

Meet a New ASP Member

ASP welcomes many new members to The Society this year. Among them is Christina Almonte. Possessing a diversity of experiences, including travel to the Amazon, Ms. Almonte took time out from starting her own business to answer a few questions for *The Newsletter*. We are grateful to her for granting us the opportunity to get more acquainted with her and her work.

What are your research interests in pharmacognosy?

I have a bit of attention deficit disorder with research, because of my driven desire to find the cure for cancer. I have had this drive since the age of 13, and thus my interests in various fields of research, pharmaceuticals, and the business world have varied in order to hone my skills for the research of cancer. My dream of starting my own business to contribute to the ongoing research is now becoming a reality.

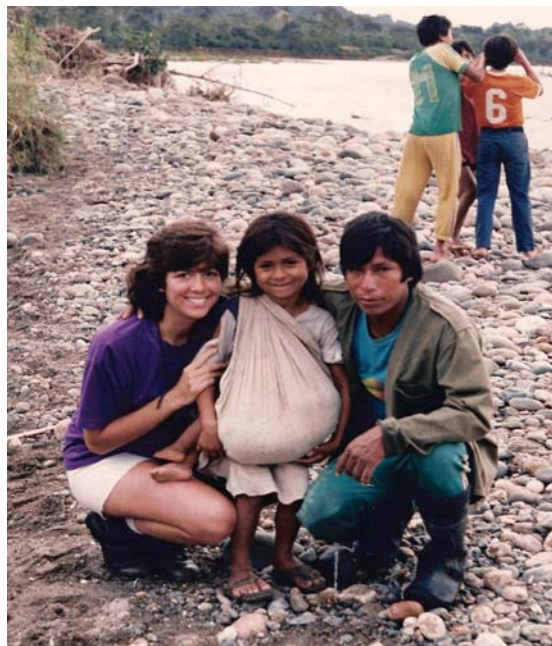
I am currently in the initial development stage of a new company, Universal Providence, LLC with product testing and community negotiations. Universal Providence, LLC was established to meet two independent needs in very different worlds. First off, innovative commercial products that utilize medicinal plants from around the world will enable impoverished indigenous communities an opportunity for economic sustainability in the present day. Secondly, Universal Providence's innovative nutraceutical products will reach and aid people around the world in various therapeutic areas.

Why did you join ASP?

I joined ASP specifically because of the credible ongoing research it supports and reports in the *Journal of Natural Products*. I like having the ability to keep updated with the news that is offered in this field as I also share a mutual interest with ASP in preserving biodiversity and the rain forests.

What is your scientific background?

My background includes a BS in Microbiology and minor in Chemistry from the University of Rhode Island, 1991. I had a special inner desire to work with plants and persuaded ASP member Dr. Yuzuru Shimizu in the Pharmacognosy Department to take me under his wing to study the last two



Christina Almonte (left), on a 1989 trip in Ecuador. Ms. Almonte notes, "Although I have changed quite a bit, my heart for these people has only grown fonder and I refuse to age!"

years of my degree. During the last years of my degree, I had the good fortune to travel to the rainforest of Ecuador to study under Dr. Bradley C. Bennett. We worked with the Quichuan Indians in the Amazon basin, identifying and collecting medicinal plants for the National Cancer Institute.

I later worked with the Natural Product Drug Discovery group in Research and Development at Bristol Myers Squibb Company, under Dr. Sal Forenza working with the Plant Chemical Dereplication group.

What would like to achieve through your membership?

My interest in joining the ASP, is to stay connected to the ongoing activities of this field of science. I believe the field of pharmacognosy is fascinating and I hope my company will be another voice to contribute to the success of this highly important field.