

Week 2: Our Guardian Angels: The Dominicans

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We made it another week! We absolutely love it here. With temperatures in the 90-95°F range and 100% humidity, the freezing cold showers are something we have come to look forward to. The people here tell us we are just starting the hot season; I don't know how much hotter it can get before we literally melt (no wonder countries like the Dominican Republic have record Coca-Cola intake levels – there is nothing better on a hot day.)

Although the Dominican Republic has uncomfortably hot weather, the people make up for it. We are constantly impressed and extremely grateful for the generosity and kindness of the Dominican people. Part of our program includes traveling long distances almost every day to new places. Although we are unfamiliar with the country, we get on buses with complete confidence that someone will take care of us and make sure that we get to where we need to go. Today was a perfect example. We were heading home to La Romana from a suburb, named La Haina, outside of the capital of Santo Domingo. We knew we would need to take a series of busses in order to get to La Romana, but we had no idea where to go. A kind man, who we met on the first bus, showed us to the correct bus stop to get home. He even was stopping traffic on the way to make sure we crossed the crazy streets safely. After we got to the bus stop, we realized his original destination was in the opposite direction and he had walked with us for several blocks just to make sure that we got to where we needed to go. We have similar experiences like this almost every single day.

OUR

During our lesson at A rescue home last week, we talked about the three most important things to have when starting a business. 1) Finding not just an idea, but an opportunity in the market 2) Creating a product that solves a problem and that people want to buy 3) Using your talents to create value. After the lesson, we invited the women to keep a lookout for problems in their everyday life that could be solved by a business.

When we returned to teach another lesson, one of the women, Nati, was so excited to tell us about a business opportunity that she had discovered during the past week. While walking her daughter to school, she noticed that most parents stopped at little shops on the way to school. They all bought snacks and treats for their kids to eat during recess, since school hours are abnormally long here. However, not even one of these shops was located conveniently or within close proximity to the school. Here, Nati saw an opportunity – to open a snack stand right in front of the elementary school, where kids and parents could buy treats more conveniently. I was so fulfilling to see these women retain and use the information we teach them. Although this opportunity that Nati saw might not become a reality, it has

established confidence in her that she can find business opportunities that she is capable of fulfilling.



Mentors International

Annamaria is a local entrepreneur that we originally met in One of our rescue homes. She volunteers there twice a week to give bible devotionals to the rescued women. Annamaria was widowed as of 21 years ago after a tragic accident where some electric cables killed her husband, leaving her to take care of their three children and two nephews on her own. Her main income source came from selling beauty supplies (lotions, makeup, razors, shampoo, conditioner, etc.) from her home. However, as years went by, she grew to have more competitors and couldn't make ends meet. One day her son came home from school with a pet fish that he has bought for a \$1.00 several villages away. She was shocked because she had never seen a fish for sale as a pet! Over the next couple of days, all the kids were swooning over her son's fish and she saw a business opportunity. Annamaria now sells pet fish from her house as well as many other animal supplies and pet food. She calls it: *El Aquario la Fe* – The Aquarium of Faith. This about sums up her attitude – humility and gratitude. She considers everything good in her life a precious gift from the Lord. What an inspiring lady.

Come back next week to see what else we are up to!

A funny story from this week:

Tuesday, we were hanging out in the park, waiting to meet up with our friend Juan – a man starting a public transportation business with his guagita (bus – pronounced “wahweetah”). We obviously stick out here, so two curious little Dominican kids came over to us. At first, they wanted to polish our shoes for money... but we were all wearing sandals. Then they became fascinated with our freckles. They'd never seen them before! After trying to explain what they were, they started guessing our ages. Sydney and Josh, “twenty-four” and Mckenna, “twenty-two” they said. Then they turned to James “Umm... Cuarenta?” Forty. Years. Old. They thought he was forty! “What!?!” James said, laughing “Dude, I'm only twenty-one!” They thought that they were pretty funny, but, unfortunately, I don't think they were joking about their age estimate.