

# Group hopes event spreads awareness of reducing conflict

## Latin America focus of Cumming-based CEMPROC

By Crystal Ledford

Staff Writer

A little piece of Ecuador will be coming to Forsyth County this weekend.

The Center for Mediation, Peace and Resolution of Conflict (CEMPROC), based in Cumming, will host the first Taste of Ecuador Benefit Dinner this Saturday beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Cane Creek Farm in Forsyth.

"The Taste of Ecuador dinner will be a wonderful opportunity to share the culture of Latin America and have a great time while supporting an important cause," said Jeff Pugh, founder and executive director of CEMPROC.

A nonprofit organization based in Cumming and Quito, Ecuador, CEMPROC was founded in 2003 by Forsyth County native Jeff Pugh. Since then, the organization has provided training in effective conflict resolution and communication skills such as negotiation and mediation to more than 1,000 community leaders, college students and children in both the United States and Ecuador.

The mission of CEMPROC is to "reduce destructive conflict and promote global peace" with the ultimate purpose of "reducing conflict in Latin America," according to the CEMPROC Web site.

"Conflict is a reality that we all face, and it can be very destructive if not managed constructively," said Pugh. "CEMPROC seeks to provide community leaders and children with tools and techniques to resolve conflict effectively and peacefully in order to build a society that is ready for dialogue."

In addition to Pugh, CEMPROC's leadership includes a director in Ecuador, Diana Palacios, and an international board of directors who govern CEMPROC and work in consultation with a local board of directors in Ecuador to oversee the Ecuador branch.

CEMPROC offers its training and educational programs especially for "marginalized areas in the developing world" and among immigrant communities in the United States, building local capacity in peaceful conflict resolution and mediation.

Pugh said most of the organization's work has been done internationally, but some work has occurred in Forsyth.

"Currently, most of our pro-

**Who:** Center for Mediation, Peace and Resolution

**What:** Taste of Ecuador Benefit Dinner

**Where:** Cane Creek Farm, 5110 Jekyll Road

**When:** Saturday, 6:30 p.m.

For more information log onto [www.cemproc.org](http://www.cemproc.org).

grams are in Ecuador, but we have offered some in Cumming," said Pugh. "Most recently, we have held three conflict resolution programs at the First United Methodist Church in Cumming. Those were mostly for Spanish-speaking kids. We're hoping to expand our local programs. Just this summer, we completed a training academy for six

new instructors so we can provide more local offerings to children in Forsyth."

Saturday's fund-raising event will feature selections of traditional Ecuadorian dishes prepared with fresh organic ingredients from Cane Creek Farm, located at 5110 Jekyll Road and owned by Pugh's mother, Lynn Pugh. Local chefs will also provide a sampling of various dishes from all around Latin America.

Additionally, the event will feature Latin American music and a live dance presentation by the Cumming International Folkloric Group, as well as a silent auction and hay rides and petting farm for children.

Tickets to the event are \$25 for adults and \$12.50 for children under age 12.

Jeff Pugh said the cost of one adult ticket could provide training and materials "so that a dozen children in Cumming can learn about effective and nonviolent conflict resolution."

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"When a couple buys tickets, they are providing sufficient support to allow an Ecuadorian indigenous community leader to receive an intensive 20-hour practicum in practical peacemaking, conflict resolution and leadership," he added.

Pugh said he and other leaders of the organization are

"very excited" about the dinner.

"We've already had quite a few people order tickets or say they're interested. It's going to be a lot of fun," said Pugh. "We're also hoping this will be a way to get our name out more to the local community.

We're very excited about the chance to help the Forsyth

County community learn more about our organization."

For more information about CEMPROC or to order tickets to Saturday's dinner event, log onto [www.cemproc.org](http://www.cemproc.org).

To learn more about Cane Creek Farm, log onto [www.canecreekfarm.net](http://www.canecreekfarm.net).

E-mail Crystal Ledford at [crystalledford@forsythnews.com](mailto:crystalledford@forsythnews.com).



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