



PROJECT ESPERANZA

2016 End of Year Report

February 1, 2017

Dear Supporter,

It is with great appreciation that we share this annual report with you. It is also with great love that we give you this necklace. One of our students or mothers searched among the polluted beaches of Puerto Plata collecting the jewels among the trash: pieces of broken glass that has become smooth after time in the sand and salt water. He or she then turned it into a necklace for you. It may not be well-made, but they did it with love, with courage, and with appreciation of the sacrifice that you make for them. Please wear it or hang it knowing that it symbolizes that love and appreciation.

We hope that you find this report informative. If you have any questions, please write to us at Info@EsperanzaMeansHope.org, Sponsor@EsperanzaMeansHope.org, or Finances@EsperanzaMeansHope.org. If you prefer snail mail, our mailing address is 1291 Valley Mill Rd. Winchester, VA 22602. Phone calls and skype calls can also be set up if so desired. If you wish to volunteer with us, please e-mail Volunteer@EsperanzaMeansHope.org.

We sincerely thank you,

- *The Project Esperanza Team*

10 Year Anniversary!

Project Esperanza began working in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic during the summer of May 2007 conducting a street census, evaluating the situation of youth working on the streets. This led us to begin supporting a school in the barrio of Padre Granero in December 2007, to open up a group home for boys on the streets in January 2007, and to take responsibility over a second school in the batey community of Muñoz.

Over the past 10 years we have received endless requests to branch into other areas, as well as hardships that have asked us to abandon those three programs, but we have remained focused. We have spent 10 years growing deeper in our work and are proud of what we have accomplished. We are also proud to call you a partner and a part of the team.

Please take a few minutes to watch the reflective video found on the “Help Us Celebrate Our 10 Year Anniversary” link found on our homepage:

www.EsperanzameansHope.org. Know that in joining us in our work, you have helped a lost boy or girl find a home and a future here in Neverland.

What We Do

Grassroots Schools Progress

In the 2015-2016 school year we began the school year in Padre Granero in our new school building. The new space has allowed our numbers to increase dramatically. By winter we were averaging around 150 students in school every day, with the number occasionally getting as high as 160. Current enrollment is at 179 in Padre Granero and 46 in Muñoz.

By partnering with another pastor beginning during the 2015-2016 school year, we were able to enroll our pre-K through first grade students into the Dominican system, using the accreditation of the pastor's school as we continue to work on our own. This year we have been working with the Ministry of Education in order to bring an evaluator from the government to allow us to enroll our 2nd to 7th grade students, ensuring that they can transition from our school into a higher level school when the time comes (7th grade). This is a work in progress and your prayers are appreciated.

Some of our biggest hurdles in obtaining our own accreditation have to do with the physical state of the school building, as we still have classrooms enclosed with chain-link walls. Morehouse College coming for the third time in May is making this construction their project this year. We also are in great need of drop ceilings for each classroom with ceiling fans to address noise and ventilation issues that hinder us from providing the best learning environment possible for our students.



As a reminder, our two schools run from 8am to 1pm, Monday through Friday. Grade levels are pre-school through 7th grade, ages 3-18. We provide a school meal each day. Between the two schools, two directors are employed, 14 teachers, one teaching assistant, two cleaning staff, three kitchen staff, and one doorman are employed, totaling 23 people.

School Fundraising Update: We're Halfway There!

In April 2015, we were faced with a tough decision: find our 6th rental in 9 years, or invest in our own school building in Padre Granero. Although the total cost

was daunting (\$140,000), we had exhausted any other options in the area, so we took a leap of faith that we could raise the funds. Just one year later, we had raised about half the costs: \$69,000. In April 2016 we secured a loan from one of our generous sponsors to pay back the rest at a 3% annual interest rate over the next 9 years. This is been our largest fundraiser yet and we are so grateful to everyone who has helped us by donating, volunteering, and spreading the word!

We would like to say a very special thank you to the Wendy Hester Good Karma Foundation, who gave very generous donations to the school building purchase.

Group Home Memories & Update

Our group home has moved to a new, quieter location after complaints from the last landlord. Watch this video for memories from the boys this year!

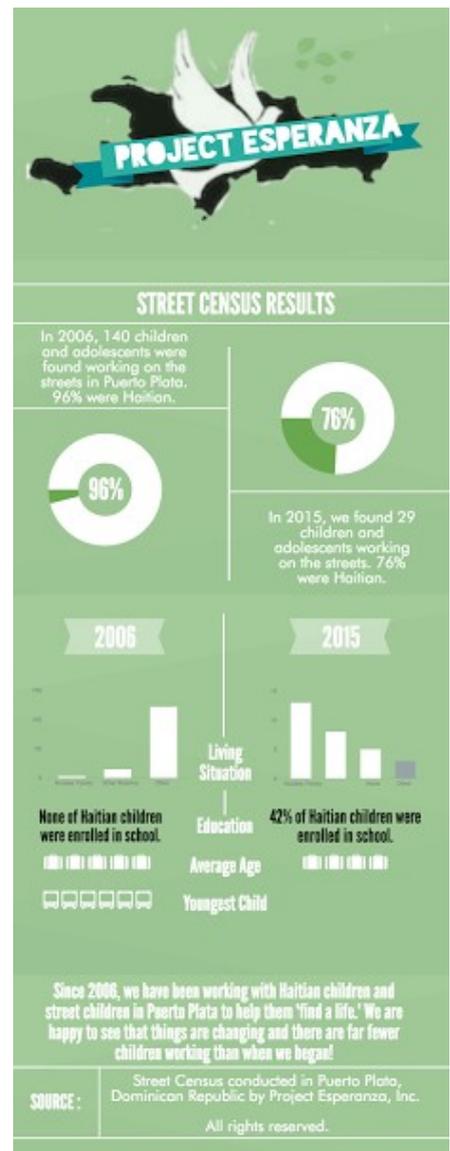
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQK92HZ4uLA>

We continue to house and educate a rolling average of 7 boys in the group home who are estranged from family or have lost their family. 2016 ended with unexpected flooding that threatened the property where we built. The overgrown creek bed became filled with five feet of rolling water coming down the mountain, carrying large rocks with it. One neighboring house collapsed. The most elderly Puerto Plateñans observed that they had never seen such flooding in all of their days. Maryville College coming in May plans to build a retaining wall to protect the home from future flooding.

