



## The Newsletter, Spring 2024



*Our mission is "to provide for low income Dominicans in the Dominican Republic, grants for educational and training purposes designed to assist them in bettering their lives and designed to help them attain personal development, skills, and advancement."*

### In This Edition:

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*Fondo Quisqueya is supporting The Baseball Island Foundation (TBIF) to provide alternatives to peloteros with big league dreams. Read below to learn more!*

### FQ Partner: Community Services Alliance

We are very excited to have Community Services Alliance (CSA) join the FQ network of local partners with a grant to support their youth-centered community projects across the DR. FQ is supporting CSA projects in the amount of \$3,000 in La Lecheria (SD) and Las Galeras (Samana)



to expand their youth development and digital literacy activities.

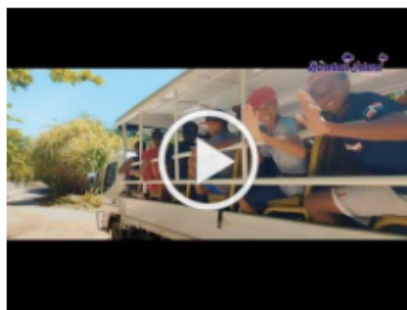
CSA celebrates its second decade of projects focused on community-driven leadership and training projects in Santo Domingo, Hato Mayor and more recently Samana. Rigil Ballester and Elizabeth Conklin created CSA in 2004 to bring US University technical teams to the DR as a cultural and technical training exchange and have continued evolving the mission and range of projects.

Rigil has Peace Corps and Entrena roots through his mother Violeta Ballester Wu, who is known and beloved by several generations of PCVs as their language trainer. Elizabeth came to the DR in the 90s and has been active in a series of organizations and USAID health projects while co-piloting CSA. CSA has support from Junior Achievement and other international donors and integrates international volunteer opportunities through its projects. Website: [www.csadr.org](http://www.csadr.org)

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## Big League Alternatives

[The Baseball Island Foundation](#) was founded several years ago by a former Columbia University baseball coach to train young athletes in the DR who are pursuing their dream of becoming big league baseball players. There are many such programs in the DR, but TBIF is one of the very few that focuses on the >90% who will not make it to the big leagues and need to be prepared to pursue other career goals. Sadly, too often young Dominican men come out of these programs with a broken dream and no education to fall back on. TBIF provides education for the young athletes and requires them to participate in the educational programs, along with their athletic training. The program is based in Las Terrenas and currently supports close to 50 student-athletes. They have been successful at placing young Dominicans with big league teams and with baseball scholarships at American universities, in addition to preparing many for a life after baseball. Fondo Quisqueya is providing \$7,800 of support for one of their instructors.



*Watch the video above to learn more about The Baseball Foundation and what they do! You may even see some people you recognize.*



## Workforce Development with DREAM Project

The DREAM Project provides high-quality educational opportunities to children, youth, and families in the Dominican Republic. DREAM's transformative education programs complement the national education system and empower at-risk children and youth to create a better future for themselves and their families. Through innovative approaches to literacy, early childhood education, youth leadership, music instruction, and community support, DREAM promotes critical thinking and independence to enrich lives and strengthen sustainable communities

FQ's support of \$1,800 is for DREAM's [A Ganar Workforce Development Program](https://www.dominicandream.org/), an intensive course targeting at-risk youth between the ages of 17 and 25. The technical training strives to completely prepare participants with the specific skills demanded in the labor market. Young people receive training in technical vocational skills, English, customer service, restaurant service, financial literacy and management, among others. A Ganar's overall goal is to reduce the rate of delinquency and crime in communities across the North Coast. Website: <https://www.dominicandream.org/>

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## Peace Corps Update

In our March board meeting we were privileged to hear from our former FQ board member and current Regional Peace Corps Director for the Western Hemisphere and Pacific, Mike McCabe.

Mike reported that Peace Corps is growing in this post-pandemic period and currently has approximately 2,600 PCVs worldwide in 58 countries, 21 of them in the Americas and Pacific. In addition to the traditional sector priorities, promoting host country volunteerism and the climate are crosscutting issues. The PC/Dominican Republic program is now one of largest in the world.



The Peace Corps budget has always been a challenge. Today is no exception with many countries enthusiastic about welcoming PCVs back in country as Peace Corps struggles with competing budgetary priorities.

The second challenge is recruiting. Programs World-wide have not grown more quickly because of these recruiting challenges. It seems that people are currently reluctant to commit to the standard 27 month Peace Corps tour. The recruiting challenge has been aggravated by a higher than hoped-for attrition rate. As a consequence, Peace Corps is studying some alternatives. One is called the Peace Corps Response program which places volunteers for specific 3-12 month assignments. There is another "Virtual" pilot where you can contribute overseas without ever leaving home.

To help with the recruiting issue, Peace Corps is asking NPCA and all affinity groups like FQ and FDR to work to have "each organization reach one new applicant this year".

It's exciting to see that Peace Corps has reemerged and is being enthusiastically received by host countries.

