

Dominican Update

A newsletter devoted to Joanne Peterson's work in the Dominican Republic

June 2014

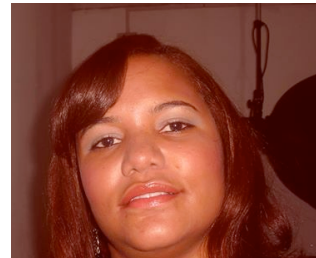


Focus on Young Adults

Sometimes individual stories of people communicate the power of the work here in El Cercado better than statistics and projects. This is the third in a series of newsletters that focus on people in the El Cercado community. “The qualities of leadership don’t emerge suddenly at adulthood,” writes Joanne. “The two young adults featured in this newsletter were already leading when they were young teens. I so enjoy working with the youth groups!” She adds, “The leaders that emerge from these youth groups will be the ‘movers and shakers’ of the future.”

Geiddy Yiraisa Feliz

Geiddy Yiraisa Feliz, is 25 years old. She is a compassionate Dominican psychologist. She studied in the Capital but returned to serve her community, El Cercado, after graduating. Her father and mother are both teachers. She learned from her family what it means to be a public servant – helping others to improve their lives.



At an early age, Geiddy began helping other young people in her church, where she was an active leader in several youth groups. She had a knack for listening and was able to give sound advice. Her shoulder was always ready for someone to cry on. It was obvious to everyone around her that she needed to capitalize on these skills for her vocation.



Geiddy opted to focus her attention on children and adolescents. She now works in the local high school, counseling adolescents who come from fractured or dysfunctional families. She treats those suffering with depression, and has prevented some suicide attempts. She works with delinquent youth and helps young people faced with family separation as well as divorce, abortion, and teen-aged pregnancy. Each day she counsels youth who feel abandoned, have low self-esteem, and are dealing with peer conflicts and bullying. And she

gives advice for future vocational options.

Many of the youth Geiddy counsels will not have access to further education. Others will begin classes at the University, which is subsidized by the State for economically disadvantaged students, but never obtain a degree. Geiddy believes that vocational training needs to be an important focus. She is a member of a local volunteer committee looking for funding to construct a vocational school that will provide certified courses to students and adults in practical skills: electricity, plumbing, computer science, accounting, carpentry, masonry, welding, sales, sewing, refrigeration, cooking/baking, beauty and barber salon. Geiddy says that the teachers and courses have been secured. The group is seeking funding to begin construction of the building.

Geiddy has many hopes and dreams and believes the key to her development as a young psychologist comes from her strong spiritual faith, and all the positive role models she has been exposed to during her youth.

Eddison Montero Marino

Eddison Montero Marino is a 25 year old University student who has been involved in organizing youth since he was 12 years old. He recently graduated from High School at a late age because he often worked instead of attending school – shining shoes to help his parents and his six brothers and sisters.

He developed tuberculosis and has a permanently damaged kidney. Eddison was cured from TB after five months of treatment, but suffered emotionally from the trauma. He is still dealing with kidney problems. During this time of ill health, Eddison displayed one of his great gifts – perseverance. Eddison is a survivor.



Eddison has worked tirelessly in organizing youth groups in the rural areas and is coordinator of a youth group in the main town of El Cercado. Eddison brings many important values along with his organizing abilities: honesty, responsibility, dedication, self-respect, and the importance of family. He continues to help his mother and brothers and sisters economically with the small incentive that he receives as a youth organizer.

According to Eddison, his main objective is to instill youth with civic and social values that will allow them to better themselves and improve the social conditions of their barrios and rural environment. He himself is a model of transformation and change.

Eddison realizes that youth can positively impact the lives of the elderly. Through Jr. St. Vicente de Paul, twelve dedicated youth, together with a group of adults have done great deeds to help improve the quality of life for 110 seniors and special needs adults and children. The team packs and delivers monthly bags of food, sometimes clothing, notebooks/pencils, uniforms and shoes

for school age children, and medicines when available. The group has organized special activities for moms on Mother's Day and toys for children on Three King's Day.

The Jr. St. Vicente de Paul group also gets its hands dirty painting houses and repairing doors, doing window and roof repairs for poor families. Or they visit seniors to provide a shave, a bath, a manicure and a haircut. Eddison continues to lead this organization that strives to mend the community.



**To Help Joanne Accomplish Her Work, and
help encourage young adults like Geiddy and Eddison**

You have an opportunity to contribute to Joanne's work in the Dominican Republic. Please make your check payable to **International Partners in Mission**, and indicate which project or projects your donation supports:

- **Project # 503, which supports Joanne's salary**
- **Project # 615, which helps support the Women's Co-op and Nutrition Program**
- **Project # 732, which supports the Reforestation and Agricultural Program.** Your donation is tax-deductible. Checks should be mailed to:

International Partners in Mission,

3091 Mayfield Road Suite 320

Cleveland Heights, OH 44118-1214

Connie Valk, a friend of Joanne's and a member of First Universalist Church of Rochester, edits this newsletter from Joanne's e-mails and letters and occasional visits to the USA.

This newsletter is a project of The Church of the Incarnate Word, Rochester, New York.