



"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

In This edition of the FQ Newsletter

- Report on a meeting between the FQ Board and the new leadership of the Instituto (ITSC).
- Jennifer McGowan gives us an update on the Peace Corps program in the DR and Mike Benson talks about life in the DR.
- The Peace Corps Oral History Archive Project.
- Emily Nuss provides us with a look at semana santa, carnaval and other holidays in the era of the pandemic.
- There's also a way to win an FQ tee-shirt if you can **Name That Person!**
- Our 2020 donors and how to join that list in 2021.

Instituto Técnico Superior Comunitario (ITSC)

Longstanding Program Continues Through Pandemic

FQ and ITSC have worked together for a number of years. The Instituto provides training in a diverse number of technical fields through hands-on workshops and training programs. (We encourage you to click on their name in the title to be redirected to their website.) FQ has supported Instituto students by providing transportation grants to help students get to and from school. The FQ Board met with new ITSC leadership and discussed reorienting FQ assistance to support distance learning. With the pandemic and change in government in the DR the FQ board was anxious to recommit to this important program. The virtual meeting was very constructive and we look forward to expanding this program in the future.



Peace Corps Update by Jennifer McGowan, Country Director



COVID has taken its time, that's for sure. No one at PCDR had ever



imagined that they would be without Volunteers for over one year. In the meantime, the country is seeing similar trends as other places in the world, while cases slowly decline, there are peaks that align with holidays or celebrations.

The Dominican government has kept a curfew in place since March 19, 2020, loosening and tightening the restrictions as conditions merit. At present, restrictions are loosest that they have ever been with curfew at 9pm M-F and 7pm on S-S, with a 3 hour grace period for transit. This basically means that businesses must close by curfew, but people can be out and about for 3 additional hours.

Schools, for the most part remain virtual, however, as of April 6, a semi in-person pilot is beginning in a limited number of districts. The government is actively vaccinating. As of April 2, approximately 1.1 million people had received their first dose and 102k fully vaccinated. The government is providing vaccines free of charge to citizens and residents of the country. While different vaccines have been available at different times, the vast majority of people are receiving Sinovac.

The Santo Domingo Embassy and PCDR continue to maintain a cautious stance towards the virus and all staff continue on maximum telework. We are optimistic that change in the right direction will happen as more people are vaccinated and cases go down.

PCDR still has its sights set on a 2021 summer return of the program. This is tentative and is based on local conditions. Peace Corps has communicated to RPCVs who are interested in returning, that they must be vaccinated. This will be true of new recruits as well. Also important is that just recently, PCDR staff had the opportunity to vaccinate!

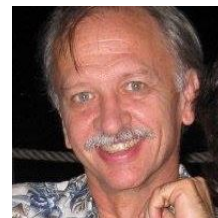
On March 31, 2021, PCDR said "goodbye" to its office located on Avenida Bolivar. Earlier in the year, they also relinquished the training center in Pantoja. While very much a "bitter sweet" farewell, the move was necessary as the buildings required extensive maintenance and upgrades. Staff look forward to being all together under one roof at Lea de Castro #252.

Our Man in Santo Domingo

by Mike Benson ('72-'74 Small business development)

Saludos desde Santo Domingo, The latest quick update on happenings in the DR.

As usual, Easter week in Santo Domingo could not be detained by anything and even though stricter hours were put on the lock down, the huge annual migration to the beaches, mountains and rivers took place as normal. We will have to see in several weeks what the results are as both cases and deaths have been falling consistently as the country approaches 1 million vaccinated twice. These were in the critical groups, 70+, anyone with medical risks and critical workers. This week they should be getting another 1.5 Million Sinovac doses to start first doses on the over 40 and any medical risk people and they are getting a very positive turnout from the people. Sinovac seems to be working as hospital usage has fallen to below 20% of ICU beds in use and deaths at under 3,500.



Everyone here is following the multiple corruption cases being tried in courts and this hopefully marks a change in the judicial system with the Presidente trying to set

examples with his own people who commit questionable acts. He is still enjoying positive ratings. Their next push is to slowly open up tourism and schools which are starting in person next week on a limited basis.

The other big news item is the changes proposed in the legal system to modify some laws with the main controversy in changing the absolute abortion prohibition with no exceptions to allowing 3 exceptions, cases of rape or incest, unviable fetus, and danger to mother's life. The church is up in arms on one side as are the womens' rights groups on the other. This is one of the points of the party that won and Abinader stated that he was for this change. Congress is having hearings on all the changes before the vote.

Want to be Part of Peace Corps History?

The University of Kentucky is compiling an oral history of Peace Corps. Former Volunteers relate their experiences as a PCV via Zoom interviews. Our very own Randy Adams is one of the interviewers. Their current priority is Volunteers from the 60s but they are interested in interviewing as many former Volunteers as possible. If you would like more information or want to be interviewed, go to

<https://docs.google.com/forms>

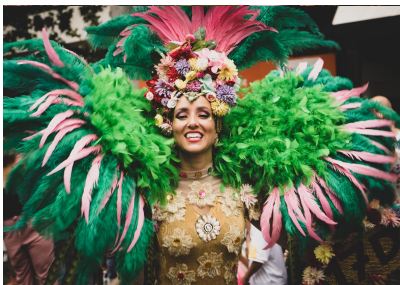
[/d/e/1FAIpQLSfSnTHnoVWezuxwVfPRt6jo55PBG_-6wYhlsFOud8tXCRlprQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfSnTHnoVWezuxwVfPRt6jo55PBG_-6wYhlsFOud8tXCRlprQ/viewform)

or email Randy at r.a.adams@mac.com.



¿Qué Pása en Semana Santa?

by Emily Nuss ('14-'17 Community Economic Development)



Dominican Independence Day

Quisqueya! February 27, typically during the month-long Carnival celebration (see below for more information), marks the national holiday of Dominican Independence. For 177 years, this día de fiesta has included marches across the country, presidential speeches, local volunteering efforts, and school events to honor this special day and those who made it happen.

Carnaval during COVID

Typically celebrated between the last weekend in January through the first weekend in March (although this timeline does vary slightly in certain parts of the country), Carnaval is a unique holiday which attracts tourists from across the World annually. However, in 2021, the Mayor of Santo Domingo cancelled festivities due to the COVID-19 pandemic with promises to make Carnaval 2022 even bigger: <https://dominican.today.com/dr/local/2020/12/21/mayor-of-the-national-district-suspends-carnival-2021/>

In normal times, these celebrations culminate with Independence Day. Every weekend, large parades are hosted and people gather to drink cold Presidentes and food from street vendors (most notably chimis and pastelitos). Costumes of the parade participants are themed and vary by region:

<https://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/articles/carnival-in-the-dominican-republic-getting-rid-of-bad-luck.shtml>

Carnaval celebrations are held all throughout Latin America (it was a tradition started

during the Spanish Colonization), with those in the Dominican Republic being the oldest.



Want to win this really cool Fondo Quisqueya tee-shirt?

The first five people to identify this famous figure from Dominican history win. Just send your answer to fondoquisqueyausa@gmail.com along with your tee-shirt size and we'll notify you if you're one of the chosen five. If your Dominican history's not so good, the tee can still be yours for a measly \$20. Just send your check and shirt size to P.O. Box 6628 Falls

Church, VA 22040-6628

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Why Not Join Them?

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