

Dear AOC Committee,

The AOC stipend helped me tremendously! I have an estranged relationship with my parents, and knew that I couldn't ask for much or expect for their full financial support. Before even going to Puerto Rico, I knew this trip was going to change my perspective and life (as dramatic as that sounds). I am eternally grateful that programs like these exist for POC students. I do not come from a rigorous academic background, in fact when I was 16 years old I dropped out of highschool. I eventually went back, and graduated when I was 21 (I'm 24 now). Ever since, I've been chasing my dream of becoming a veterinarian. Working for SATO Project has opened many doors for me and given me opportunities, I'd never imagine would come to me. I wore many hats on the job. I was shadowing veterinarians full time, for the spayathon event. Surgery started promptly at 6am, I'd finish working around 8-9p.m. And do it all over again for 10 days! I did not see ANY sunlight, and probably had one meal a day. But, I was my best self under all the pressure. Some of my responsibilities, included keeping track of surgical data. For example, the type of suture being done, type of surgery (spay or neuter), were there any pregnancies found during operations, what kind of animal was given anesthetics (cat or dog. I believe cats don't need anesthesia during surgery only a shot before), who was the doctor performing the operation, and inform doctors of previous health records. I had to do this for 10 animals at the same time, totaling in about 200 a day. The Humane Society of The United States used the data collected to inform public and for it to be used on a study, that the university of Florida will be doing. When I had my data under control, I would help with registration (in Spanish). When I wasn't doing that, I worked at the pharmacy booth, filling up syringes with vaccines, and administering them into the correct patient paperwork.

Puerto Rico taught me to believe in myself and not to listen to anyone who thinks I won't get into vet school. It taught me that anything and everything is possible as long as you work hard, persist, and are passionate! Going through this experience, encouraged me to come back to Antioch with a more positive attitude. I feel much more focused and secure in my long term goals. I would like to share that I was invited back for the last spayathon round in Puerto Rico! I will be there for 7 days beginning of May. I hope the AOC will continue to help out kids in similar situations. \$500 changed my life for 20 days! I will absolutely join the committee (once I get my vet salary). I would like to support future Antioch students accomplish their dreams and do good for the world. I've attached photos below.

Thank you for everything!

Maria Andrea Lopez Soto
Antioch College '21



Doctors, Staff, and Volunteers



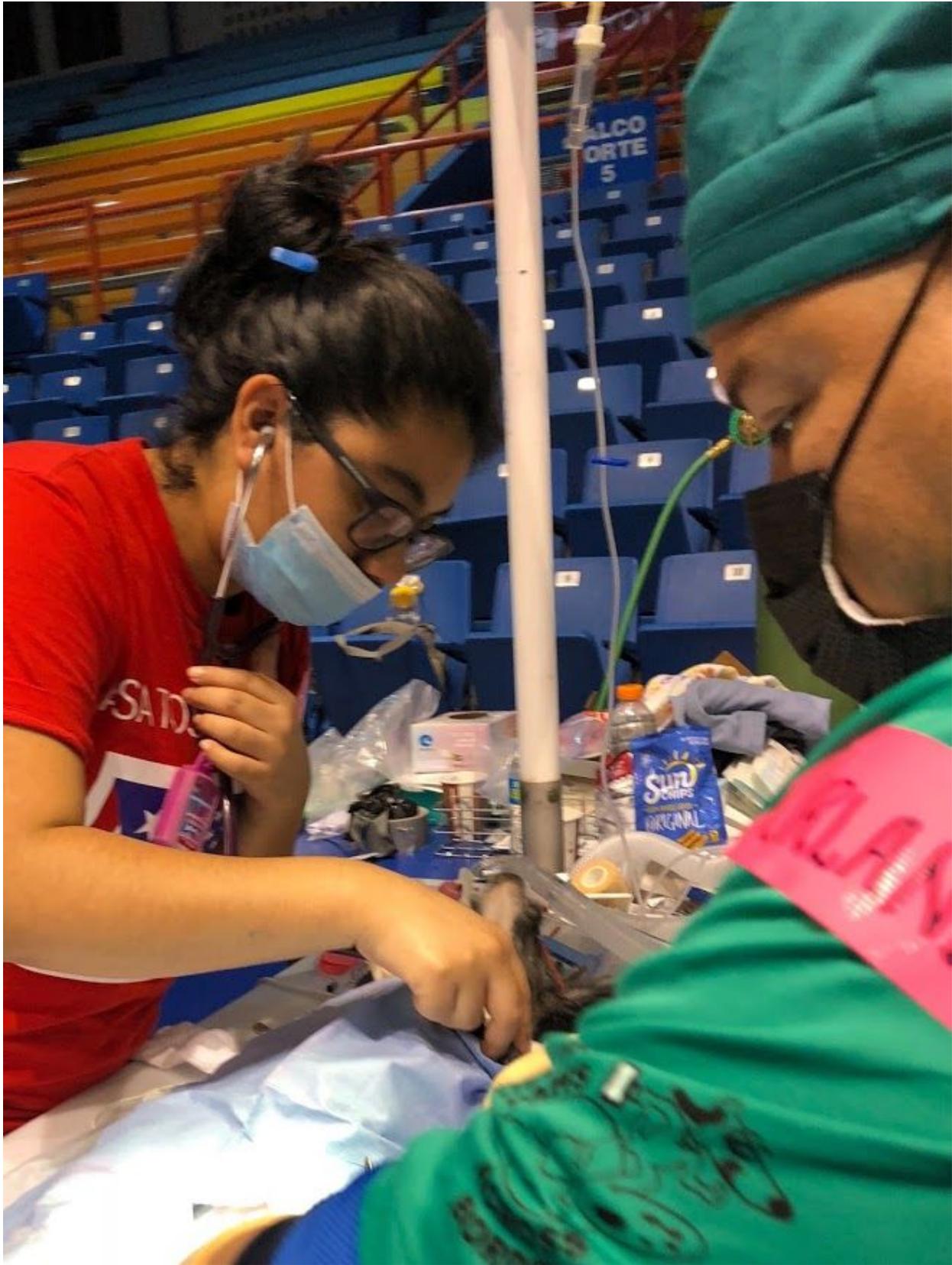
Some of the SATO Project vet techs, and volunteers.



Neuter surgery for adult German Shepherd.



Me.



Dr. B and I.



Recovery.