

Winter 2018

León Center Newsletter



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Little did I imagine when I took a group of 14 students to study in León for spring quarter, 2007 that ten years later we would have a full-blown study center located in a lovingly restored 16th century royal palace in that historic city. In May 2010 King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofía officially inaugurated the Palacio Conde Luna, home to the León Center. Since that first program over 1000 students and faculty, from 15 different departments and units at the University of Washington, as diverse as Spanish, English, MATESOL, Art, and Law, among others, have lived and studied at the León Center, and it continues to grow and prosper.

Fruit of a three-way partnership between the Universidad de León, the City Government of León, and the UW, the León Center aspires to be more than a remarkable resource for our students and faculty. An integral part of our commitment to León is to be a cultural resource for the city and the region. We do this by sponsoring lectures and art exhibits, always free and open to the public. Our most recent exhibit, detailed in this newsletter, is the exhibit *¡Shalom! Sefarad*, organized by the Washington State Jewish Historical Society, the Seattle Sephardic Network, and the León Center, among others. The exhibit, lovingly curated by Stuart Eskenazi, tells the history of the Seattle Sephardic community, composed of descendants of Spanish Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, who have nonetheless maintained an emotional and linguistic connection to Sefarad (Hebrew for Spain) for over five centuries.

Our ambition is for the relationship to be a true exchange. University of León faculty have been visiting professors at the University of Washington. A University of León graduate student is finishing her PhD in the UW Spanish Department. We are working toward exchanges and eventual dual degrees in several disciplines, including Education.

Additionally, and largely through the good offices of Luis Fernando Esteban, the Honorary Consul of Spain in the Pacific Northwest, the León Center functions as a hub for businesses and scientific enterprises between León and Seattle. The collaboration between INCIBE, Spain's cybersecurity institute, and UW Tacoma, is just one such example.



Anthony L. Geist
Executive Director of the León Center

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR, cont.

The programs featured in this newsletter showcase several of the many ways the León Center can enrich the lives of our students. The Advanced Spanish program, directed by Suzanne Tierney, immersed students in the study of the Spanish language, culture and literature, garnering them 19 credits. Read about their experience working as conversation assistants in English language classes in León's public schools.

The Communications program, led by Randy Beam and Katie King, engaged students directly with the greater community of León through projects related to the impact of the ancient Camino de Santiago (St. James Way) on the economy, environment, and culture of the city. An outstanding component of both programs were the homestays. Learn about students' experiences with their host families.

The UW León Center is entirely self-sustaining. This means it receives no money from the central campus and runs on student fees. Your generous contributions to the León Center Scholarship and Discretionary Funds make this extraordinary experience available to ever greater numbers of students. To donate, visit <http://www.washington.edu/giving/make-a-gift> and search for "Leon Center".

¡Felices Fiestas! Que el Año Nuevo nos dé paz, conocimiento y alegría.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: Communications in Spain

UW Students Study Communication amid Drought and Political Upheaval in Spain

By Randy Beam, Director of Communication Spain in León

LEÓN, Spain, December 2017 - A fifth year of drought in north-central Spain that threatens to pit agricultural interests against the area's booming tourism industry. A volatile secession movement in nearby Catalonia, home to Barcelona, Spain's second-largest city. A national economy struggling to regain its health after being devastated during the Great Recession. That was the backdrop for the work of 20 students in UW's Communication Spain study-abroad program in Autumn Term 2017.

The program, now in its third year, teaches students how to conduct communication research and engage in compelling storytelling in an international context. The students take two Communication courses at the UW León Center, located in the historic Palacio Conde Luna, an 800-year-old palace that has been meticulously renovated into a mixed-use space that includes UW classrooms, a small auditorium and a city museum. A third course, in conversational Spanish, is taken at the nearby Centro de Idiomas (language center), which is affiliated with the University of León.

This fall, the Camino de Santiago was the focus of Instructor Katie King's communication course on Writing with Voice. King, a former journalist and public relations executive, has lived



Photo courtesy of Suzanne Tierney

DID YOU KNOW THAT UW SPANISH STUDENTS HAVE A FACEBOOK PAGE FOR THE ADVENTURES OF DUBS?

According to Suzanne Tierney, director of the AUT17 Advanced Spanish program in León, her "students have created a Facebook Page with photos and posts of Dubs, re-named 'León Dubs'. In teams of three, the students take turn hosting Dubs. The task is to take a picture of the dog in various locations, and then write—in Spanish—a short narration of where he is, what he is doing, etc."

