

GOAL-ORIENTED

HEAD OAKER'S TRIP TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AN EYE-OPENER FOR ALL INVOLVED



Submitted photo

Coventry High School Principal Michael Hobin stands behind a half-dozen students in the Dominican Republic in late January. Hobin helped construct a school there.

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COVENTRY— After traveling to the Dominican Republic at the end of January, Coventry High School Principal Michael Hobin spoke to students about his experience recently and how it changed his perspective on life.

As part of the high school's world language week, various speakers and foreign exchange students presented to the Spanish, Italian and French classes about their travels to and from different countries.

Christine Hoskins, World Language Curriculum Coordinator, explained that the school's been doing this event for many years, and each year it grows larger.

"We've offered different cultural presentations, like a presentation from students who've traveled about Tanzania, about China," she explained. "We had a student present who's from Germany, France, Thailand — and we had one student spend a year abroad in Malaysia."

She said the main reason for this week-long event is to make the students in the language classes "more globally aware and I'm trying

to push them to study a second language."

So as part of world language week, Hobin spoke to the students about his travels to the Dominican Republic from Jan. 21-Jan. 28.

The trip, he said, was fully funded by Life-touch Photography and gave him the opportunity to travel to the island and build a vocational school.

"I was giving a presentation last September and they were looking for principals from throughout the country to travel to the Dominican to build a school so I put my name in

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Dominican trip an eye-opener

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and they chose me to represent the National Association of School Principals," he added.

After arriving in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican, Hobin said he and the other volunteers squeezed into a pick-up truck and traveled four hours to the town of Constanza.

"We had 50 people's luggage on the back of a pick-up truck, that was belted and covered with a tarp," he laughed.

He explained that the vocational school was being built by 10 Dominican workers prior to their arrival but they needed assistance because of the amount of work and the amount of money it cost to build the structure.

One portion of the school will offer a culinary program, he said, with a working restaurant, a kitchen and a pantry. The purpose of the program will be to teach children ages 13-18 how to cook and "they will feed the children in the elementary school directly across the playground."

Hobin said there will also be a construction program at the school because one of the major industries in the Dominican is construction.

He explained to the students that he was assigned to a group of three and their job was to build a wall around the perimeter of the school building.

The wall will "keep the children safe" and will be lined with barbed wire at the top for security.

"I asked the children if this wall would frighten them," he said. "And they said that while they are trying to study they won't have to worry about people selling drugs, not worry about people coming in with guns, or anybody trying to rob them and this security wall is their protection. There are also two people at each opening," Hobin added, "with bats."

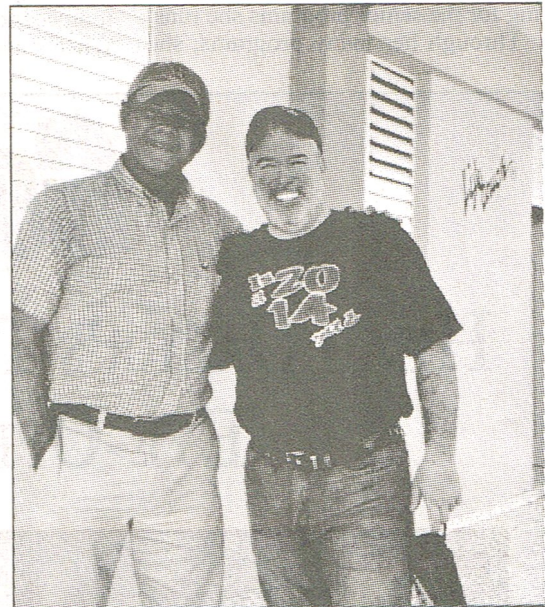
While building the walls, Hobin said, he and the workers would pour buckets of cement down between slabs of wood to fill the blocks.

"The boards are rented; they take the nails out, they clean them up with water and take the cement off them and sand them then they return them for other construction sites to use," he added. "They take the nails; if they are bent they bang



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ABOVE: Coventry High Principal Michael Hobin speaks during a presentation about the trip.



RIGHT: Hobin poses for a photo with a pastor of the local congregation at the town of Constanza, a four-hour drive from the capital of Santo Domingo, during his trip there in the last week of January.

Submitted photo

them straight; they waste absolutely nothing."

Hobin explained that he went down to the Dominican with 230 "One Goal" bracelets that were originally sold at the high school.

"As you know we have one goal: get a great education so you are prepared for whatever's ahead of you," he added.

He said he went into the eight classrooms at the elementary school in the Do-

minican and explained to the students the meaning of the bracelets.

"I told the students that I had 1,600 students at my school and that we had a message, 'Una Meta' — One goal — and that means get a good education and work hard," he said. "I gave all the bracelets out to the students and I found that throughout the week the students kept them on, they got the message."