

Encuentro Dominicano

Comunidad Diez

Fall 2010

Life At ILAC

By Anna Green

Service Site Groups and Interns

Audrey: Intern at Public Hospital

Kaitlyn: Intern at microcredit
organization, Fondesa

Batey Dos: Gaby Christine,
Anna and Andres

Hospicio: Rachel

Cien Fuegos: Diane, Veronica,
Kaitlyn and Becky

Hogar Luby: Cody, Hannah and
Kellie

ILAC, Institute for Latin American Concern, is a Jesuit-based mission and clinic in Santiago, Dominican Republic providing medical and educational assistance to the people in the rural areas of the country and Haitian migrant worker communities, bateys. The ILAC center is where the 13 Creighton, Encuentro Dominicano students lived and studied for this fall semester abroad.



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Nights in the bell tower,
days on the rooftop
Around the track and ba-
nana plants we would
dance, walk, run, and hop

Together, breakfast, lunch,
and dinner we ate
Rice, beans, peanut butter,
and pineapple, we couldn't
wait

Spanish masses in the
church and learning to cook
Volleyball games with the
staff and classes we took

The ILAC staff began learn-
ing English and we all could
joke

Every night someone was
sure to be running down to
the colmado for a Coke

We found ourselves playing
dominoes or making music
videos at night

And dancing with the night
guards in the parking lot
when there was no light.

The creatures of ILAC are
snails, lizards, dogs, rats,

and bats
Our neighbors blared mer-
engue; listening in plastic
chairs we sat

Rachel painted nails while
Gaby taught yoga to us all
We drank coffee and tea as
we relaxed in the rocking
chairs in the hall

Raining days brought pud-
dles of fun

While it was winter back at
home, we were soaking up
the warm sun

On Halloween we made
puppy chow and played
games without a winner
In the kitchen we cooked a
traditional Thanksgiving
dinner

Every time we left ILAC to
adventure out
Times on the gringo bus
were always fun, have no
doubt

After returning from cam-
pos or other trips, pulling in
on the bus
ILAC truly did feel like home
to us.



Academics

By Becky Paruszkiewicz



Along with all the service sites and campo immersions, Fall Break at the beach, and hanging out in Santiago, we also attended class. It's hard to believe with all the Caribbean sun and palm trees, but we had our Culture and Sociology class twice a week and Spanish class four times a week. Our classes were tough, and applicable to our lives in the Dominican Republic.

Mary Bean, our Academic Director, taught our Dominican Culture class. We covered the history of the island, Dominican culture, along with the theology, and the economics of developing nations. We applied all these

subjects to the sociology of the country, and how it all affects Dominican culture. We learned the history of the corruption in the country, how this experience affects us spiritually, and changes we can make in our own lives and in the societies we live in when we return home.

Our Dominican professor, Edwin, taught Spanish class every afternoon. We learned conversational Spanish, including Dominicanisms that we used when we went to the campos and in Santiago. During class we also listened to songs, watched movies, and learned about the culture; all in Spanish of course! We all improved our

oral Spanish since coming to the Dominican Republic, through our class and frequent opportunities to speak Spanish every day at ILAC and in Santiago. This has been a great semester, and we've all learned so much about the Dominican Republic and ourselves that we cannot wait to put it to good use!



A Slice of Yuca and a Cup of Coffee

By Veronica Benton

Everyone was filled with excitement and anticipation as we swiveled up the mountains in the *Gringo Bus*. The luscious green mountains and palm trees passed by as we each wondered what the next week and a half would hold. We were headed to meet our new families who we would be living with for the next ten days. When we finally arrived we were greeted with smiling faces, huge hugs, and cup after cup of sweet Dominican coffee. These faces, which seemed so new at the time, quickly changed into faces of our mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. We had been completely accepted as part of this small campo community.

Gajo de la Yuca, translated to "slice of the yuca," was

the name of our new found home. Our purpose there was to bring the supplies to build and construct an aqueduct. Over a period of ten days our Dominican friends and family helped us to bring water, *agua de vida*, to this small community of 40 families. We worked all morning and afternoon digging the *zanjas*, or ditches, and working up at the tank. The evening, however, was spent in sweet company as our families shared in song, dance, coffee, and many games of domino. The memories created within a span of 10 days will ever be present in our minds as we head back to the states. We will always have a home tucked away in the breathtaking mountains of the Dominican Republic.