Check out Dubs and all of his adventures:

<https://www.facebook.com/dubsenleon/>

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: Communications in Spain, cont.

in Spain. She is an inductee of the Department of Communication's Hall of Fame and is currently a doctoral student in Spanish.

The Camino is an engine of growth for León's tourism industry. It draws a quarter-million "peregrinos" each year, passing through León as they make their way across northern Spain to their final destination in Santiago de Compostela.

King's students explored the economic and cultural impact of the Camino on León, telling stories about the hostels, restaurants and merchants that cater to those who walk the Camino. The peregrinos, they discovered, do bring euros into the community but also strain local resources. For example, they consume water in an area plagued by drought and create garbage that needs to be collected and processed. Their nearly continual presence also threatens to reshape the centuries-old rhythms of life in León's historic Barrio Humedo neighborhood.

"The students did some outstanding work researching the impact of Camino tourism growth on the people who live on and near this 1,000 year-old path. They told their stories on multiple platforms: videos, blogs, research papers, and digital magazines. Their work not only helped them understand this fascinating part of the world, but also helped them develop their own voices as story-tellers," King said.

A surprisingly popular part of the Writing with Voice course was the assignment to write 100 words by hand in a journal every day, including weekends and travel days (and to be submitted weekly to the professor online). Students could write whatever they wanted, but had to write every day, and keep it short. The twin requirements of discipline in length and frequency of writing was new to many students, who reported huge growth in their confidence as writers and in their ability to use different tools and devices of writing with voice.

In their second Communication course, students undertook research projects that evaluated differences between Spanish and American media content. They conducted their research in small groups as part of Professor Randy Beam's course on comparative Content Analysis. "Every day we are immersed in media content, from the time we get up until the time we fall asleep," Beam said. "Living for 10 weeks in another country presents a rare opportunity for us to step back and look at differences between the ubiquitous media content that Spaniards and Americans consume. That should give us more insight into what's in these messages – the ads, the newspaper articles, the photos – that we find in both nations."

The secession movement in Catalonia was a timely topic for two groups of Beam's student researchers. They examined differences in how U.S. and Spanish news outlets wrote about and photographed those who were caught up in the secession movement.

Other research groups focused on differences in fashion advertising, treatment of women in sports magazines, warnings on cigarette boxes and even the characteristics of food packaging. Both courses ended with public presentations of the students' work at the Palacio. "A study-abroad program isn't just about taking classes in a different setting," Beam explained. "It's also about learning from close observations of how people work, live and think in a different culture. Both Katie and I were intent on getting students to take a close look at Spanish life through the lenses of our Communication courses, and then getting them to tell people in León what they had discovered about this beautiful country."

"A study abroad program... is about learning from close observations of how people work, live and think in a different culture."

DO YOU WANT TO SET UP YOUR OWN PROGRAM OR CONFERENCE AT THE LEÓN CENTER?

Contact Lani Phillips, Director of Program Development, at leonctr@uw.edu for more information!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: Advanced Spanish in Spain

Service Learning Project and Coursework for Spanish Department Students

by Suzanne Tierney, Director of Advanced Spanish in León

LEÓN Spain, December 2017. Learning a foreign language can be challenging, but it can also be a lot of fun. The 15 students in the Advanced Spanish Program have adopted this philosophy since the first day of their Service Learning Project, in which they serve as Teaching Assistants to English Instructors in the local High Schools. It is a wonderful learning experience for all, as the challenging task of second language learning becomes a fun, meaningful cultural exchange.

During the first week of the program, the UW students attend an Orientation Session delivered by Ms. Delia Vázquez Blanco, a representative from the Ministry of Education in the province of Castilla y León. Ms. Vázquez explains the basics of the compulsory education system in Spain, and the expectations of the teachers and their assistants. Of special interest to our program is the exciting initiative to incorporate more bilingual education, with English as the second language, in the schools. This provides more opportunities for native speakers of English to participate as teaching assistants.

After the Orientation Session, the supervising teachers from each of the participating schools, more than 12 in total, arrive to greet the UW students. They then walk together to their schools, and the UW students begin their role as English Teaching Assistant.

"I was assigned to a High School - IES Juan del Enzina," says junior Stacey Schmeltz. "I remember that I was so nervous when my supervising teacher introduced me to the class. The students stared at me and didn't say much at first. But, as the weeks went on, we got to know each other better, and it was really fun to help them speak in English. They also taught me a lot of slang expressions in Spanish, which I never would have learned from a book!"

