

Generation Peace Academy came to Santiago, Dominican Republic to serve and bless our school

Unhae Suh Wiesner
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The volunteers built this climbing frame for the kindergarten students

I am half-German, half-French but have lived in the Dominican Republic with my national messiah family for more than seventeen years. My dad, Matthias Wiesner, is the owner of a school project. I have been working as a volunteer at my family's school project for the past five years with my brother Bernard and my dad. I have been actively working to improve the school as an English and crafts teacher, ballet instructor, character educator, assistant administrator and assistant principal.



Doing crafts with the young children

Twenty-six young, determined volunteers from the Generation Peace Academy (GPA) program came all the way from the United States to serve and bless our school project in Santiago for a whole week in March. This was the third time the GPA volunteers came to serve our school, Colegio la Union. The first project, in 2013, involved painting the inside of all twelve classrooms, which had literally looked like prison cells instead of classrooms. For the second project, they built a sports ground and donated toys for our kindergarten. Before the GPA team came, we had no proper space for

our two hundred students to run around in or play sports in, and the kindergarten had almost no toys. The last project in March focused on building a playground, making a beautiful mural, repairing and painting students' broken desks, improving the sports ground, doing crafts with the children, teaching English, playing sports and donating sports equipment.

The project in March made a deep impression on our community, we are grateful to the whole team and to Elissa Alan who was the main coordinator of their Dominican Republic GPA project. Never before did we have a playground for our students.

Observing the children's big eyes and smiles while the playground and mural were taking form melted my

heart. The difference these volunteers made in just one week was amazing!



Some of the volunteers

Now our school is starting to look less like a refugee camp and more like a proper school. On top of that, the little English they taught the children during this one week was probably worth three months of normal English class.



Repairing students' chairs and desks

The love and hope that these young people shared with the children and the community made it difficult to say goodbye to them.

Our school project started in 2009 with my father's vision to offer a better moral and academic education to children in our community. We ask a minimum school fee. Our students come from families that do not want to send their children to public school, but who

also can't afford to send them to an expensive private school. We have many cases of student's stopping school because their parents cannot afford any longer to pay the school fee. Thanks to our sponsors, we were able to help some of these students, so they could finish their education.



Painting a mural on the wall of the play area

The Dominican Republic education system is ranked one of the lowest in the world. Students learning time is less than 25 percent of their school time and many drop out before graduating because of early pregnancy or a need to work. Public schools have up to sixty students in a class with very poor discipline, so many parents are worried about that and prefer to send their child to a private school even though it may mean a painful economic sacrifice.

Our students now have a better learning environment and a larger vision for their future, thanks to our twenty-six volunteers who said,

Yes we want to make a difference.