

HHART 2026 NEWSLETTER #1

October 15, 2025

HHART is short for *Hispaniola Humanitarian Assistance and Relief Team*. HHART missions are planned, organized, supported and led by Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Wasaga Beach (Rotary District 7010), Canada. The Team's mission is to improve the communities and lives of disadvantaged and impoverished people living near Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic by providing medical, dental and community development services. Three HHART missions 30 are scheduled for the 1st quarter of 2026. HHART 30 dates are January 12 to 28; HHART 31 dates are February 9 to 25 and HHART 32 dates are March 14 to 22. The mission number reflects the number of the deployment by HHART personnel since the Team formed in 2011 – therefore, for example, HHART 32 is the 32nd deployment by the Team.

ABOUT OUR FRIENDS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND YOUR HHART SERVICE EXPERIENCE

The Team will undertake projects to relieve poverty, promote education, improve health and wellness, and develop public facilities to make communities a better and safer place to live. Who are the people we serve? Why are they impoverished? How is it that they are disadvantaged? These are important questions that require a straight answer before one can fully appreciate the importance of HHART missions and your participation as a team member.



During most of the 20th century the export of cane sugar was very important to the economy of the Dominican Republic (aka DR). Tending to the vast fields of cane grown all around the country required more workers than the domestic workforce could supply. Workers from neighbouring Haiti were, therefore, recruited to work in the fields in return for a small but adequate wage. Migrant workers were housed in sugar cane company barracks adjacent to the cane fields (a sugar cane worker camp is called a *batey*). The companies held the identification documents of all workers during their term of employment. Before the end of the millennium, the sugar beet surpassed sugar cane as the most economical way to produce raw sugar.

Thus, many of the sugar cane companies in the DR went bankrupt and most cane fields were abandoned. Sadly, the workers were unable to recover their identification papers. With no papers to prove their citizenship and a seemingly perpetual series of political, economic and natural disasters making a return to Haiti impossible or undesirable, the migrant workers decided to remain in the DR. The men took on work as labourers, farm hands and fishermen. The women worked as domestic help or remained home to raising their families.

Today, more than 10,000 people representing four generations of people of Haitian heritage are settled in the Puerto Plata and Sosua regions of the Dominican Republic. Children of the original migrant workers are now stateless, notwithstanding the fact that they were actually born in the DR. All are shunned as undesirables and labelled as illegal aliens by the current government and most citizens of the DR. They have no right to vote, no ability to own land, no access to health care, cannot legally work, and until 2021, the children could only attend school from age 8 until age 16. Since 2024, due to a shift in government policy, the adults are also vulnerable to round-ups by the national police and subsequent transfer to Haiti. Virtually all of those of Haitian heritage under the age of 30 was born in the DR and almost all; have never been to Haiti. These people are uneducated, unskilled and find it extremely challenging to find work (even

illegally) in a rapidly developing Dominican economy, in a social environment filled with individual and systemic discrimination towards these people. Several humanitarian aid groups have cared for these people in recent years. These NGOs are doing great work! They minister to the peoples' needs and raise awareness to their plight. Some NGO's have built planned communities to which many of the poor have relocated. Each of the planned communities has a school and most a medical clinic. Some vocational training is also occurring. However, many of our friends remain in the original bateyes and are living in squalid conditions and are of poor health. Most of the young children in the bateyes are malnourished.

As a member of HHART you will meet and witness the living conditions of these poor, disadvantaged people. You will visit and serve in the small bateyes that have grown from the original barracks into small shantytowns. Most have limited or no running water, no public school and few washroom facilities. You will observe cases of significant poverty and despair. You will also visit one of the planned communities to see how those lucky enough to be relocated are trying their best to get healthy and improve their lot in life. During your mission you will have the opportunity to help feed the children; tend to the sick and elderly; improve decrepit homes in the bateyes; teach new vocational skills; encourage and help facilitate community development, and mentor young men and women who are struggling to find their purpose and a better future. Most importantly, you will spend time with the people to acknowledge them as persons, to learn about their culture, worries and dreams, and to provide them hope for a better future.