Students earn one Service Learning credit for participating in this project. Their experiences are also incorporated in curriculum of the Spanish 302 (Advanced Writing) and Spanish 301 (Advanced Oral Communication) classes. In Span302, students read segments of **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**, by educator Paulo Freire, and write reflection papers on how his proposed pedagogy shapes a new relationship among teacher, student, and society. In Span301, students conduct oral interviews with their supervising teachers and students and make oral presentations comparing and contrasting the education systems of the US and Spain.

"I remember that I was so nervous when my supervising teacher introduced me to the class."

Photo courtesy of Suzanne Tierney



NEWS: *Shalom! Sefarad* Exhibit

Homecoming: UW León Center reconnects Seattle Sephardic community with Spain

By Katie King

LEÓN, Spain, Sept. 7, 2017 – The names are so familiar to locals: Calderón, Mayo, Agudo, de León. These are names of Seattleites from the Pacific Northwest's vibrant Sephardic community and they are also very common names of people from this ancient city, founded by the Romans and home to a thriving Jewish community in the Middle Ages.

In a moving homecoming event, Seattle's Sephardic community was celebrated here today with launch of a one-month exhibit *¡Shalom! Sefarad (Hello! Spain)* which profiles the Sephardic immigrant families who made their way from the Ottoman Empire to Seattle in the early 20th Century, and there kept alive the rich traditions handed down from their ancestors in Spain, a nation they call "Sefarad."

Large Jewish communities once energized Spain through their contributions in art, culture, scholar and commerce. Today, more than 500 years after being forced to leave Spain, Spanish Jews – known as *Sefardi* – preserve that legacy within a flourishing community in Seattle. *¡Shalom! Sefarad* profiles these families and illustrates their historical connection to León. The exhibit includes displays of the language, music, foods and other Sephardic traditions that have survived the centuries and reflect a Spanish heritage. *¡Shalom! Sefarad* is a reminder of the past but, also a celebration of the present and vital connection between two far-flung communities.

A joint project of the **León Center of the University of Washington** and the **Washington State Jewish Historical Society**, the exhibit was inaugurated by UW Professor Anthony Geist, founder and director of the UW Center in León, along with a number of national, regional and local officials including Antonio Silván, Mayor of León, Mar Sancho Sanz, Cultural Policy Director of the regional Castilla y León government, Juan Francisco García Marín, President of the University of León, and Luis Fernando Esteban, Honorary Consul of Spain in Seattle.

"The most moving part of the opening for me was seeing the response to one of the last panels in the exhibit, which lists a number of family names in the Seattle Sephardic community: De León,

De Jaen, Calderon, Calvo, Soriano, Toledo... The audience recognized them as *their* names. I think this helps close a gap of 500 years," Geist said.



Anthony Geist explains the history of the Sephardic community in Seattle
Photo courtesy of rejuderias.org

Several members of the Seattle Sephardic community travelled to León for the opening of the exhibit including Doreen Alhadeff, President of the Seattle Sephardic Network and the first U.S. Sephardic community member to receive Spanish citizenship, Lisa Kranseler, Director of the

"I think this helps close a gap of 500 years."

DID YOU KNOW THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITY ORIGINATED ABOUT 1,000 YEARS AGO IN THE IBERIAN PENINSULA?

Living under Catholic or Muslim rule, Jews energized Spanish society through their contributions in art, culture and commerce. They also produced world-renowned rabbinic scholarship.

-By Katie King

NEWS: *Shalom! Sefarad* Exhibit, cont.

Washington State Jewish Historical Society and exhibit curator Stuart Eskenazi.

Through stories, photos and songs, *¡Shalom! Sefarad* reminds Spaniards and Americans of our common past, as we celebrate the present. The exhibit debuts at a time that Spain is enjoying a renaissance in appreciating its Sephardic Jewish history. The Spanish government, having come to terms with the wrongs of the past, is offering citizenship opportunities to people of Sephardic descent throughout the world, including Seattle.

The exhibit is made possible in part through the generous support of: Ayuntamiento de León, Universidad de León, The Isaac Alhadeff Foundation, Seattle Sephardic Network, Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood, Red de Juderías de España, Centro Sefarad Israel, and the Honorary Consulate of Spain in Seattle. After León, the exhibit will travel to the cities of Estella in Navarra and Madrid.

