

Aaron Arnoldy – Community Economic Development, Miches, D.R. '06-'08

Having grown up primarily in Springfield, Missouri, I attended the University of Missouri from 2001-2005 graduating with a degree in Finance. Upon not really feeling inspired by the idea of a business career, I began to look for better options and stumbled upon the Americorps*NCCC program through the recommendation of a friend. I immediately knew that was more of where my interest lied and sent in my application.

I started as an Americorps volunteer in Sept. 2005, operating out of the Charleston, SC campus and working throughout the southeast region of the U.S. Later, due to an unexpected and tragic event, I went from corps member to team leader of our group of ten volunteers. We travelled throughout the southeast U.S. and contributed to several projects, including a state park in Georgia, an elementary school in Mount Pleasant, SC, a Red Cross shelter in Gulfport, MS, and gutting homes after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. It was a true learning experience, and reassured me that I was headed in the right direction with my career path.

This “domestic Peace Corps” was the perfect step towards becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer. It was during our first project, in the Red Cross shelter in Gulfport, MS, that I began to fill out my PC application. I was sent to the Dominican Republic in September 2006, despite my expressed desire to go to Africa (but I could not complain about going to the D.R.).

My primary project assignment was with an organization called Artemiches, which was started a few years prior to my arrival with the goal of complementing the traditional educational opportunities for the youth in the community with workshops and activities related to art, artisan work, theater, and culture in general. I served as the Technical Advisor of the project, which essentially meant I was involved in the planning, coordinating, and administration. I also had the opportunity to participate in a variety of other initiatives, including the formation of an environmental youth group (Brigada Verde), teacher trainings and school repairs, and a latrine construction project (sponsored in part by the Community Challenge Fund!).

This work made for a nice transition to my current job, as I continue working in Miches as the Local Coordinator for the Fundación Cisneros. It is a private, nonprofit institution that focuses on education and cultural initiatives. As the local coordinator, my primary responsibility is implementing two teacher training programs, coordinating a digital literacy course for teachers, as well as coordinating a school renovation program which encourages community engagement.

I became a member of the Friends of the DR board in April 2009 and am a member of the DR committee.

