



Hard work in island paradise

Jeff Hurst, Times Staff

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For most people, a trip to the Dominican Republic means sun, surf and relaxation.

However, one group's trip will consist of sweat, labour and a whole lot of love.

Simply known as Dominican Service Projects, 22 Cambridge residents are heading to the island on Feb. 25 for a one-week work project. The goal is to build a medical clinic and as many houses as funding will provide.

Now in its fifth year, the project grew from a conversation at a Rotary convention. And while some of the members are Rotarians, the group is doing it as individuals.

This yearly trip goes beyond being a simple volunteer project. Not only do the participants pay for their own transportation and lodging, but they also cover any expenses – renting buses to get to and from construction sites, bottled water to drink, as well as any little treats they may provide to local residents along the way.

"Each person pays their own way," explained participant Rita Westbrook.

"Everything."

The group has also developed a relationship with local residents over the years. It's one thing to build a medical facility, but quite another to come back one year later and see it staffed and utilized.

One example of the group's hard work is the community of Ascension. A few years ago it was a few huts and nothing more.

"Now it's a full village," said Larry Olney, a veteran of the project.

This year's plan is to build a medical clinic at a cost of \$48,500, as well as houses (\$4,500 each).

But they also provide lessons at local schools and feed the children. In addition, they will visit a local village and provide a bag of food and supplies for each household.

A popular event is movie night, when the volunteers rent a projector and show a movie.

"The kids just love it and it might be only once or twice a year that they actually see a movie," said volunteer Dennis Birley.

The group is hoping to raise a minimum \$60,000. Each person can bring 100 pounds of supplies with them



Hard work in island paradise. Along with building houses, volunteers organized bags of supplies. *Dominican Service Project*

so members are quite specific about what can be brought. Items include baby formula, diapers, children's underwear, washcloths and medication.

To make a donation, call Larry Olney at 740-0958. For more information, visit www.dominicanserviceprojects.com.

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