Changing the World,
One Student at a Time

This is the story of how a club, a family with a dream, a woman with a deep conviction, and a group of willing, helping hands, can make a meaningful difference.

We talked to Bill Black recently about the work that he, his family and his Rotary Club community undertook in the Dominican Republic earlier this year. The group spent eight days in Cabarete, clearing grounds, digging trenches, mixing cement, and building to provide excellent facilities for children at a small school there.

A Hand Up

“Why a school”, we asked Bill. “Educational projects for children offer the opportunity to make a true impact. Giving them an education enables them to help themselves; it gives them a hand-up rather than a handout”, he explains.

Bill was inspired to support this community by his long-time friend, Karen. 14 years ago, Karen and her family moved to Cabarete where she met Miguelina while taking Spanish lessons.

Miguelina, the youngest of 18 children, grew up in Cabarete with a keen love for teaching and a belief that she can change the world – one student at a time. She got a Masters in Education and, in 2002, began purchasing land for a new school. In 2005, she successfully started Centro de Enseñanza Coral, CEC in a building with no windows, doors, finished walls or floors, but that did not deter Miguelina one bit – a woman with a big heart and a will to succeed. Profoundly impressed by Miguelina’s efforts, Karen passed the word around to her friends in Owen Sound, many of whom came forward to sponsor the children in Cabarete. This tradition has continued for about a decade now.
Service above Self

Last year, The Rotary Club of Owen Sound was looking for an international project in line with their motto: “Service Above Self”. Bill and a group of others agreed that they would support Karen and Miguelina in their efforts.

These Rotarians decided the best thing they could do is raise funds to support the necessary building costs for the school and donate their time. So, off they went to Miguelina’s school in Cabarete to help build it into an even more robust, safe and fun environment for the children for many years to come. They constructed better drainage, reinforced buildings, and built sports facilities to rival those we sometimes take for granted up here in Canada. The highlight was the school’s basketball court, which, along with the gear the team took to Cabarete, made for many happy moments that they were able to share with the children.

“The kids’ faces and their excitement is just an incredible motivator. Some of us have been sponsoring them for over 10 years now and we’ve watched them grow. This trip was an excellent way to take that relationship one step further.” Bill says speaking of the experience.

Today, the school has 300 students and 12 teachers. It has also expanded to teach high-school students.

Miguelina is working on her second Masters degree in Child Psychology and the people of Owen Sound continue to support her. Who says geography has to matter in efforts to bring rich value to the communities we touch.

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– Bill Black

Miguelina teaching in a classroom with unfinished walls and floors
Live your dream.

Finished classroom

High school students playing basketball

Old basketball court

New basketball court