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Laura MacLean

POSITIVELY PASSIONATE: Morgan Richter is going to make a difference. As a Girl Guide for the past 12 years, she is getting the opportunity to travel to the Dominican Republic with the Girl Guides of Canada and Power Trips Inc. to dedicate 336 hours to helping do an extreme makeover on an elementary school.

Teen volunteers 336 hours to Dominican service trip

June 17, 2009 - by Laura MacLean

Morgan Richter is a firm believer that actions speak louder than words. The 16-year-old Huntsville High School honour student and long-time Girl Guide is preparing herself, mentally and physically, for a journey to the Dominican Republic in July. But this isn't an ordinary journey. Over 16 days, Richter will be volunteering 336 hours with Girl Guides of Canada and Power Trips Inc., to travel to Moca, an underdeveloped area of the Dominican, to help do an extreme school makeover on an elementary school. She, along with nine others — eight girls and two leaders— will help construct a children's playground, get a chance to teach kids basic English and play with the local children who are involved in day-camp and sports programs. The group will be partnering with local charitable organizations to participate in programs to feed the hungry and visit the sick. Richter will be one of many who will be planting trees and doing other environmental work with local scouts and guides and give a 'dreams do come true' day to a group of underprivileged children. In Richter's eyes, this is an opportunity to help make a difference. She hopes that after the trip is over, she will return home with a better understanding of the problems and issues that are affecting people around the world. But right now, she's got butterflies just thinking about her departure. "I know I will be taken out of my comfort zone and into a new world," she said. "For two weeks I will be living without my computer, cell phone, iPod and hair dryer. I know I will be shocked at what I see. I have been asked to be a gumby.... to come prepared to bend, adjust, stretch and be stretched, and to get my head around some very difficult third-world issues and go with the flow." With the \$1,100 price to go on the trip, Richter has been working hard to save her pennies. But even at the time she was filling out her application form, she knew that volunteering to do something like this would come with a cost. In her application, Richter was required to write an essay on why she thought she would be a good candidate for the trip. She is a self-described go-getter and someone who always strives to see change in her hometown and in the world. As a small child, Richter would watch World Vision commercials and wanted to make a difference by adopting a child. "I can't stand seeing those things and I don't like sitting around," she said. "I thought this was a good opportunity to help change a country that needs help. I hope this is just the beginning. I want to get into humanitarian work for my career. I'm all about travelling. I want to do everything and be a part of everything. I'm willing to try almost anything. I love doing new things in life. When my mom handed me the big envelope that came in the mail from the Dominican, I was so excited." While in Moca, the group will be staying in a retreat that belongs to an ambassador of Canada. An emotional person by nature, Richter is nervous about seeing the extreme poverty and the potentially shocking lifestyle of the locals. She is, however, looking forward to playing with the kids and seeing how they interact with the group. "Apparently I'm in for some very hard work, but I'm motivated and willing," she said. "I know it's not all going to be fun and games. We also get to meet the girl guides from the Dominican and see how we can't do the same things because of money." Because Richter will be visiting schools, she is hoping she can reach out to the local community for some much-needed donations. She is looking for school supplies, toothbrushes/toothpaste, Advil/Tylenol and closed-toed shoes. Shoes do not have to be new, but it is preferred they are gently used. Those who are interested in making a donation can call Richter at 788-2076 or e-mail her at morganrichter12@hotmail.com.

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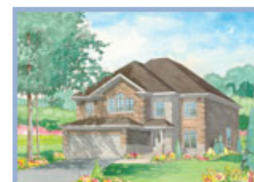
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