NEWS: León Center Receives Award

UW León Center Honored for Contribution to León's Culture and Community

By Katie King

LEÓN, Spain, Oct. 20, 2017 – León's leading digital news site *leonoticias.com* today honored the University of Washington León Center with an award applauding the Center's 10 years of cultural contribution to the city of León and its citizens.

The award coincides with the 10th anniversary of the launch of *leonoticias.com*, whose success and growth has paralleled that of the UW León Center, the only permanent study center for UW study abroad students besides Rome.

"What I find most gratifying about the León Center receiving the award from *leonoticias.com* is the recognition of the UW's contribution—cultural, academic and human—to León both within and beyond the classroom. We anticipate that our first decade will be just one of many more to come," said Anthony Geist, founder and Executive Director of the León Center.

The UW Center hosts classes and students from a variety of University of Washington Departments, including Spanish & Portuguese and Communication. Classes range from Spanish Literature, Writing with Voice, Content Analysis, the Food and Drink of Spain and even includes a focus on the famous pilgrimage of the St. James Way (Camino de



Randy Beam and Santos Rodríguez on stage with award
Photo courtesy of B. Nakata

"What I find most gratifying about the León Center receiving the award...is the recognition of the UW's contribution—cultural, academic and human—to León both within and beyond the classroom."

NEWS: León Center Receives Award, cont.

Santiago), which passes directly through León. UW students live with host Spanish families, and often forge long-lasting friendships with them, as well as with the local program directors and the Spanish professors from the University of León's Centro de Idiomas.

The award was accepted by UW Communication Department Professor Emeritus Randal Beam who has led the creation of a Communication study program here and teaches in León regularly. In a speech at the award ceremony, Beam told the estimated 700 people gathered in the León City Auditorium that UW students are the ones who bring value to the program and to the people of León.

"The award is a testament to the contributions that UW students have made to this community. They have done service learning projects in the UW courses that they take here. They have written articles for publications like *leonoticias.com*. They have shared their insights and experiences with their host families. And, of course, they have contributed to the local economy through the money that they have spent in León's stores and cafes and bakeries," Beam said.

"The citizens of León have more than returned the favor, of course. They have provided homes and meals for our students. They have helped them when they were sick, and they have given advice when they asked for it—and sometimes when they didn't ask for it but needed it nonetheless. They have made them feel welcome here. They have been their most important teachers about the rich culture of this city and country," he said.

UW President Ana Mari Cauce praised the León program and thanked *leonoticias.com* for the award. In comments shared with the audience by Beam, she also emphasized the important role that León's citizens have to play in student learning. "Our students learn a great deal studying and living here. I want to thank the city of León, the Centro de Idiomas, and especially the families that take in our students with such tremendous hospitality. They all make immeasurable contributions to our students' education," Cauce said.

See local news coverage of the *leonoticias.com* award.

<http://www.leonoticias.com/leon/premio-apuesta-exito-20171021125518-nt.html>

<http://www.vocento.com/sala-prensa/2017/10/21/leonoticias-cumple-10-anos-de-compromiso-y-lealtad-a-la-informacion-y-a-sus-lectores.html>

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Santos Rodríguez

UW León Center Coordinator Santos Rodríguez – a life changer for UW students

By Randy Beam, Director Communications Spain program in León

LEÓN, Spain, December 2017 - For eight years, Santos Rodríguez has been changing the lives of students who come to the UW León Center to take classes and to immerse themselves in Spanish culture.

Rodríguez is the local coordinator of the UW Center. In that role he is alternately a Spanish teacher, a counselor, a tour guide, a facilities manager and a dispute mediator. Those are his tasks. But ask him to describe his role at the Center, and he's more likely to invoke the language of a change agent.

"The award is a testament to the contributions that UW students have made to this community."

**MORE THAN
700**
students have
studied at the León
Center.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Santos Rodríguez, cont.

The students suddenly find themselves in multiple novel situations simultaneously, he says, and that can be stressful. They are eating different types of food, living with strangers, adjusting to a different daily routine, and trying to negotiate their way in a new city with a language that many of them can barely speak.

These circumstances may be stressful, but for Rodríguez they also are pregnant with opportunity. He wants to gently take advantage of that by encouraging them to relax and immerse themselves in Spanish life. "I want to make them 'feel' this experience so that it changes their lives," he says.