Never a Dull Moment

We moved to Dominican music, cheered on the local team and splashed around in the Caribbean's largest water park...



...While still having time to see dolphins at Ocean World, revisit our grade school volleyball days and ride horseback to a beautiful waterfall in Jarabacoa.



Bacumi

By Kellie Webber

For our second Campo adventure, Comunidad Diez traveled to the central part of the country to a place far different from our first experience, a town named Bacumi. Set amongst the rice fields and rolling plains, our new community differed not only in landscape but also in size, serving as home to 175 families. We constructed ten new latrines; building from the bottom of the seven foot hole to the top of the six foot casita. The ILAC latrines replaced old ones or gave a family a bathroom for the first time. Our Encuentro group also attempted to repair five houses that suffered from water, wind and termite

damage and consequently ended up re-building three of the five from the ground up. Favorite past times of the students' during this campo experience included eating dulce de coco (coconut candy), playing pool, dominoes and hand clapping games, running the streets with the masses of children that obsessed over their new Americano brothers and sisters, and overall just kicking back, relaxing over a cup of coffee and purely enjoying the simple presence of new family and close friends.



In the Clinic

By Cody Fricke

One of the most important parts of ILAC is the clinic which serves not only the surrounding community, but also acts as a staging point for various medical groups from the U.S. and Europe. This semester, two such groups came down providing essential services to residents of the campos (impoverished, agricultural communities) who are able to receive these treatments free of charge. The first group to come down was an ENT group (ear, nose, and throat) comprising of surgeons, anesthesiologists, and many nurses. During their time here, around 150 surgeries were performed with the majority being either tonsillectomies or adenoidectomies. Many of the Encuentro students, particularly those with pre-health focuses, were able to translate for the

medical staff and gain valuable shadowing experience with the doctors.

This same experience was relieved with the hernia team who came down in November to perform yet another round of surgeries for the campo residents. As the ENT team had mainly focused on children, it was exciting to see surgeries done on adults as well. Much like the pervious group, the doctors and nurses of the hernia team performed something on the order of 125 surgeries greatly benefiting the people of the campo. Without these medical services provided to them free by ILAC, it is likely many of these people would never receive them otherwise. This is but one of the many ways ILAC serves as an integral part to the campos and the surrounding community.



Hogar Luby

By Hannah Oreskovich

Hogar Luby is essentially an orphanage for children with physical and mental disabilities. Families unwilling to, or unable to, take care of these handicapped children leave them in the hands of the caretakers of Hogar Luby, which is now funded by the Dominican government. Although it is considered an orphanage, the children here are highly unlikely to be adopted. With the constraints of poverty surrounding many Dominican families, care for these children is difficult to afford and most of them are hard

to manage because they have no way of communicating with others. For the student volunteers involved, time at Hogar consisted of holding, playing with, and generally caring for the children. Cody Fricke, Hannah Oreskovich, and Kellie Webber were the students who spent this rewarding semester at Hogar.



Cien Fuegos School

By Diane Ferry

Picture this: forty excited children exclaiming, "¡Americana!" and jumping up from their broken tables and chairs with ear-to-ear grins to wrap their little arms around you. Is there a better way to start the day?

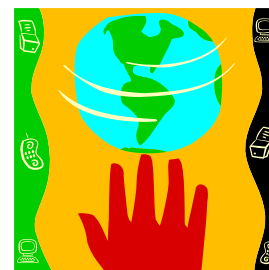
During this past semester Becky Paruszkiewicz, Veronica Benton, Kaitlyn Maloney and I volunteered at Escuela Santo Lucia every Monday and Wednesday morning. The school sits in Santiago's poorest barrio, Cienfuegos. The majority of families do not own the land their houses occupy and unemployment is the norm instead of the exception. After class, many of the children who attend the school joined their parents in the neighboring trash dump to pick through the rubbish in hopes of finding items to clean up and resell.

At the school, the principal assigned each of us to a different classroom as a teacher's aid. Forty students per classroom, less-than-perfect attendance records and minimal resources challenge the teachers to provide a quality education. The four of us helped the teachers by reading to students, providing one-on-one attention to struggling students and helping the teachers with discipline.

Many of the students came from broken homes with parents who worked long hours, so they loved the individual attention we gave them. In the classroom, the students swarmed us for help with assignments and on the playground they pulled us into their games. At times the children seemed much older than their six or eight years, but during recess their bound-

less energy reminded us that they are just like any other child.

