

Almost Spring 2022



"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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Keeping in Touch

We don't want you to miss any news about Peace Corps or the DR. Of our four newsletters annually, only two go out by snail mail. If you change email address, please send an update to FondoQuisqueyaUSA@gmail.com. We promise to only use your email for the newsletter.

Fondo Quisqueya Makes a Difference



Fondo Quisqueya is making a difference in the lives of Dominican students. The FQ Board has recently approved the expansion of two important programs.

Your contributions have been supporting students at the **Instituto Técnico Superior Comunitario (ITSC)** since 2015. ITSC provides a broad range of technical training programs and works with students in securing employment once their program is completed. The majority of FQ support has been in the form of grants to students in need to pay for their transportation to and from their classes. ITSC does some distance learning but due to the nature of their programs, many students require "hands on" involvement in their courses. Over 100 students have been supported by FQ over the past 7 years. Without this support, they likely would not have been able to complete their programs.

In December the FQ Board had a zoom call with ITSC leadership to discuss expanding FQ support for their programs. In response, they submitted a proposal to supply 18 students in need with laptops or tablets for distance learning. The FQ Board approved this request for approximately \$8,000 at its March 5th meeting.

The **Brigada Verde** is a University Scholarship Program, jointly funded by FDR and Fondo Quisqueya in cooperation with the DR's national environmental school. Guy Baehr, FDR Board member and one of the founders of Fondo Quisqueya resides in the DR and coordinates this program on behalf of both organizations. To date, one four-year scholarship has been awarded. The FDR and FQ Boards have approved funding a second four-year scholarship to be awarded later this year.

The scholarship program got its start in 2019 when it awarded a single four-year, \$2,000-per-year scholarship to one member of that year's graduating class of 38 students from the two-year technical environmental school in Jarabacoa.

From this year's larger class of 59 students, which graduated in January, two graduates were selected last month by a faculty committee at the school to receive *Brigada Verde* scholarships. Selection was based on the faculty's assessment of academic ability, maturity, likelihood of success, potential for civic service and need.

FDR & FQ also increased the amount of each scholarship to \$3,000 per year. The decision to expand the program was based in part on the success of the first student selected in 2019, Keisel Rivas of Pedernales, who is now in his third year studying industrial engineering at the Universidad Tecnológico de Santiago (UTESA). It's unlikely that Keisel would have been able to attend college without the FQ/FDR support. He is expected to graduate next year.

The Rector of the school in Jarabacoa, Dr. José Vásquez Guerra, said he strongly supports the scholarship program because of the opportunities it gives to his students. This residential school, which is operated by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, has worked closely with PCVs over its more than 50-year history. It charges no tuition and admits high school graduates based on nationwide competitive exams. Many of its students come from lower income families.

PC/DR to be 1st Country to Welcome Back Volunteers

Peace Corps announced recently that Volunteers will be returning soon to a number of host countries. The DR is slated to be the first country to welcome 20 trainees and 2 returning volunteers. The exact date is dependent upon continued progress in reducing the threat of Covid, but is expected this month. The DR program focus will continue to be education (about 50%), youth development (25%), and community economic development (25%). Volunteers will function pretty much as they have in the past, with some consideration given to new public health measures, and all will be participating in Covid programming activities in one way or another.

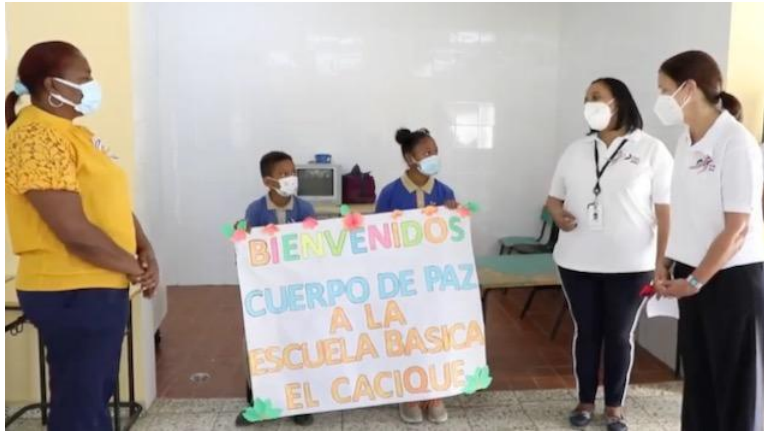
Peace Corps will be watching closely to see how re-entry proceeds from a programmatic and public health perspective. Country Director Jennifer McGowan is hopeful that soon they will be back to their pre-pandemic numbers, bringing in 2 groups of 45 trainees each per year.