*Santos Rodríguez leading a group of UW students
Photo courtesy of Paul Brannan*

Rodríguez took his part-time position with UW in 2010, after having run his own business – a small English language school - for several years before moving into teaching languages. He started with UW about the time that the Center opened in the Palacio Conde Luna, a restored palace that houses UW classrooms, a public auditorium and a city museum.

Rodríguez divides his work time between his duties at the UW Center and his responsibilities as an English teacher at the Centro de Idiomas, which is the UW's partner institution in León. There, he helps local Spanish speakers learn a language that his UW students have already mastered.

Though Rodríguez' life is quite different from many of his students – he's married, with a 15-year-old son and a passion for jogging – one thing he shares with them is an affinity for social media. He has an active Facebook page, where one can find posts from excursions that UW students have just taken, activities in his language classes at the Centro de Idiomas and a regular weekend weather report that he does for León.

It is the educational aspects of his job that Rodríguez says he finds most rewarding – and by "educational" he doesn't mean the teaching. Rather, it's the chance for him to learn from the UW students – to learn how their perspectives and their ways of doing things differ from what he finds in León, a city where he's spent 41 of his 46 years.

Take, for example, Thanksgiving. It's become a tradition for the UW students in the Center's Autumn Term Spanish-language programs to cook a Thanksgiving dinner for themselves on the holiday. They often invite Rodríguez, who has learned from them that Thanksgiving – a holiday not observed in Spain – isn't like it's shown on television.

"All of these things that are different – these are things that enrich you," he says.

During the last eight years, Rodríguez estimates that he's had a chance to learn from more than 700 UW students. He says that in his job, his biggest challenge is helping create an experience for these students in León that will make them want to come back. That's one of his yardsticks for success.

"All of these things that are different – these are things that enrich you."

FAMILY SPOTLIGHT: Rocío Álvarez

Host Mom Rocío Álvarez - A perfect cook

By Ria Nagar, Student on Communications Spain Fall 2017 Program

Coming into León I was extremely nervous. I was about to begin a program in a place that I did not know much about, with people I did not know, and in an entirely different culture. The minute my host mom Rocío and I made eye contact, her warm smile and kind eyes were an immediate comfort. The first time stepping into her home, she showed me around and told me that whatever was hers was mine. I felt at home. The entire home-stay she made sure I was okay at all times, and made me feel as if I was living with my actual family. There were no formalities, no awkwardness. Her cooking was absolutely perfect. and since I am a vegetarian, she learned how to make a couple dishes from her friends just for me. It varied from different soups to risotto, to many Spanish tortillas and such. It was sweet because even though she loves eating meat, she stuck to vegetarian food during those couple months just for me! She would buy anything that I needed at a moment's notice. She truly was another mother to me, we became very close. I would change nothing about this experience, I feel incredibly lucky to have gotten her as my host mother. I am grateful to have a best friend and family here in León.



Rocío Álvarez
Photo courtesy of Ria Nagar

“The minute my host mom Rocío and I made eye contact, her warm smile and kind eyes were an immediate comfort.”

EXCURSION SPOTLIGHT: Las Médulas

Las Médulas: Beauty spot that's a scar on the landscape

By Paul Brannan

LAS MÉDULAS, Spain, October, 2017 - The beauty of the landscape at Las Médulas belies the reality of what took place in the area nearly 2,000 years ago.

Today's gorgeous hues of glowing sandstone peaks emerging from a verdant shroud of chestnut and oak forests looked very different then.

This was the site of a man-made ecological disaster, one that was devastating for the local flora and fauna and one which even now scars the earth.

The culprits were the Romans, mining for gold using an early form of hydraulic fracking.

They honeycombed the mountains with tunnels, diverted and trapped water from miles around and then unleashed it to blast through the passages.

Pliny the Elder described the mining technique as ruina montium, undercutting softer sandy soil to get at the precious ore, resulting in collapse and devastation.

EXCURSION SPOTLIGHT: Las Médulas, cont.

At their peak, the region's mines were the biggest producers of gold for the empire with figures estimating as much as 20,000 lbs a year was extracted.

Over the life of the site – which continued into the third century – that would mean around 500 million cubic meters of material were displaced.



*Las Médulas
Photo courtesy of Paul Brannan*

The gold found its way into artworks and jewelry and was also minted to pay the salaries of Rome's legionnaires.