At times we felt discouraged by what seemed like a hopeless situation and wondered if we were truly doing any good. The students' huge hugs or triumphant smiles after solving a math problem alone, however, reminded us why we trekked across the city twice a week. We influenced the lives of a handful of children and they, in turn, showed us the beauty of a child's uninhibited love.



Hospicio

By Rachel Barnett

This past semester at Hospicio was spent sitting and talking with residents, helping with the daily physical therapy, and walking around the grounds helping residents get their daily exercise. I met some wonderful people with whom I spent my time. Everyday I went in and greeted all of the people sitting in the front garden. After that I found Sylvia and Sarah and spent much of my time talking with them. They showed me all of their art projects and possessions that they were proud of. It was a great semester filled with many memories and stories from the residents.



Where the Students Go

By Audrey Jensen

Over Fall Break, some students showed their families their service sites and gave tours of Santiago; other students went to the eastern coast of The Dominican Republic and explored the different beach towns.

Audrey, Veronica, Kaitlyn and Cody traveled to the Samana Peninsula for their Fall Break. They spent half of their time in Las Galeras and the other half in Las Terrenas. In Las Galeras they played dominos at the local colmado (general store), woke up at 4:30 in the morning and hiked an hour and a half to the top of the local mountain to watch the sunrise and hiked to Playa Rincón. Playa Rincón is considered one of the prettiest beaches in the world due to the crystal clear waters and few people that know about the beach. In

Las Terrenas, they spent a day at the local beach and another day at Playa Bonita, where they once again had the beach all to themselves. One night the students even found a concert series that brought in different acts and had food from all over the world.

Over Fall Break, Anna, Rachel, and Becky ventured to Cabarete to not only hang out on the beach, but also go to the Cabarete National Park and swim in a natural cave pool. Also they headed over to Las Terrenas on the Samana Peninsula to explore the European town and what the scenery had to offer.

For Thanksgiving Break, eleven of the students decided to hang out together and spend the holiday with each other, since they were unable to spend it with their

families. The students rented a villa on the beach in Cabarete and enjoyed lying on the beach or next to the pool while soaking in the warm sun. Everyone enjoyed playing dominos and cards and walked up and down the beach looking for seashells and exploring the closed hotel. On Thanksgiving Day, the students cooked a spaghetti dinner, since the night before the whole group prepared a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner at ILAC. The next night the students walked the beach to Cabarete and ate a delicious dinner at a restaurant that was located on the beach. The students were reluctant to leave their beautiful vacation home and enjoyed hanging out with each other.

Spirituality and Encuentro

By Student Life Director, Karie Karasiak

While Creighton is a Jesuit university and the Dominican Republic is predominantly a Catholic country, students of all faiths are able to participate in Encuentro Dominicano and deepen their personal spirituality in various ways.

Apart from celebrating mass at ILAC and in the campo communities, students are encouraged to engage in spiritual exercises and to share their spiritual process in retreats and group reflections. To facilitate the communal aspect of faith, in Gajo de la Yuca, students led a youth Catechism class that involved an exchange of stories, games and songs. We were also invited to a charismatic prayer gathering. In Bacumi, each afternoon students would visit the sick and homebound residents and bring scripture

readings, prayer and song in collaboration with other members of Bacumi's local Catholic church.

Dominicans often use the phrases, "Gracias a Dios" (Thanks to God), "Si Dios quiere" (God willing), and "Con Dios adelante" (With God guiding). Students catch on quickly that you do not just respond to someone asking how you are doing without ending giving thanks to God and if you say to Dominicans that you will see them tomorrow, most likely they will respond God willing. The sincerity behind these phrases is quite inspiring.

It is not always easy for students to talk about their faith, but several students can attest to their experience living in solidarity in the Dominican Republic as a time when they became willing to share about



their faith more than ever before. During the semester, some students are challenged in their religious beliefs while others become affirmed in their values. Students always have the opportunity to explore their ideas without being judged. Encuentro Dominicano is not what it is without the spiritual component, which sets it apart from other study abroad programs.

As the Student Life Director, I get to participate in the spiritual journey with the students. I can confirm that many members of Comunidad Diez saw God in many familiar and some unexpected places, including in each other and in themselves. After all, we are created in His image (Genesis 1:27). Those that perhaps did not, most likely have a good idea of where to look.

