



# LIFE IN JUAN TOMAS

SPRING 2012

Turning off of the main highway, the dirt road that leads to Juan Tomas looks like little more than a driveway. Bouncing along the pot-hole filled road for about a mile will bring you to Manantial de Vida, Fountain of Life Christian School. The elementary school and Paul and Linda McMillan's goat farm are on the left side of the road. The high school and church (The Bible Center of Juan Tomas) are on the right. The students always look happy with their big smiles. Their school uniforms are clean and bright. It is something to be admired when you leave the school and visit their homes.

The houses in Juan Tomas are small and dark. Doors and windows are usually open because of the heat. Most houses are built of lumber. A few of the homes still have dirt floors, some are linoleum, or concrete. There are a few nice homes made of cement block, with ceramic tile floors. The homes in Juan Tomas do not have indoor plumbing, and some properties do not even have outhouses. There is a village water tower where 5 gallon buckets are filled up and taken home for cooking, cleaning, laundry, and bathing. Drinking water is sold by local vendors to those families who can afford it. Drinking the ground water causes stomach problems even for those accustomed to it. Older model

televisions and refrigerators are fairly common. Many homes have electricity, but it goes on and off throughout the day every day. (Fountain of Life has back-up generators and inverters in order to maintain power at the school.) A few of the FOL graduates are working and own a computer, but other than that, families do not own computers.

It is not unusual to see cows, pigs, and chickens roaming freely. There are no grocery stores in Juan Tomas. Butchers supply fresh meat daily to meet the demand. I was told that the meat would be hung from trees until purchased, but I did not see that. There are small stores where you can purchase snacks and soft drinks. Fresh produce like mango, coconut, guava, and sugar cane are sometimes sold in front of a home.

Other than the butcher and a few small business owners, most of the men and women go to work in Villa Mella (5 miles away) or to Santo Domingo (about 15 miles). Some are auto mechanics, hairdressers, taxi drivers, or workers in the food or tourist businesses. But work is scarce, pay is poor, and transportation is costly.

There are no doctors, dentists, or clinics in Juan Tomas, with the exception of a witch doctor. Entertainment is mostly people-related. Believers meet at The Bible Center at least three times

per week. On Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons, you will find people gathering together, visiting and enjoying each other's company. Dominoes is a favorite pastime, and of course, baseball is popular. The young people play baseball with sticks as bats, and use whatever they can find as balls. There are swings at the school for children. In fact, the school is a safe, fun place for children in Juan Tomas, and you will find them there everyday, whether school is in session or not.

Survival is a constant battle for many of the families in Juan Tomas. Fountain of Life Christian School is such an oasis of love and security for the people here. As a sponsor, you are not only making a difference in the life of the child you support, you are making it possible for this school to exist.



# Student Focus

Alba Iris Antigua De La Cruz is a 12<sup>th</sup> grade student at Fountain of Life. She is a kind, soft-spoken young lady. Her favorite classes at school are English and French. English is more difficult, but she is better with that language because it is spoken more frequently by other people. Alba Iris also likes physical education classes where she runs, plays basketball, volleyball, baseball, and even soccer, although there is no soccer field. Alba Iris loves to sing, play piano, and draw. She takes piano lessons from the music director at a church in Villa Mella. And she loves the art and music teacher at Fountain of Life, Rebecca.

At home, Alba Iris helps with cooking, dishes, and yard work. She cooks meat, beans, and spaghetti for her family of two sisters, two brothers, her father and mother. She has three other brothers who do not live at home.

Her mother sells Avon. Her father maintains the local Cardinals' baseball field, Stadi Quisqueylla. They have electricity in their home, but no computer, and their TV is broken.

In her free time, Alba Iris teaches English to two students, plays chess with her sisters and brothers, and her favorite pastime is reading. She gets books from the library at school mostly. She has friends at school, at church, and in Juan Tomas. They like to hang out, go to church, cook, sing in church, and study the Bible together. Sometimes, the father of a friend in Santo Domingo will take the girls to concerts or weddings, and sometimes the girls decorate for weddings, which Alba Iris likes to do. None of her friends drive a car.

Alba Iris told me she puts God first in her life and does devotions the



first thing in the morning. She would like to go to a university after graduating this fall. She wants to study English, French, and as many languages as possible. She likes teachers who want their students to learn, and do whatever they need to do to help the students. Perhaps someday Alba Iris will be a teacher at Fountain of Life! I'm sure she would be a great one!

## Dominican Recipe: "The Dominican Flag"

1# cut up chicken	2 small tomatoes, chopped
lemon juice	crushed red pepper, optional
2 garlic cloves, divided	2 Tbsp. Oil
1 medium onion, divided	½ tsp. Sugar
salt & pepper to taste	1# white rice
1 red pepper, chopped	½# red beans

Wash the chicken in water with a little lemon juice. Pour out water. Mix together the chicken, 1 garlic clove, ½ onion, salt & pepper, red pepper, tomatoes, and crushed red pepper (if desired). Cover and allow to set ½ to 1 hour. Heat a skillet with oil. Sprinkle sugar into the oil and heat. When the sugar is bubbly, add the chicken mixture. Cook until the chicken and vegetables are tender, about ½ hour.

In the meantime, cook the red beans according to package directions, adding 1 garlic clove and ½ onion in the last hour. Cook the rice according to package directions.

Prepare a tossed salad. Serve the chicken, rice, beans, and salad in four sections on a plate to represent the Dominican flag.