The site is still making money today, but in more modest amounts; a few euros gets you a hard hat and entry into one of the mined tunnels.

The trail is lit, but not so well that the uneven floor is easily traversed, and the variable roof height will have all but the most diminutive stooping, if not to conquer, then to continue.

A few bumps and scrapes will prove the worth of the hard hat and the reward at the end is a view from a gaping hole blasted in the side of the mountain.

This is a Unesco World Heritage Site now, an outcome beyond the imaginings of the slaves and workers who labored, and died, in what was once a piece of hell on earth.

LIVING IN LEÓN: San Froilán Festival

Flagging Limbs at the San Froilán Fiesta

By Paul Brannan

LEÓN, Spain, October, 2017 - A forest of flagpoles is being raised when I arrive at Plaza San Marcos for the opening sequence of the day's San Froilán festival.

Some spars are still on the ground, like trees downed after a storm, and around them stocky individuals put their brawn to use hauling the poles back to vertical. It's no easy task; the carved and fluted trunks are extremely heavy. Groups of two or three individuals set about manhandling them to the upright while others grasp guy-ropes to aid stability.

Each flag is colorful but limp on a thankfully cool morning without a breath of wind. Each one represents an outlying village - and there are scores of them. Clustered around each are teams of supporters in bright, matching T-shirts. It's their task to carry their respective flags through the streets and up the incline to the Gothic masterpiece that is León's cathedral.

It's a distance of about 1.5km and an easy 20-minute stroll – if you're not carrying a 20+ft caber (and the size of your flagpole really counts when it comes to inter-village rivalry).

“At their peak, the region's mines were the biggest producers of gold for the empire with figures estimating as much as 20,000 lbs a year was extracted.”

LIVING IN LEÓN: San Froilán Festival, cont.

“The señoras and señoritas all wear floral headscarves that are a riot of color.”

While it’s an honor to be a bearer it’s a physical burden and an emotional one too - you’re carrying the hopes and bragging rights of your community.

For the honoree, there’s a downturned hook on the spar that slots into the special belt that is worn. Made of leather, it looks similar to those worn by weightlifters and does the same job, spreading the weight and offering some protection to the back muscles.

There’s a lot of stop-start shuffling as the parade comes to order and begins to move off. Keeping the pole from toppling requires good balance and hefty arm strength – muscles and sinews are already being tested.

Mixed in with the flag-bearers are village musicians playing bagpipes, flutes, drums and clacking castanets. Alongside them are the dancers, the peacocks of the parade in their gorgeously, gaudy traditional costumes.

The señoras and señoritas all wear floral headscarves that are a riot of color. Shoulders are clad in expensive and elaborately decorated silk mantillas, edged with playful tassels. Tight-waisted, flared skirts come in two styles, either richly embroidered or in bold colors with black banding. Shiny brooches, pins and earrings add to the dazzling display.

While the dancers delight with their intricate footwork and whirling skirts of kaleidoscopic color the flagbearers toil.

It’s getting warmer by the minute; the parade has concertinaed to another halt for no apparent reason and the strain is beginning to tell.

A wobble here, a teeter there and the wisdom of having guy-rope holders comes into play. They have to be alert and they have to be quick. A dart to the right to counter-balance the leaning pole, then a tug to the left as the adjustment overcompensates.

At the foot of this giant toothpick, muscles are aching, lactic acid is building up, the full realization of the undertaking is starting to sink in. The incline to the cathedral is not in the realms of Golgotha, though some of the more severe Catholics might wish it so, it’s a steady, gentle slope. The route runs along the former Roman road, Calle Ancha, the prime section and every inch of viewing space has been claimed.

You can almost hear the inner voice of the pole-bearers as they slog through the throng: “Come on! Don’t falter now, not in front of all these people.”

But falter one did, only a few yards shy of the finish. The shaft lurched precariously, was arrested and then teetered in another direction. Another correction, a struggling for mastery, but the pole had the beating of him.

Fellow team members swooped in, steadied the shaft and decoupled the fatigued bearer from his agony. He looked crestfallen but was met with sympathy from the crowd. And, of course, there’s always next year.



*Flags in San Froilán Festival
Photo courtesy of Paul Brannan*

DID YOU KNOW THE LEÓN CENTER IS SELF-SUSTAINING?

Support the mission of the León Center by contributing to our student scholarship and operating funds. Visit

www.washington.edu/giving/make-a-gift

and search for “Leon Center” to make a gift.