Peace Corps has maintained constant communication with technical level government partners, communities, and volunteer counterparts throughout the pandemic by cell phone and WhatsApp when travel was limited. Most recently, conditions have permitted travel to sites. With the change of government last year, and the arrival of Volunteers, staff looks forward to renewing relationships at the Ministry levels. According to Jennifer, Dominicans are as excited to welcome Volunteers back in country as is the PC Staff.

Fondo Quisqueya looks forward to supporting the Peace Corps program in any way we can.

Check out the PC/DR LinkedIn page and watch the video to meet the staff and share their excitement in welcoming PCVs back into the country.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/peace-corps_return-to-service-dominican-republic-activity-6904512088467664896-IMTF/



Come Join Us

Want to help FQ make a difference? Consider joining the Board. This is a way to stay involved in the Dominican Republic, make a difference in students' lives, and work with like-minded former PCVs and friends of the DR. Send us an email at FondoQuisqueyaUSA@gmail.com. The time commitment is no more than a couple of hours a month, our meetings are held on Zoom and you'll get a lot of satisfaction from working for a good cause. (The board is really much better looking than this picture would suggest.)



New Peace Corps Office

Peace Corps has moved. After 50+ years in the old office at 451 Bolívar, the leaky roof and menacing sinkhole in the front yard became too much, and PC/DR traded nostalgia for functionality. (If any of you are so sentimental about the old office, it's for sale – a handyman special.) The new offices at Lea de Castro #252 Gazcue are beautiful, practical, and very flexible, and will be able to handle program needs for years to come. Located on three floors in an office building, this editor had the opportunity to tour the offices with Country Director Jennifer McGowan. In addition to administrative space, there are training areas, conference rooms, a modern, fully staffed medical facility, and resource center and lounge for Volunteers. The staff I met were well acquainted with Fondo Quisqueya and appreciative of the support FQ has provided since 1987.



Mike McCabe New Regional Director

The Biden/Harris Administration recently appointed three new Regional Directors for Peace Corps. Fondo Quisqueya's own Mike McCabe was named Regional Director for the Inter-American and Pacific (IAP) Region starting March 14th. Mike has deep ties to the Dominican Republic. He has been an FQ Board Member the past eight years, served as the Director of Programming and Training in PC/DR from 2002-2006, and then as the IAP Region's Chief of Programming and Training from 2006-2010. Mike said in a recent call: "I am honored to serve this Administration in an Agency that is one of the greatest examples of global cooperation to work together with local communities to advance their goals, as well as bring back a deeper understanding of other cultures. Peace Corps is at a pivotal moment as it turns 60 to re-imagine its role in the

world and supports the return to service - starting in the Dominican Republic in March.”

Fondo Quisqueya will unfortunately lose Mike from our Board of Directors, so as to avoid any perceived conflict of interest. But Mike’s commitment to FQ is strong and he will continue to support our program as an emeritus director. FQ’s loss will be Peace Corps’ gain as both organizations head into a new and exciting era.

FQ's New Investment Strategy

The FQ Finance Committee met on January 22nd to review the state of our current finances and consider a rebalancing of our investment portfolio. Historically, our resources have been invested in several index funds that closely follow the direction of the stock market. The FQ Board of Directors, at its March 5th meeting approved the following investment strategy going forward:

- Maximize investment return,
- Minimize risk,
- Hold enough cash for six months of operation, and
- **Invest all other resources in socially responsible mutual funds** with a high Morningstar ESG (environment/social/governance) score.

Ever Hear of Angula? Me neither...

Angula are baby eels found at night in February and March in the shallow waters off the DR where freshwater streams empty into the ocean. Why, you might ask, would anyone be interested in baby eels? They are a delicacy in Spain and fetch upwards of \$500/pound! Granted, it takes many of these little creatures to make a pound, but you see many fishermen at night trying to catch this delicacy. Wikipedia describes them as having very little taste and the consistency of spaghetti. I think I’ll pass.



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