Continuing the Journey

By Kaitlyn Maloney

Although our time in the Dominican Republic has come to an end, our minds and hearts will stay here forever. Throughout the past four months, we have built relationships and friendships with all of the people we have encountered along our journey. Some of our strongest relationships were formed at our service sites, which we visited two days a week. The elementary school in Cien Fuegos was a service site that was chosen by four students this past semester. While we grew to love the children of the Escuela Santa Lucia or Escuelita Piña as it was better known around the neighborhood, we quickly realized that this school had something very vital missing, run-

ning water. After our first few days of service in late August, we quickly realized what a problem this was. These students had to go to school for four hours every day in the heat of the Caribbean sun, without even a sip of water to drink. We could feel the children's thirst after running around with them at recess, but we had the luxury of being able to purchase a water bottle down the street after our two hours of service were over. After witnessing the students and teachers protest about their need for water one day, we realized that we needed to do something about this problem.

Upon our return to the States, we will begin fundraising to build an aqueduct

for the Escuela Santa Lucia. This water system will bring water to the three bathrooms in the school and also provide a few water spigots around the school. Our goal is to raise around \$4,000 and to return in late August to help the community of Cien Fuegos complete the project. We are so excited for this opportunity to stay involved with a community that we have grown to love. This water will bring new life to this school and will truly be a blessing for each student.

For more information about the project or if you are interested in making a donation, please contact Kaitlyn Maloney at kaitlyn-maloney@creighton.edu or Veronica Benton at veronica-benton@creighton.edu.



Santa Lucia School



School in Batey Dos

Smiles to Tears to Smiles: Batey Dos

By Christine Bolas

Two hours and thirty minutes was enough time to change our semester drastically. Two mornings a week our alarm clocks would sound at 5:30am telling us it was time to get dressed, eat a spoonful of peanut butter and hop on the *guagua* to our destination. This first van took us to the center of Santiago and after a bus transfer we arrived in Esperanza, a neighboring town. From there, we stumbled off the bus, after a usual quick nap, to be awakened to the loud noises of the morning rush commuting into the city. We passed entire families on motorcycles, children walking their younger siblings to school, trucks full of men on their way to work, women selling food and others simply enjoying the morning sun. We continued through the noisy

streets of neighborhoods into the incredibly peaceful rice paddies, plantain fields and mountains that would lead us to our destination, the batey.

Tucked away at the end of this long road is a community of Haitians who have migrated to the Dominican Republic in response to a promise of or hope to work in the fields. With spotty work and low wages they are struggling to meet their most basic needs and, although, the country relies heavily on their labor the children born in this community are still essentially unrecognized by the Dominican government. Without a birth certificate they are unable to attend school in neighboring towns. ILAC and a group of volunteers built a school where the children can learn how to read and write basic Spanish

(given their first language is Creole). Throughout the semester, four of us were part of the class. We helped sound out Spanish words, broke up fights, colored, sang and simply added some new entertainment in the community. After school ended is when we ran off to the field just across the road and played almost every game imaginable laughing at our goofy selves or wiping away tears after a fall.

The people of this community are sure to never to leave our minds. From the first time we were embraced by a mob of children, handed a newborn baby, witnessed the arrival of clean water, looked into their yellow eyes, saw the effects of malnutrition and inadequate health-care and shared laughs that make your stomach hurt in the fields are images that

will stay with us forever. So while almost every American ideal would suggest that five hours of total travel time is too much to invest in playing for a couple hours, ask us if it was worth it. The answer is overwhelmingly yes.





We are the World

Remake by Anna Green & Christine Bolas

We are the world and you have been given a direct order to rock out.

Rock out like you are getting paid to disturb the peace.

Rock out like music is all that you got.



Rock out like the banana and palm trees are on fire and the only way they can be extinguished is by doing the Bachata.

Rock out like the gua gua is going into town, there are 120 people on board, and 12 seats.

Rock out like your water bottle is empty, but the water jug is full.

Like you got pants full of pesos and nothing to do but save the world.

Rock out like you are the international domino champion of the entire universe.

Rock out like it's raining outside and you've got a friend to wear with rain jackets with.

Like your dirty white v-necks are brand new.

Rock out like it's raining in the Caribbean and dancing is the only thing you know to do.

Like no one understands your Spanish, but you're going to die trying to make them.

Rock out like this life is so good we are willing to exhaust ourselves daily, wake up and do it again.

Like the room is full of people that don't want to be anywhere else.

Rock out like it's your duty to dream.

Rock out like your life depended on it , fool, because it does.



Comunidad Diez

