



THE NEWSLETTER

Fondo Quisqueya



"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." Fondo Quisqueya Bylaws 2005

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Coronavirus in the DR

September 4, 2020

Confirmed cases: 96,629Deaths: 1,801

Source: Johns Hopkins Coronavirus
 Resource Center

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/dominican-republic>

President's Report - FQ & The Future

Why Are We Still HERE????!!!!!! This question comes up more often this year. There are no PCVs in active service in the DR. Covid-19 has taken over many of our lives here in the US, amidst many competing needs and priorities. The DR has "developed" since many of the PC/DR Diaspora served there and is more modern and competitive. As you can see in the fine article by Carrie Meyer referenced below, economic growth of the DR is the highest in Latin America (tied with Chile) in the 1985-2018 period. All true, all reasonable.

And yet Fondo Quisqueya's core mission to support and promote leadership and educational opportunities for the most vulnerable members of Dominican society remains arguably more necessary than ever. Covid-19 has wreaked havoc on lives, jobs, opportunities, educational systems in the DR in similar ways as the US, but the most vulnerable have less resiliency, fewer support systems, and no savings cushion as they deal with the pandemic.

While we don't have a cohort of active PCVs in country, FQ has engaged and activated new ways of fulfilling our mission. We have offered to expand our support to the students at the Instituto Técnico to facilitate distance learning, continued support to the Lou Ferrand Scholars, and begun a new program with an organization familiar to many of you, Entrena S.A. (see below). Education has had to adapt to Covid-19, with an emphasis on online learning across the country, so FQ has adapted its funding support to this reality. *Continues on page 4*

Update from PC/DR

Jennifer McGowan, Interim Peace Corps Director in the DR reports that life on the island is still quite difficult. Despite there having been a curfew for the better part of the past six months, covid-19 cases continue to rise, however, recent reports are showing a decline in the number of positive cases reported, which is movement in the right direction. Peace Corps staff and in-

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FQ Supports Young Leaders Program

As thousands of young Dominicans have seen their education suspended because of the pandemic, Fondo Quisqueya has partnered with Entrena, a Dominican social entrepreneurship firm with over 36 years of experience, specializing in social development, education management, and cultural training. Since 2012 Entrena has implemented the Dominican

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Evacuated Peace Corps Volunteers

Fondo Quisqueya is very concerned about the Volunteers who were recently evacuated from the Dominican Republic. As noted in the PCDR Update from Jennifer McGowan, currently the post is closed and Volunteers returned to the US in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While these Evacuated Peace Corps Volunteers (EPCVs) are eager to return to the Dominican Republic and their projects, they've all had to rethink next steps and work plans. Their Peace Corps service was cut short and they were brought back to the US at one of the worst periods in America's history. It's unclear as to whether they will be able to return to their communities and projects in the DR. FQ has reached out to the evacuees in an effort to provide support and have them tell their stories to the FQ network. It is our hope that FQ's readership can offer a helping hand whether by alerting these Volunteers to job opportunities or other forms of assistance. We've all been through this re-integration process but never under these trying circumstances. Following are a couple of profiles. Thank you for any advice or support.

If you are an EPCV, and would like to be featured in an upcoming newsletter, please email Emily Nuss (ec-nuss@email.wm.edu) for more information!

Name: Sophia Rose Wischnewski

Email: SophiaWischnewski@go.rmc.edu

Hometown: Hay DEMASIAOOO... I lived in Pensacola Florida infant- toddler, Virginia Beach, toddler-childhood, Stafford childhood-tween, Spotsylvania high school, Richmond/Ashland Va college

DR Community: La Descubierta AND DID I EVERRR discover mis panafules 😊

Peace Corps Sector: Education, because books are good 😎👏

Current Location: Richmond, Virginia

What are you up to now (work, school, etc.):

Part time job: applying and looking for jobs. Aside from that, I volunteer weekly via phone with The Immigrant Learning Center in Malden, Massachusetts to practice English Conversation with students unable to attend class in person due to the pandemic. I am busy teaching private Spanish classes for middle school kiddos and some adultos. 😊 I was recently accepted to serve with Americorps Citizen and Immigrants Integration position and am extremely excited for this opportunity!

