

Saturday, July 2, 2016

Dear Ones who have supported us in prayer and giving to the DR mission trip,

Good news travels fast, a marriage proposal even faster. But we had to hold the presses on this good newsletter until family members are told via phone or in-person Stateside, by Saturday.... [*first a backstory*] After reminding us of the Lord's teaching & example in washing the disciples' feet (John 13), Codi had us pair off with to wash one another's feet. For this, he chose his girlfriend and mission partner on this one-week trip. After washing her feet, **Codi Halbur** (*on bended knee*) rose to propose to **Marisa Gordon**, asking for the opportunity to serve her the rest of his life.... [*dramatic pause*]. She said, "Yes!"



In other breaking news.... Since the series began in Year 2000, USA has not won a baseball game here. Not until today, June 30, 2016. Final score = 11-4. "Field of Dreams" (the movie) has nothing on these Dominicans who play the shared national pastime not in a farmer's cornfield, but in the city's burn pile-turned-cow pasture. Rocky mounds of tall grass swallow up most any ball hit to right field; lost balls = "ground rule doubles." A fabric bag doubles for home plate.

Legions of fans (*near left & far right*) cheer our every play, including two plays by an alert, wide-ranging **Brennen Weber**. He snags a fly ball that bounces off one outfielder's glove into his mitt—2x in one inning! But what they really want is a level playing field, one with a track around it, with other multi-sport options that they would own & maintain.



That dream came closer to reality as **Rick Zynda**, **Vicki Hellenbrand**, **Olivero** (*standing*) & **Almonte** (*not pictured*) also pitched a community proposal to the Vice Minister of Sports, Phys Ed & Recreation (*seated, far right*). Seed money of \$10,000 has been donated by High Point Church in Madison, and the Mayor of El Almirante is discussing the land. Before long, the residents of *El Hoyo* ("The Hole," the dirt poor barrio in El Almirante where we serve) hope to have their own "field of dreams"!



Romance & Baseball provide a fitting capstone to our week, as we fell in love with these people. Other highlights & takeaways of the week may be simply recapped for those of you just tuning in or keeping score at home....

- The week ended too quickly for some; on time for others who spent all their sweat equity and energy.
- Some are more than ready to go home to Madison; others express eagerness to return next year.
- Some learned masonry skills; others wanted to "do more" but were content to simply "be with" the kids.
- One team member who doesn't like touch was overwhelmed, positively, by the snuggling, hugging kids.
- Yours truly reprised his favorite role as *Señor Foto*; I hope & pray I can find my voice again in future blogs.
- Our two physical therapists kept alive the local medical clinic; otherwise, it's hours on buses to big city clinics.

So appreciated were Codi & Marisa as PTs that one guy with a broken femur and the mosquito-borne disease *Chikungunya* hobbled to the church, just to get well. Shades of Mark 2:1-10, where the friends bring the paralytic to Jesus, lowering him through the roof to get healed. This bodes well for a local clinic (few months away?) and getting more medical people to join us and help others in obvious need.



- Femi (*in blue*) memorized Ephesians 2:8: (“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ according to the Bible to the glory of God”) in Spanish: *Por gracia eres salvo por medio de la fe en Jesu Cristo según la Biblia para la gloria de Dios.* Then he and the others taught the kids to sing this praise ditty, which the kids never stopped singing all week long!
- Another key takeaway: tutoring or reading to disadvantaged kids back home (e.g., in Orchard Ridge school or Allied Drive area).



➤ The Dominicans, who have out-worked us and out-served us, will finish up this house “in time” (3 weeks from now) for a 2nd team (all youth from HPC and Crossroads churches) to paint.

➤ For people who want to know more or get involved beyond prayer & supporting these DR trips, we invite you to check out our website, talk to one of us, or “come and see” for yourself. There are many kids, such as Christopher (*right*) who, after hanging with me all day, asked: “Are you my new sponsor Dad?” I did not know how



to answer him, but I am committed to find him one. If not you, who?



Many needs are less obvious and cannot be conveyed in an e-newsletter such as this. Private things. From suicidal depression,... to child sexual exploitation,... to teen pregnancy,... to kids being delinquent and joining gangs for lack of good role models. Some housing conditions are miserable and can be ameliorated; rusty beds, leaky roofs, no plumbing—that we *can* fix. Yet we cannot just do it all for others, but must work through local leaders.

The library, e.g., is in central, sufficient space that Hands of Hope rents, and we underwrite the wages for the librarian, but all this changes hands in 4 years.

Valerin Carreras Sandoval (*at right, visiting with Casey*), is now more equipped and encouraged, since she took delivery of 240 books, two laptops, one desktop computer, plus five Kindle Fires for getting on the internet. **Casey Zynda** is also the source of hugs and words of encouragement, H of H project finances, child sponsors & assessments, and the food boxes—all of which involve countless hours, pre-trip and during the week. To sponsor a child in need, to go yourself or to send someone else on a future mission to the Dominican Republic, see www.handsofhopedr.org.



The librarian,



Trip co-leader **Brennen Weber** (*at far left*) addresses the team on our last night, confessing areas where he let down his colleague **Doug Ready**. Doug countered with his own litany of life before the trip—months full of nerve-racking decisions, stress, worry, lack of communication, fears of failure. Both exemplify a real heart for this mission. Doug and Brennen hug it out.

Noting how well respected & responsible the new local leaders are, as well as any number of church women, we are confident that in **Richard Ascensio Chatman** (*left*) and **Angel Eusebio Almonte** we see a bright future for Hands of Hope.



In the months & years to come, we envision an established health clinic, a new ballfield, more homes built by the community development corporation, in partnership with El Amirante churches. We aim to finish well, together with them & with you, our sending & supporting partners. *Mucho gracias. Gloria a Dios. Amen.*