STATELESSNESS AND HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS BACKGROUNDERS

The National Film Board of Canada has released a brilliant documentary by Michèle Stephenson titled *Stateless* that helps explain the situation that many of the people that HHART serves find themselves in today. You will find this film at <https://www.nfb.ca/film/stateless/>. Also, find and watch these other pertinent backgrounder movies online: *The Price of Sugar*, and *Poverty Inc.*

HHART LEADERSHIP



HHART Chief of Operations is **Steve Wallace** (photo left). Steve is responsible for planning this mission and for guiding the team safely through this service-trip-of-a-lifetime. Steve has organized and led all previous HHART missions and is very familiar with the people and villages we will be serving. His initial experience as a mission planner and team leader was obtained through 24 years of service in the Canadian Air Force and 20+ years as a commercial airline pilot. He is also a Rotarian, a past-president of the Rotary Club of Wasaga Beach and also a past chairman of Rotary International District 7010's Service Projects Committee. You can contact Steve by cell at (705) 444-4012, via WhatsApp at +1-705-444-4012, or by email at Steve@HHART.org.

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE

HHART's operations base is Sosua-by-the-Sea Boutique Resort in Sosua, Dominican Republic. As always, we are looking to attract service-minded persons who are good-spirited, humble and flexible. One does NOT need to be a Rotarian to join the team. **Persons interested in joining HHART 30, 31 or 32 should make haste to contact HHART Chief of Operations, Rotarian Steve Wallace to discuss their participation.**

Please note that it is highly desirable to have a robust dental services component within the Team. Therefore, please use your network to help us recruit dentists, denturists, dental assistants, dental hygienists and dental technicians to the mission.

HHART CONDITIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Field operations will occur each day of the week. However, Sunday operations will be limited to half days. The operations theme is “max flex”. Team members will have the freedom to select the days on which they conduct service operations, which means they can also determine their days off.

Team members must arrange their own flights into and out of Puerto Plata airport (POP), Dominican Republic. Arrivals and departures should occur on or between the dates below:

HHART 30: Arrive on or after January 12, 2026. Depart not later than January 28, 2026

HHART 31: Arrive on or after February 9, 2026. Depart on or before February 25, 2026

HHART 32: Arrive on or after March 14, 2026. Depart on or before March 22, 2026.

Please do not book your flights until your participation has been confirmed by HHART Chief of Operations, Steve Wallace.

WestJet and Air Transat are offering pretty good frequency during the timeframes above. Participants are free to select travel dates that suit their personal circumstances best. **IMPORTANT!!! HHART WILL** provide transportation between the airport and resort on arrival and departure during the travel windows listed above. Extended stays are encouraged (there is so much to see and do in the Dominican Republic), however, HHART cannot guarantee transportation outside the arrival-departure windows listed above.

Team members must reside at Sosua-By-The-Sea Boutique Resort (SBTS) in Sosua during their time with the Team. Although there is great flexibility in regards to arrival and departure dates at the Puerto Plata airport, a minimum 7-night stay at SBTS is mandatory. **Reservations at Sosua-by-the-Sea are made through HHART Chief of Operations, Steve Wallace.**

Your stay at SBTS will be all-inclusive, which means the cost of the room, meals, open bar, daily housekeeping, use of all resort facilities (bar, pool, dining hall and beach) and all taxes are included in the daily resort fee. Daily resort fees for HHART 30-32 are fixed at \$73 USD per person for double or triple accommodation arrangements, and \$86 USD for single (private) accommodation. Payment can be made by credit card in lieu of cash – Increase the prices above by 3.5% if you plan to pay by credit card. Team members pay their total resort fees **directly to SBTS in US dollars** at the end of their stay. If you wish to share accommodation but do not have a companion joining you on this mission, we will attempt to pair you with a “roommate” to reduce costs. If you need a roommate, please request one through HHART Chief of Operations, Steve Wallace. **If a suitable roommate cannot be found and you occupy a room by yourself, you will be required to pay the single accommodation rate.**



Please also budget to add 6-8% to your accommodation costs as a gratuity. You will find the service very good at the resort and be aware that, behind the scenes, resort staff are providing great service and support to our mission. Submit the gratuity to the front desk on check-out. **Important note:** The tips are shared by ALL employees at the resort and are very much appreciated. Additionally, you won't need to constantly tip the housekeepers, servers or bartenders (unless they do something absolutely exceptional). Please don't be that person – the one who skips on the gratuity through oversight or lack of empathy.