Areas of assistance needed (networking, informational interviews, resume preparation, mentor-ship, etc.): Networking and connecting with job opportunities. Many of the jobs sent in Peace Corps emails, I am not at all qualified for. It's been difficult finding a job without support although being a part of Peace Corps connections was supposed to help or give me an advantage that I haven't been able to access.



Name: Andrea Weires

Email: aweires@wesleyan.edu

Hometown: Dubuque, Iowa

DR Community: Yásica, Puerto Plata

Peace Corps Sector: Education

Current Location: Minneapolis, MN

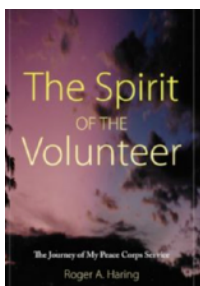
What are you up to now (work, school, etc.): I'm working as an immigration paralegal at a law firm in downtown Minneapolis and looking into volunteering to help some local families with virtual schooling.

Areas of assistance needed (networking, informational interviews, resume preparation, mentor-ship, etc.): Evacuation really disrupted my five-year plan, so now I'm trying to figure out next steps. I'm becoming more interested in Latin American politics and international elections, and would love to network and do some informational interviews with people who have dabbled in those areas!

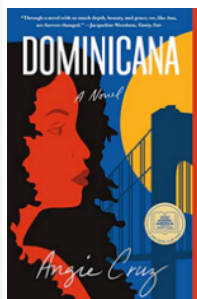


Books & Articles of Interest

Ever wonder why Dominicans (or anyone, for that matter) eat bacalao? Carrie Meyer, Associate Professor of Economics at George Mason University and former DR Volunteer has written two articles about Dominican culture and economy. The first is "Local Food, Agriculture, and Tourism in the Dominican Republic" which highlights food growth throughout the country and how tourism has impacted agribusiness as a whole. This article includes a very interesting history of the Dominican diet. The second article "Tourism and Economic Growth in the Dominican Republic: 1985-2018" discusses the importance of tourism to the overall economic growth of the DR. For instance, did you know that the number of tourists visiting the country increased 12-fold from 1984 to 2018? This increase in tourism translated into a 4.9% real GDP annual growth rate - which is the highest across Latin America. Both of these articles and others of interest to readers of this newsletter can be found at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/cf_dev/AbsByAuth.cfm?per_id=59868



Former DR Volunteer Roger Haring has written a memoir of his Volunteer experience, "**The Spirit of the Volunteer.**" You can purchase and see more about this book at <https://kpub.com/roger-a-haring-the-spirit-of-the-volunteer/>



"**Dominicana: A Novel**" by Angie Cruz is about a young woman's journey from a small town in the DR to her new life in Nueva York with her husband of an arranged marriage. It's set in the period just before the end of and just after Trujillo. It's a heartbreaking story of coming of age and the challenges of adapting to a totally alien culture. The book has been nominated for many awards.

The Congressional Research Service reported on the Dominican Republic in August. This two page summary of the economic and political situation of the country can be downloaded at: iz4.me/R1B27z-QSnkd1

Our Man in Santo Domingo by Mike Benson

After taking 10 days on the North coast for a little R & R, the work seems to have multiplied and am now catching up. Cabarete and Sosua are great as usual and we were treated to Hurricane Laura for a night and the next day. She changed course and came inland at San Pedro and took the southern route over the mountains. All reservoirs are full and there is a lot of agricultural damage even though it was just a tropical storm as it passed through. It was to have stayed off the north coast and we were expecting much more up there but the Cibao and north escaped most of the worst.



The main concern is Covid 19 and it seems that masking and distancing are being abided by to a large degree. ICU occupancy and hospitalizations appear to have gone down. Back to school is the big question now and the new government is promising a sweeping plan of connectivity and computers/tablets for all who need them by November. A big task. Private schools are starting as they are able with 90% distance learning. Creativity and ingenuity are everywhere. Traffic is back to pre-pandemic levels and life takes place from 6 AM to 7PM. There will continue to be a curfew for another 45 days until mid October, making it the new normal.

The new government has made some very positive statements on corruption and there will be no "borròn y cuenta nueva". Vamos a ver. The new president had a good interview by Camilo on CNN en Español recently for a full hour with many good questions, for which he had good, serious responses. The new government seems to have the right intentions.

