



DRSEA INFORMER

Volume I, Issue 1: A Publication For Your Reading Enjoyment

Estoy Loco (Am I Crazy)? – That was a question I was asking myself last week as I headed to the airport in a driving rainstorm to catch a plane to the Dominican Republic, relocating here to pursue the dream of turning the Dominican Republic Sports & Education Academy into a reality. Despite having worked on developing the Academy for more than two years with Harold Mendez, my co-founder and good friend, the doubts were flooding my mind. After all, there is still so much to do: Identifying land, raising money, building facilities, developing a course of study, hiring teachers and administrators, AND, finding students who have both the athletic and academic inclinations to succeed, to mention just a few. It remains a daunting task.

But fears can't help but subside in the Dominican Republic, a magical land where dreams do come true. Where hope springs eternal. Where perseverance is rewarded. When I stepped off the plane in Santo Domingo, I felt a renewed sense of determination and drive. It didn't hurt that it was 92 degrees and sunny! As I rode into the city I felt even more of a communion with God and the journey He guides each of our lives through. I know in my heart and soul that the DRSEA will happen! I am hoping that many, many others will share and support the dream.

El Sueño (The Dream) – The basic mission of the DRSEA is to provide young, gifted student athletes the opportunity to become well-rounded individuals. While providing student athletes with the opportunity to hone their natural athletic talents amongst some of the world's best young athletes, the Academy will also prepare them to excel in life, outside the lines and off the playing fields. Through a rigorous educational and athletic component, student athletes will be given the tools to qualify for sports scholarships at U.S. colleges and universities. If they can have a career in professional sports, great, but playing sports is a short career even in the best of circumstances. Education is something that will last them a lifetime and help them make an impact on the world around them. This is the dream I hope you will share.

Valoree de LeBron Es Una Persona Especial (Valoree de LeBron is a special person)

– From time to time I want to spotlight some of the people who are working directly to make the DRSEA a reality. One of them is Valoree de LeBron, who has spent 40 years in the Dominican Republic trying to make life better for people. She currently runs Instituto Escuela, a school that works with Dominican baseball players to get them high school diplomas. She is also on the Board of Trustees of the DRSEA. Her passion and commitment for her work is inspirational, and I love her practical approach to things. She is an extraordinary asset because she understands the education system in the Dominican Republic as it exists, and she understands what the DRSEA needs to do to succeed.

She spent a good part of this past Saturday taking me to the market to get food and supplies, helping me navigate shelves of familiar and unfamiliar items. Milk comes in a box that sits on a shelf, not in a refrigerated section. Tide® costs about twice as much here as in the States, but there are some quality local alternatives. And thank God for good old peanut butter! And yes, we were able to find distilled water for my humidifier – that was a necessity.

I look forward to working with Valoree.

Charles, qué usted está haciendo aquí (Charles, what are you doing here)? – I believe strongly in the saying that coincidence is God’s way of staying anonymous. Imagine my surprise while in the supermarket when someone called out to me? I certainly wasn’t expecting to see anyone I knew, but was delighted to see this woman, who is the cousin of my ex-girlfriend. The odds of bumping into her were astronomical, but she is a delightful person (as is my ex). Our crossing paths was not a coincidence; but it is part of the magic of the DR. Good things happen here.

La Mejor Manera De Predecir El Futuro Es Inventar (The best way to predict the future is to invent it) – “Change” has become the popular force of late, what with the shifting political scene calling for a different direction. The DRSEA is about change also, about inventing a different educational path in the Dominican Republic. As you know, change is not always easy, particularly when things have been done a certain way for a long time. Baseball is a business here and it is not the business of education, so creating the DRSEA is an inventive process to say the least. But we have assembled a good “team” to get us there. But the team cannot do it alone; it will take a village. Money, of course, is the greatest requirement for such a project, and we will be launching a capital campaign soon, and still hope to open our doors by 2010. Raising money in these times of financial distress won’t be easy, but there are many ways to contribute to the DRSEA succeeding and we hope you will help. Any assistance helps us get one step closer to our goal. Even if you personally can’t help, maybe you know someone who can? And individual who may want to make a contribution? A foundation that provides grants for such projects. A company that may have a vested interest in such a project? A college or university that would like to provide scholarships for DRSEA graduates?

We also will need such things as school supplies, including books, laptops and other materials. Maybe you know someone who would be interested in teaching or working at the DRSEA, or who specializes in fundraising? Someone who can work with our website? Translate information into Spanish? All suggestions are welcome; please send them to cfarrell@drsea.org.

One program we are working on to put our brand out there is a literacy program for young people to promote interest in reading. We are particularly interested in Spanish language books for children, so if you or others have them, send them down to me and they will go to good use.

Let's invent the future together!

Charles S. Farrell

Hechos De Diversion (Fun Facts)

Capital: Santo Domingo

Climate: Maritime semitropical, with an average yearly temperature of 80 F

Currency: Dominican peso

Ethnic groups: European - 16%

African origin - 11%

Mixed - 73%

Government type: Representative Democracy

Independence: February 27, 1844 (from Haiti)

Language: Spanish

Phone Code: International access code – 809

Political parties and leaders:

Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) - Leonel *Fernandez* Reyna

Population: 8,950,034

Religion: Official - Roman Catholic (95%)

Other - Protestant, Seventh Day Adventist, Baptist, and Mormon

Tourism – So far this year, more than 3.1 million people have visited the Dominican Republic, or 29% of the Caribbean total. The country's tourism revenues exceed US\$3.4 billion. Tourism accounts for 24% of GDP for the DR.

Of foreign tourists:

52.1% come from North America and 37.5% from Europe.

DRSEA Contact Information in the Dominican Republic

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