



# **DRSEA INFORMER**

Volume I, Issue 7: A Publication For Your Reading Enjoyment

***Todos Los Sistemas Van En Programa De Lectura (All Systems Go On Reading Program)*** – After a meeting last week with Children International, all systems are go for the Lector Programa, the reading program established by the DRSEA send people out into Dominican communities to read aloud to children in an effort to impress upon them the joys of reading. We will hold the first reading at a new community center in Boca Chica, not far from Santo Domingo; a date towards the end of January will be finalized soon.

Many thanks to DRSEA Board of Trustees member Valoree de LeBron, and DRSEA Advisory Board member Franklin Guerrero for helping to put everything together. A special thanks goes out to Vaughn Thomas and the Sports Foundation in the Bronx, NY, for donating school supplies for distribution to the children.

More donations are needed for future reading sessions, including additional school supplies and books. If you are interested in supporting the program, send an e-mail. It is only through your help that we can be successful; helping to educate a child is priceless.

***Patrocine A Un Niño (Sponsor A Child)*** – Our relationship with Children International has expanded to where we have been asked to help identify child sponsors for the organization. For just \$22 a month, an individual, business or organization can support a child in the Dominican Republic or elsewhere in the world. Sponsorship gives impoverished children the critical help they need to grow up healthy and educated. This includes some basic things like medical care and clothing.

And, your support will benefit the DRSEA, if only indirectly. The DRSEA, to sustain its own educational mission, must identify youth who can benefit from the DRSEA experience. With the assistance of Children International, and your sponsorship of a child, we will begin to identify those children now and get them into the pipeline to prepare them to one day attend the DRSEA.

Our goal is to help Children International recruit 200 sponsors. Your sponsorship is not limited to the Dominican Republic; Children International operates worldwide. There could be a great office project; get 10 or 12 co-workers together and do this as a joint venture that doesn't cost an

individual much but will make a world of difference to a child. For more information on Children International, and the sponsorship process, go to [www.children.org](http://www.children.org).

***Una noche en Santo Domingo (A Night in Santo Domingo)*** – On January 27, 2009, we will be holding a fundraiser, "***SANTO DOMINGO NIGHT II***" at the **Renaissance Cigar Emporium**, 1825 Madison Ave. (between 118<sup>th</sup> and 119<sup>th</sup>), from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Your \$40 donation will support the DRSEA; the evening will be full of food, drinks, and music. Cigars and gift bags will be provided to all who attend; there will also be a raffle of sports memorabilia and other items of value. Please make plans to attend this event that will have so many wonderful benefits. The DRSEA journey has only just begun, and only through your help, input and support can we continue to make strides towards creating a unique educational institution for which we all can be proud.

For more information on the event, or how to get tickets, go to [www.drsea.org](http://www.drsea.org) or call 212-348-7028 or 215-888-9608. Information on Renaissance Cigar Emporium is available at [www.renaissancecigars.com](http://www.renaissancecigars.com). Tickets for the event are limited so please respond now if you are going to attend and leave contact information. Even if you can't attend, please consider purchasing a ticket(s) as a donation to the DRSEA. And please let others you believe may be interested in attending the event and/or supporting the DRSEA know about what we are doing.



***John Watson Es Una Persona Especial (John Watson is a special person)*** – John Watson, a member of the DRSEA Board of Advisors, began his tenure as Head of School at West Nottingham Academy, the oldest boarding school in the U.S. (founded 1744) in July of 2002. Prior to that, he served stints as Assistant Head at the Peddie School in New Jersey and Cheshire Academy in Connecticut,

He was born and raised in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where his family owned and operated a newspaper and printing business for nearly thirty years. The fifth of six children, Dr. Watson's family stressed civic participation and education even though his mother didn't finish college and his father didn't finish high school because of the Depression. He attended the University of Minnesota earning an MA and a PhD in Music Composition and Theory. He was co-chair of the visual and performing arts department at the Breck School in Minneapolis for eight years while pursuing an active career as a composer and conductor. In 1992, he took the position of Assistant Head at the Darrow School in upstate New York.

One of Dr. Watson's ongoing concerns is how living in a strong, close knit community such as a boarding school affects how a student learns. He has authored or co-authored numerous articles and book chapters and made conference presentations concerning the nature of lasting change in schools, the counter-cultural nature of education today, and legal issues for heads of schools. Dr. Watson currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Association of Independent Maryland Schools, and also sits on the Accreditation Committee of the same Association. Closer to home, he is a director on the Board of the Cecil County Arts Council.

Dr. Watson has been extremely instrumental in the development of the DRSEA course of studies.

***Reflexiones (Reflections)*** – I recently had the opportunity to visit the St. George School, a prestigious private school in Santo Domingo that has been in operation since 1965. Having grown up on a college campus, I have always appreciated an academic environment and St. George is a warm, inviting place, rich with the pursuit of education.