Hasta la próxima.

Annual Meeting

Fondo Quisqueya's annual meeting was held via Zoom on June 27th. While we missed the Presidente and hot dogs, this new pandemic format offered some benefits we haven't had at past annual meetings. For example the Peace Corps staff was able to join us on the call and give an update on the current status of Peace Corps. We were also joined by six of the Volunteers evacuated from the DR because of the pandemic. Several other former Volunteers were also able to join the call.

The new board and slate of officers were approved as was the program with Entrena as described on page one. A new three year budget was also approved.

"Update from PC/DR" from page 1

infrastructure remain open and the October 2020 training class has been postponed. The situation remains fluid and at the mercy of the pandemic. Jennifer says that the in-country staff are still very excited to receive Volunteers when conditions permit, and are reluctant to set fixed dates as the situation could change and move in either direction.

We'll all keep our fingers crossed for a speedy return to normalcy.

"FQ Supports Young Leaders Program" from page 1

Republic At-Risk Youth Initiative, targeting youth ages 11-24 in the country's most violent neighborhoods. This initiative's goal is to create sustainable, multidisciplinary safety nets for at-risk youth in order to reduce crime and violence in the country by providing viable and accessible alternatives to improve their education, employability, health, and legal status. Entrena has developed a sustainable framework to foster leadership through training and empower youth to take active roles in their communities. These youth comprise 11 active Youth Networks with over 1,600 participants connected on the national level.



In alliance with the Dominican Government through the Ministry of Youth, a total of 380 scholarships were provided to Youth Network leaders and members in October 2019. With the necessary shift to distance learning many faced the challenge of completing online classes without internet connectivity or an intelligent device such as a tablet or computer.

A Fondo Quisqueya \$10,000 grant to this program will provide tablets or Chrome Books to 24 participants that currently don't have a device; provide surge protectors for the 24 devices; and provide high speed internet for 49 students for 7 months. The Fondo grants compliments resources provided by Entrena and USAID.

Entrena identified 49 potential beneficiaries, ages 16-24 with the following characteristics:

- Scholarship recipients from Ministry of Youth
- 50% have an intelligent device
- 100% lack internet access
- 38% are young mothers/fathers
- 41% are main source of income in their home
- 47% have jobs and all in the informal sector

"President's Report" from page 1

These activities will continue as Peace Corps goes through its change process, with high hopes that PCVs will be able to return soon. We will keep you posted along the way with updates from the PC/DR team who continues to keep the communities and partners primed and ready to receive.

Meanwhile, donations to FQ programs have (understandably) gone down this year amidst the confusion and changes to all of our lives. **Donations are down 46% compared to the same period last year, while the cost of grants is up 7%.**

We welcome your engagement, as always, as well as your comments and suggestions. We wish all of you in the FQ community to continue this complicated year as safely and productively as you can and look forward to hearing from you.

Speaking of Friends

Our sister organization, FDR, like FQ, is a 501(c) (3) organization. FDR focuses on helping bring together the community of DR Returned PC Volunteers and staff in the US. It also raises money for two funds: the Program Support Fund, which assists Volunteers and PC programs with donations such as equipment, software and workshops; and the Community Challenge Fund, which provides grants for small-scale community infrastructure projects in poor communities. For more information, go to www.fotdr.org. Contributions may be sent to Mary Britt, FDR Treasurer, 2-2nd St Apt 3604, Jersey City, NJ 07302.



Comments & Complaints

Do you have comments or complaints about this newsletter? Do you have a suggestion for something to be included in a future newsletter? Do you want to submit something for inclusion in the newsletter? Send us an email at DominicanRepublic-PCV@gmail.com

- Want to make a **contribution?**
 - Mail checks payable to: Fondo Quisqueya and mail to PO Box 6628, Falls Church, VA 22040-6628, or
 - go to our website at www.fondog.org for PayPal or credit card.
- Do you have a **new address?** You can either mail it to us at the above address, or email us at DominicanRepublicPCV@gmail.com
- Prefer to receive the newsletter by **email only?**
Send email with "email only" in the subject line to DominicanRepublicPCV@gmail.com
- Want a **t-shirt?** We have two sizes at \$20/each:
Medium - No. _____
Large - No. _____
Mail this form with your check to the address above.