the society at large) believe that excellence in education is possible and of indispensable value in bringing about substantive change. In shorthand, we are dreaming of things that never were, and our mission is what happens when we ask, “Why not?”



Volunteers dancing with the children

Our [Good Shepherd Bilingual School in Camasca](#) is unique in all of Honduras, though perhaps it should be common rather than unique. It is a public school, accessible to everyone, and yet it offers an education of exceptional quality. Should not all children, independent of their economic status, or where and to whom they were born, have unencumbered access to a quality education of exceptional quality? That is our belief and that is what we hope to achieve at all academic centers on the Frontera. This is the seed that we are planting that will produce a yield of development. Engaged minds, critical thinkers, will be able to look at the problems and circumstances that support cyclical poverty and design solutions. They will bring water to a thirsty land. They will provide nutrition to hungry children. They will create jobs and opportunities to enrich an impoverished people. This is what we believe. This is CREE.

Some ‘things that never were’ have already come to be.

We have been successful at the bilingual school in utilizing the technology available for the KA Lite program and other technologically based curriculum to engage students and teachers in interactive education. Building on that success, we are introducing the same tools and support for its deployment and implementation at other academic institutions. Presently, we have programs running at the high school in Camasca, at the primary school in Camasca, and at the high school in Magdalena. We have gathered the stakeholders of this mission, the local community leaders and partners in the US, to discern the best way to enable excellence in education. We will continue to seek investment and ownership in this mission to bring about excellence in education. In the same way that our health mission has become sustainable on the Frontera, excellence in education will become standard and stable.

Some 'things that never were' still need to come to be.

- ❖ We have some support for this ambitious mission in education, but we need a lot more.
- ❖ We have a few schools, primary secondary, and at the university level, that are partnering with us in the mission, but we need a lot more.
- ❖ We have some volunteers that are giving their time and talent to bring excellence into public education, but we need a lot more.
- ❖ We have some donors who have committed their resources to an inversion into a mission, but we need a lot more.

Perhaps YOU are a part of the “lot more” that we need to make the things that never were a reality.

- Are you, or someone you know, part of a school or organization that might consider partnering with us?
- Could you form a brigade or service trip, or adopt a classroom? Why not?
- Are you, or someone you know, interested in dedicating a time in your life as a volunteer? Why not?
- Are you, or someone you know, able to invest some resources in bringing about substantial, meaningful change?
- Perhaps you could sponsor a child at our bilingual school, or support one of our teens on the robotics team? Why not?



Volunteer Jessica

It doesn't take much to look at things the way they are and ask “why.” It doesn't make things any better either, and often simply brings about despair. But to dream of things that never were and ask “why not,” well that requires a lot. But it yields the hope to make the difference in bringing about substantive change. We have a little. We believe we will receive much more. In the end, we are not content to simply ask why, but we are moved to and inspired to realize the why not.

Communicate with us at:

paulandlaura@shouldertoshoulder.org

Consider volunteering with us at:

<http://shouldertoshoulder.org/volunteer-opportunities>

Sponsor a Child at:

<http://shouldertoshoulder.org/sponsorshipprogram>

Make a general donation at:

<http://shouldertoshoulder.force.com/undesigned>