



YALE ALUMNI SERVICE CORPS

La Cucarita, Naranja, Vallejuelo, Dominican Republic

Community(s):	La Cucarita, Naranja, Vallejuelo
Partner:	Diocese of Orlando
Projects:	Home (construction); Health (medical care); Heart (creative literacy and arts enrichment)
# Volunteers:	2008 (88) Trip Producer: YAA

YASC's first service trip took place in 2008 in the three small communities of La Cucarita, Naranja, and Vallejuelo, which are located on the western part of the island close to the border with Haiti. It was organized with the Diocese of Orlando, which led an agricultural collective in Vallejuelo through which residents learn effective, sustainable farming practices. The goal of the collective is to foster economic strength and independence within the community. In addition, with the help of local residents and volunteer partners like Yale, the Diocese was creating new homes in Vallejuelo for families who must relocate from their current village which lies in a floodplain. The program consisted of three major volunteer projects: Home – the construction of homes in Vallejuelo, working side by side with local residents who were relocating from their current village, which lied in a floodplain; Health – alumni nurses and doctors provided medical care to residents in the remote Cordillera Central Mountains; and Heart – offering a creative literacy and arts enrichment program for elementary school children and adults in the mountain village of La Cucarita. This inaugural service trip enabled Yale volunteers to address critical needs in this region, while working alongside and connecting with local residents. Participants also learned about Dominican culture through lectures, workshops, and celebrations with the local community.

About the community(s)

Three small communities of La Cucarita, Naranja, and Vallejuelo, which are located on the western part of the island close to the border with Haiti. Many experts familiar with this western region agree that the biggest challenge facing communities is the lack of education. Teacher attendance in the local schools is sporadic at best and teaching practices are unmonitored. Many teachers and students must travel great distances to get to school. These obstacles create an environment in which residents have little assurance about their education or options for the future. The goal of the Yale Service Trip education project was to offer a creative literacy and arts enrichment curriculum that will inspire students as well as build knowledge and confidence through collaborative performance.