



# Sister Island Project

October 2011

**Dear Friends:** We wish you the best as we move toward year's end. Sister Island Project (SIP) is an independent non-profit organization that has partnered for 10 years with the economically impoverished rural community of Cruz Verde in the Dominican Republic. Our service commitment is personal at its roots and practical in its expression. We listen to what Dominicans tell us they need. We keep it simple. We try to do a lot with a little.

With the support of partners like you, since 2002, we have coordinated safe and meaningful service trips for hundreds of volunteers; built a large community learning center and a well; enabled construction of 6 houses; organized hundreds of classes, theater/arts groups, youth leadership training and health education sessions; distributed over a ton of donations; supported Haitians post-earthquake; run arts camps; and guided microenterprise efforts. **With your support, we keep going.**

**NEW PROJECT - Cruz Verde Community Well Repair.** *This is the most urgent current need.* Cruz Verde is served by a single well that has been gradually failing for some years. The well provides running water for 230 people, and can't continue operating without a major overhaul. Water is fundamental. Sister Island Project has committed to funding the necessary repairs, both materials and labor, at an estimated cost of \$US 10,000. This will include the following main steps: 1. Hire an engineer to oversee the process, 2. Repair and strengthen the tank platform, 3. Remove the old metal water tank which has rusted out and replace it with 2 to 3 large tanks; 4. Dig trenches, remove old pipe and fittings, and replace all pipes leading to 48 households. (Note: This community well is different from the one we built at the Luz Maria Learning Center, which serves outlying households on the edge of Cruz Verde.)

**NEW PROJECT - Community Gardening: Sustainable Living with the Land.** The people of Yabacao are rural people who live connected to the land, the same land that was damaged for generations by the chemical fertilizers of industrial sugar monoculture. There is growing community interest in increased engagement with the land, to grow healthy food, live sustainably, and generate income. One of the projects Sister Island Project supports is a community garden and orchard on the land at the Luz Maria Learning Center which we completed in 2006. The garden and orchard are maintained by a 12-member collective of community members (open to anyone), guided by the Cruz Verde Community Council. It currently provides a very limited amount of vegetables and fruit to group members and their families. The group has requested \$US 800 to purchase fencing, fertilizer, seeds, till the soil and hire an agricultural consultant. The group would like to grow lettuce, collard greens, onions, carrots, beets, peppers, eggplant, and other vegetables, and develop the fruit orchard. The food would be distributed among the collective and their families (about 60 people), and surplus would be sold. This is an exciting project supporting sustainable rural community. It represents a small step toward independence from an unreliable economy and the pull toward urban employment.

## Looking Back at 2011

**Volunteer Service and Cultural Exchange.** In January, high school student Morgan Ramsey (*photos right*) from Germantown Friends School in Pennsylvania served for a month as a teaching assistant at schools in Cruz Verde and Altagracia. She truly inspired local students. Spring 2011 was a wonderfully full season for student volunteer groups as SIP coordinated service trips for groups from Appalachian State

University, Fordham School of Law, Northeastern University, Rhodes College, University of Maryland, and University of South Carolina. In the first part of the year, 115 student volunteers shared their good will, labor, creativity, intelligence, and heart, engaging in home construction projects, education and arts activities with youth, gardening, and workshops. They made a genuine, meaningful contribution and learned a lot in the process.





**Home Construction.** Our ongoing home construction efforts support safe, sustainable community as residents team up with local builders and U.S. volunteers to build enduring structures, transforming their community one house at a time. Home construction projects continued in 2011, as we began and completed our sixth house, the home of Antonia and Nunu. This photo (*left*) is of the fifth house completed.

**Summer Arts Camp.** The

annual summer arts camp launched by Sister Island Project in 2002, in partnership with community leaders and young adult volunteers, was held again in 2011. With financial support from SIP, the camp was organized and run entirely by Dominican adult and youth volunteers, serving around 100 children (*photo right*) at the learning center. This is a very satisfying marker of the community's increasing ownership of the camp and collective skill development.



**SIP Scholarship Fund.** The love of learning is precious. For the 2011 Scholarship Fund, we dedicated support to two university students:

**Student: Idania Sala Payano** (*middle right*) **Career Goal:** Math and Science teacher **Total Need per year:** \$2,477

**Student:**

**Jenifer Cabrera Rodriguez** (*bottom right*) **Career Goal:** System Engineer **Total Need per year:** \$3,030. Both Jenny and Idania are in their second year of college, attending full-time and need ongoing scholarship support. In 2012, with your help, Jenny and Idania can continue their education, benefiting their communities.



**Your support keeps this work alive. Thank you!**

Sister Island Project is a non-profit organization with 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. Your donation is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. **Please make check payable to "Sister Island Project", and mail to: SIP, PO Box 1413, Langley, WA, 98260**

You can dedicate your one-time or monthly donation (Cruz Verde Well, Community Garden, Scholarship Fund, or Home Construction), volunteer in the U.S., or volunteer on a service trip to Cruz Verde. You can donate online at: [www.sisterislandproject.org](http://www.sisterislandproject.org)

**For more info, please email us at [sisterisland@gmail.com](mailto:sisterisland@gmail.com)**



Wishing you much happiness,  
Peter Blaustein and Victoria Santos  
Co-Directors

[www.sisterislandproject.org](http://www.sisterislandproject.org)