It takes children as young as age two and takes them through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and beyond, a near cradle to adulthood experience. Toddlers played happily on slides, while elementary age kids enjoyed the delights of lunch in the school's spacious cafeteria. Classrooms for older students don't have room numbers, they have names like William Shakespeare, Alexandre Dumas and other authors of the classics. The halls of education have a life of their own.

Yet it was not the best of times for St. George. The school was already affected by the death of a 13-year-old boy, who, having already had two near-death experiences with diabetes, was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident. While still recovering from that, St. George was sent reeling by the death of a young girl, a senior who took her own life with a gun.

Suicide hits home for me. I lost my younger sister to a drug overdose many years ago, so I felt an immediate understanding of what the school was going through. When my sister died it was the first time I had ever seen my father cry; my mother went into a spiral that affected her the rest of her life because, even though it was not her fault, I know she felt blame.

The death of any young person is tragic in nature, but in the case of suicide, there is always a search for answers that may never come. How could someone so young become so sad, so depressed, in such a short lifespan to want to end it all? Was there something you could have done, that anyone could have done, to prevent it. What signs did we miss? What did you do wrong? And you wish you would have told them – just one more time – that you loved them.

It is one of God's profound mysteries, and one of God's realities. Things happen in life that we don't understand, that don't have an explanation no matter how hard we search for one. I always tried to tell my sister that she was one of the lucky ones in life to have parents who wanted her, who cared for her, nurtured her and tried their best to prepare her for life in a world that is not easy, and gets more complex every day. And children today are faced with more peril and uncertainty than I could ever imagine when I was growing up.

I don't have children, but still hope to one day. Those of you who do, count your blessings every day. Tomorrow may be too late.

### ***Otras Noticias De Interés (Other News of Interest)***

**A Whole Lot Of Shaking Going On** – A earthquake registering 5.1 on the Richter scale was felt in the DR recently. The United States Geological Survey website reported that its epicenter was off the eastern coast of the country. It was located 26 km (16 miles) NNW (343 degrees) from San Pedro de Macoris, 41.8 kms to the north-northeast of La Romana, 43.6 kms to the south of Samana, and 63 kms (39 miles) ENE (71 degrees) from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

**Tourism Outlook Optimistic** – Tourism Minister Francisco Javier Garcia believes that tourism in the DR will emerge unscathed from the looming international financial crisis. Garcia's optimism is based on a 2.10% growth in tourism from January to November. Garcia added that tourism in the DR has already survived five crises, including the US real estate problems, the increase in fuel prices during the summer, the global food shortage and the instability in the international financial markets. Making his case, Garcia said that travel from the US was up 1.61%. When Canada is included, travel from North America was up 4.52%.

**Presidente Goes Pro** – Presidente beer, the national beer of the Dominican Republic, will be an official sponsor of the NBA's Miami Heat, making the Dominican national brand the first to sponsor a major American sports team. In the past, Presidente had an agreement with the NFL's Miami Dolphins. Few details about the partnership have been released, but Listin Diario reports that Presidente will be able to use the Miami Heat logo as part of its promotional campaigns. The beer will also have a special place in Miami Heat luxury boxes. The move by Presidente is a testament to the company's growth in recent years and its small but growing following beyond the borders of its native country.

**Foreign Investment** – Foreign direct investment more than doubled in 2008, but real estate investment declined, according to statistics from the Center for Exports and Investment (CEI-RD). Investment in 2008 totaled US\$2.35 billion, for a 55.1% growth from 2007. Real estate investment was down to US\$576.4 million, compared to US\$1.33 billion in 2007. Eddy Martinez, director of CEI-RD says that total foreign direct investment equaled US\$836.5 billion.

**Trade Deficit** – The Dominican Republic's trade deficit with the United States has doubled. The DR has a free trade agreement with the US. Economist Luis Vargas says that figures from the US Department of Commerce for the first 10 months of 2008 show that the trade deficit grew 70%, or US\$939.3 million, going from US\$1.34 billion to US\$2.28 billion for the period. Exports are down 5.16% or US\$182.9 million, while imports were up 15.47% or US\$755.5 million.

**Dominican All Star?** – Al Horford, the second-year center for the Atlanta Hawks who is Dominican, is among the top-ranked centers in this year's All-Star voting. According to initial stats released by the NBA, Horford has received 45,284 votes behind Dwight Howard, Sam Dalembert, Rasheed Wallace and Jermaine O'Neal. Horford is following a strong rookie year with a solid second campaign. As of last week, he was putting up 11.2 points per game, 8.1 boards, and 2.5 assists while shooting 53.5% from the field. Adding to Horford's accolades is his number 12 ranking on Jezebel Magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People in Atlanta" list.

## **LETTERS TO THE DRSEA INFORMER:**

*No letters this issue. Your comments and questions are welcome.*

*Charles S. Farrell*

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Please feel free to pass the **DRSEA INFORMER** on to others you feel might be interested in being updated on what we are doing or send their e-mail to including them on the mailing list. The **INFORMER** is published on a regular basis; back issues are available upon request.