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## From the President

Last week I was listening to a report on technology initiatives launched recently by Vice President Kamala Harris. What was reported led me to pull off to the side of the road to jot it down to be able to share with you. "All business is tech business. Digital inclusion grows the economy", said the Vice-President.

Why did that get my attention? Because I had just finished a call with Magdalena Guerra (Peace Corps Partnership Program Manager) and Alejandra Saldana (CED Program Manager) at PC/DR. During the call, we talked about the recently completed "Digital Literacy for Entrepreneur" courses for which FQ had contributed \$5,000. Officials from PC's partner, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Small Businesses (MICM), are eager to continue this partnership (between MICM and PC) to improve their ability to reach often unnoticed business owners from rural communities." As you will see in the DR economic update in this newsletter, this sort of training is consistent with priorities for growing the Dominican economy.



The Digital Literacy program for women is one of many programs FQ is supporting this year. As you will read in this newsletter, FQ has successfully created several opportunities with a diverse group of partner organizations to provide training and education to continue our critical mission —providing "low-income Dominicans...with scholarships and grants designed to assist them in bettering their lives."

With the one-year mark of PCVs' return to the DR, we are also working closely with the Peace Corps Staff in Santo Domingo to ramp up the number of individual scholarships we can provide through the unique contribution PCVs make by identifying members of their communities who have few other resources available to them.

At our upcoming annual meeting we will hear from a recent participant in the Digital Marketing Course for Small Business Owners about how she is using her newfound skills.

As always, I am grateful for your continued support for FQ's programs. You make it possible to advance the goal of helping people complete education that will improve their ability to better their lives and set a person and their family on a path out of poverty.

Janet

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Did you know?

## DR and CHIPS

[A recent article in the New York Times](#) cites Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic as effectively **competing to displace critical components of the supply chain** currently based in China. "While the CHIPS and Science Act is best known for its billion-dollar subsidies to build facilities on U.S. soil, it also provides modest funding for our allies. Costa Rica and Panama have received money to beef up their work forces and their infrastructure. The Dominican Republic looks poised to be next in line."

## RPCV on Issues and Myths of Haitians in the DR

## An Advanced Economy?

The Dominican Republic has been changing rapidly. [A recent NPR article](#) cites an IMF report projecting that the **DR could become an "advanced economy"** within the next 40 years. That's quite a transformation from the quaint agrarian economy that many of us remember. And the International Monetary Fund says that "the Dominican Republic has been closing the income gap with the U.S. faster than any other Latin American country in the past 50 years."



FQ by the numbers

Former PC/DR volunteer Jerry Murray has [written an article about Haitians in the DR](#) and some of the tensions and misconceptions. Jerry was a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Dominican Republic from 1964-66 and is Professor Emeritus of anthropology at the University of Florida. His professional interest has been Haiti. He is fluent in Spanish and Creole (and who knows how many other languages) and is currently studying Mandarin. Jerry has published four books on the Dominican Republic about microenterprises, including one on the colmados and another on the hair salons to which many Dominican women go at least once a week.

In this article he explores the [issues and myths of Haitians in the Dominican Republic](#) and our need to understand the complex history of the two countries. The article is on the Fondo Quisqueya website.

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## 2025 Reunion in the DR

A joint (FQ-FDR) committee has held several meetings to begin the planning for a PC reunion in the Dominican Republic in 2025. The committee is chaired by Kim Herman until a permanent chair is identified. It's not too late to let us know your thoughts about the proposed reunion and/or your willingness to participate in the planning. Please email us at [FondoQuisqueyaUSA@gmail.com](mailto:FondoQuisqueyaUSA@gmail.com).

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## It is with great sorrow

that we note the passing of long-time Fondo Quisqueya supporter and board member Rik Laird (1940-2024). Rik was a PCV in Padre las Casas from 1962-65 and Peace Corps' staff in Venezuela in the late 60s. During the 1965 revolution, Rik risked his own safety to deliver food to Peace Corps nurses attending to the injured in the "rebel" zone.

Rik and his wife Patti retained close relationships in the DR and returned there many times over the years. Two weeks prior to his passing Rik was on a conference call with another FQ board member and one of the new FQ programs mentioned in this newsletter. His intelligence, gentle manner and sense of humor will be sorely missed.



## US\$12,600

Fondo Quisqueya partnership allocations to projects run by Community Services Alliance, the DREAM Project, and The Baseball Island Foundation.

## US\$5,000

Fondo Quisqueya contribution to [Digital Literacy for Entrepreneur courses](#) run in partnership between PCVs in the CED Program and officials from PC's partner, the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Small Businesses (MICM).

# Announcements

Fondo Quisqueya Annual Meeting on Sunday, June 23rd.  
Watch email for details about how to join via Zoom.

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## Board of Directors

Officers: Janet Kerley, President; Minor Anderson, Vice President & Co-Editor Newsletter; Tito Coleman, Secretary; Bill Threlkeld, Treasurer; Directors: Mike Benson; John Evans; Stephanie Giddings; Dan Golub, Co-Editor Newsletter; Kathy Padilla; Dave Padilla; Josh Rosenthal; John Yuasa; Emeritus Directors: Robert Tafelski; Mary Ferrand; Mike McCabe

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We're just getting started!