Since HHART is primarily self-funded, every team member must contribute at least \$500 CAD to the HHART operations fund. This fund will be used to purchase materials and pay indigenous workers required by the team to complete its projects. The fund will also pay team transportation expenses while in the Dominican Republic. The contribution can be paid in one lump sum or in installments. An initial payment of \$100 is due when your participation is approved. The balance is due on January 1, 2026. The preferred payment method is by INTERAC e-Transfer sent to steve@HHART.org. Make the e-Transfer security question: "Where HHART stays". Make the answer to the security question: **sosua** (all lowercase letters). If necessary, send cheques (payable to "HHART") to *Steve Wallace, 145 Fernbrook Drive, Wasaga Beach, ON*. We are sorry but we cannot accept payment via credit card. And, since HHART is NOT a charitable organization, tax receipts CANNOT be issued for contributions to the HHART operations fund at this time.



FYI, with a few exceptions, we will NOT collect items in Canada nor transport items to the Dominican Republic for general distribution in the villages during these missions. This simplifies mission preparations and checked baggage plans.

SERVICE PROJECTS

The primary community development project for HHART 30, 31 and 32 is to install a second-floor classroom on top of the one erected in Batey Cangrejo in 2025. The current plan is for HHART 30 to erect and parge the block walls; for HHART 31 to install the trusses and metal roofing, and rough in the electrical and plumbing systems, and for HHART 32 to complete the electrical and plumbing, and to paint the inside and outside of the building. Other project details will be provided in future newsletters. Obviously, since our Team is largely self-funded, the actual number and type of projects completed will be determined by how much money we raise for the operations fund. Each project is intended to address one of more of the following areas of focus: Food and Water, Health and Wellness, Education and Literacy, Economic Enterprise and Employment, and Safety.



It is important to note that the function of the Medical team will be somewhat different during the 2026 missions than from previous deployments. The medical focus in 2026 will shift away from large "operativos" (community medical clinics) towards a mix of delivering "community health promoter" courses, delivering educational health and wellness presentations to small gatherings and individuals, and conducting door-to-door medical sweeps.

Dental team operations will occur in the modern dental suite at Amigitos' Health and Wellness Centre in Pancho Mateo to the maximum extent possible during all three missions. Dentists, dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental technicians and denturists are invited to join the Team.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION MILESTONES

The following milestones will help you understand the planning process and what lies ahead. Note that something is due from team members on the 1st of each month, and more HHART mission information will be dispensed via newsletter on the 15th of each month.

Participation approval date: \$100 contribution to the HHART operations fund is due.

15 Nov 2025 Release of Newsletter #2. Topics addressed: HHART projects; Infectious diseases and vaccinations; HHART roster; Accommodation; Funding and fundraising; Distribution items; Work-rest-relaxation in the DR; HHART on Facebook; Currency and currency exchange.

15 Dec 2025 Release of Newsletter #3. Topics addressed: Weather in the Dominican Republic; Make-up meeting for Rotarians; Dress code; What to pack; Carry-on items and personal items; Registration of travel abroad; Preparing to travel; Arrival documentation; Arrival at Puerto Plata airport.

1 Jan 2026 Balance of \$500 operations fund donation is due. Confirmation of flight arrangements is due. Accommodation request details are due.



TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A passport is a requirement for all HHART members. Your passport must not expire while you are in the DR. Passport applications can be obtained online at www.ppt.gc.ca, the post office or at your local MP's office. If you need to obtain a passport, please apply right away because the process can be lengthy. Passport info is required in advance of departure for airline ticketing.



GOT QUESTIONS?

Visit (and like/follow) HHART at: www.HHART.org, visit and follow [www.Facebook.com/HHART.info](https://www.facebook.com/HHART.info), or contact HHART Chief of Operations, Rotarian Steve Wallace – by cell at (705) 444-4012, via WhatsApp at +1-705-444-4012, or by email at Steve@HHART.org.

CANGREJO SCHOOLHOUSE BEFORE



AFTER



CANGREJO SCHOOLHOUSE
BEFORE



AFTER



CANGREJO MONTESSORI SCHOOL



ON THE TRUCK



HHART 28A



HHART 28B

