

# Update from Santo Domingo

## Joel Zwier, Dominican Republic

December 2009

### What Do Eggs Have to Do With HIV?

Dear Friends,

Christmas is a time filled with hope. I want to share a story about one of the CRWRC partner programs that is full of hope.

For a year now DesCo staff have been working in five communities in the Monte Plata province implementing an HIV-prevention program. In each community, church leaders, parents, and teens have been actively involved for a year. While new knowledge about HIV is important, even more important is change in behavior. The focus of the program has been to promote abstinence until marriage as a viable option for teens. These communities traditionally have not talked about sexuality issues in the home, school, or church. It has been a big leap for everyone to begin addressing these topics.

As a reward for faithful attendance at training sessions DesCo took 200 teens on a daylong field trip by bus to Santo Domingo. Activities started in a local church where there were a number of songs and dramas. Family therapist Patricia Ebersole Zwier, the guest speaker, started by calling all the teens forward to pick up an egg from 7 flats of eggs on the platform. She gave no explanations, only the following instructions:

- 1. Each person is responsible for his/her own egg.**
- 2. You must have your egg with you at all times.**
- 3. Don't let your egg get broken!**

Patricia then presented a healthy model for creating intimacy based on twelve incremental steps that are seen across cultures. Offering concrete action steps (such as 1000 hours of conversation; spending fun times side-by-side before continuing with touching the face and head) gave practical alternatives for a process of knowing another person without getting quickly caught in a cycle of premature sexual intimacy.

The group, with 200 eggs in hand, then visited the national aquarium, followed by an afternoon at a farm with a meal and swimming in a pool. As they mounted the buses to return to their communities, most of the eggs were still being carefully guarded.

The impact of the metaphor has been huge! Weeks later as part of a DesCo program evaluation, a number of participating teens shared how they had successfully cared for their egg all day and how they were going to do the same with their sexuality.



Staying in school, getting a good job, and waiting for marriage to begin sexual activity have suddenly become cool in these communities.

News from the family:

- Both Patti and Joel traveled recently. Patti to do team building for an organization in Mexico, and Joel to supervise the program funded in Cuba.
- Elisabeth began her first semester towards her PhD in education.
- James and his wife, Sarah, continue to work for CRWRC in Laos.
- Sarah is working in Madison, Wisconsin. David is a sophomore at Goshen College.

**Please consider giving a gift of hope to the poor this Christmas. The impact of the recession has been significant on CRWRC, and these reductions now reach the programs funded in the Dominican Republic and in other countries.**