A 2015 street census was conducted by volunteers to assess the need of youth working on the streets in the same way that we conducted the census in 2006. Read about results in this blog post (<http://caitlinmchale.blogspot.com/2016/07/street-census-redone.html>) and in viewing the graph.

Building Project

Because of constant threats of evictions, we decided to build a new group home building on land that was purchased in 2013. We have about \$3,000 left to pay the seller



of the land before we no longer have any building or land payments, which we are paying off with monthly payments of \$250. We also have a few more improvements kinks to work out to make the building completely livable and functional for the amount of people that it is meant to serve. But we are almost there!

How We Do It

Financial Update

We are happy to announce that 2016 provided Project Esperanza with its **highest income ever!** With art shop income and expenses aside, but including volunteer trip fees, our gross income was \$131,664.82. Here is the breakdown of how those funds were managed:

Program	Total Expenses	% of Total Budget	Notes
Padre Granero School	\$59,286	45%	Around \$24,800 went toward the building purchase.
Muñoz School	\$20,990	16%	
Group Home	\$16,711	13%	Close to \$8,000 went toward construction.
Social Aid	\$3,100	2%	
Administrative Costs	\$5,256	4%	Internet, telephone, printing, transportation, transfer fees.
Change My Stars Scholarships	\$5,458	4%	Donor guided scholarships.
Volunteer Program	\$21,000	16%	More than covered through volunteer trip fees

Volunteer Program

Throughout 2016 we had 198 volunteers join us here in Puerto Plata as members of 13 different groups, staying between 2 and 8 days. They built human compost toilets, installed rain barrels, did small business consulting, taught about recycling, led

community recycling activities, did health workshops, ran English immersion camp in the summer, and more!

We also had 33 individuals come and help out in similar ways but on their own, not as part of a group.



In addition to these volunteers, we have had dozens of day visitors who come to the art shop, participate in a cooking activity, and have a talk. The funds we raise through the fees volunteers and visitors pay is our **biggest source of revenue** for running our programs throughout the year. We also ensure that their presence has a positive and non-interrupting effect on the schools and communities we serve, thus making it a truly mutually beneficial situation.

Partnerships and Development: Art Shop

In 2016 we really blossomed our partnership with Me2We, a Canadian group that leads student and adult volunteer trips in 22 countries. They have brought groups most months for a talk about Project Esperanza, a cooking activity, and to shop in our art shop. In March alone they brought 86 visitors. They are a huge part of why our art shop is profitable for the first year! In 2016 we made right around \$2,000 in profit. While this is not one of our biggest sources of revenue, it does help and provides work for many!

As Me2We is lessening their involvement in the Dominican Republic, we continue to host their groups, but we are developing partnerships as well with Outback Safari tours and Entera, a local organization that leads volunteer-based cruise ship excursions. Both organizations plan to begin leading groups to the art shop and do not ask for commission in return. The school and art shop in Muñoz have been moved to a more central location in the batey community that has electricity 24/7, more space, and a large parking lot. The extra costs needed to move were also covered by the Wendy Hester Good Karma Foundation!

Another idea for development in the art shop is to create a “Paint and Wine” evening excursion to be advertised on tripadvisor. All of this development depends on our ability to recruit an excellent volunteer coordinator, which is currently in process. A huge thanks to Kati Hinman who served as volunteer coordinator from August 2015 to August 2016.

One footprint Kati left behind was to secure a grant for gardening space in the community of Muñoz. So far, we have purchased a small building behind the school and art shop which will serve as more classroom space, as well as an HQ for volunteers

leading environmental and sustainability projects in the community. The yard area will soon be transformed into gardening space with hopes of including composting and recycling bins. Stay tuned for pictures and updates!

Student Sponsorship Program



In the 2015-2016 school year, 99 of our students were sponsored at \$100 a year. That was about 50% of the students in our two schools. Many of our individual sponsors have sponsored more than one person. A notable addition to our sponsorship this year was the Burnt Factory Methodist Women's Church.

This number is up from 59 in the 2014-2015 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year we have 113 students sponsored so far. Please help us to make this the first year that we get ALL of our students sponsored!

Monthly Sponsorship Program

We continue to seek monthly sponsors to give as little as little as \$10 per month to help us cover our monthly budget. It has long been our dream that our monthly sponsorships would cover our monthly budget, but it has never become a reality. We continue to spend many months wondering what manna God will provide to make ends meet, especially come teacher pay day, but provide he always does. If you would like to be a part of that provision, please e-mail Sponsor at EsperanzaMeansHope.org to get started.

We currently receive \$1,522 from 24 monthly sponsors, ranging from \$10 to \$230 each month. We do our best to send out regular updates and this is an area we admittedly need to improve on. Please know that our monthly sponsors are our rocks, providing us with stability, and without you, we would be truly shaken.

Questions?

Again, please feel free to send us any and all of your questions! We are not at all annoyed but happy to know that people take a deeper interest in the work and activity behind the scenes.