LETTER WRITING

The SRI staff works with each school to organize letter writing to sponsors once a year in January. If your student writes you more frequently, SRI will be sure to mail you those letters. However, at this time, we are only able to organize one official letter writing campaign each school year.

We encourage you to write letters to your sponsored student, knowing that the student/sponsor relationship is special, and a motivating factor for many students and families. Letters can be mailed to the SRI office at: PO Box 20867 Indianapolis, IN 46220. We will arrange for the letters to arrive at the SRI Guesthouse in San Juan de la Maguana. Letters can also be emailed to Kamanda Bucher, SRI Team Ministry Coordinator, at kbucher@solidrockinternational.org. Emailing your letter will ensure a more timely delivery to your sponsored student. Your letter will be translated, if needed, and delivered to your student’s school.

Please use letter writing as a way to get to know your child. Ask questions about their family, friends, school, and daily life. Encourage them in the Christian faith, in their studies, and share with them about your family and life. Please remember to be age appropriate with what you share, and if photos are included, please ensure that individuals are dressed modestly. If any issues arise with delivering your letter, SRI staff will contact you. Otherwise, you can trust your sponsored student is receiving any letters you send.

THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for deciding to sponsor a student through Solid Rock International. We truly believe that education is the key to creating a more hopeful future for children, their families, communities, and the Dominican Republic as a whole. This information has been compiled to help you along the way as you develop a relationship with your sponsored student(s).
While we understand gifts can be an important part of any relationship, we encourage you to be extra thoughtful in what is given to your sponsored child. By committing to sponsor your student you are already giving the very important gift of education! While that is not always tangible for a child to think of, it makes important and lasting effects in the life of your sponsored student and his/her family. We encourage you to think of any additional material gifts given as a supplement to (rather than the focus of) the important relationship you are creating with the student and his/her family.

Therefore, we ask that gifts remain on the smaller side - valuing no more than $20-$25 - and that they be things such as school supplies, Christian items, a toy, supplies related to the student’s interests and hobbies, an article of clothing, etc. Cash gifts are NOT permitted. Part of the reason we request that gifts be small is the desire for things to remain as “even” as possible among sponsored students, to avoid feelings of hurt and jealousy, while showing respect to the student’s parents. We also suggest gifts be limited to once or twice a year and reflect meaningful times for a student such as a birthday, in preparation for the beginning of school, Christmas, or to celebrate a graduation.

Another way to give to all sponsored and unsponsored students within the five schools is to donate to the Student Christmas Fund. Every December, donated money is given to each of the schools, who then hold a Christmas Party providing all students with a small gift. This is a fun and meaningful way to ensure all students are remembered during the holiday season. Feel free to contact the SRI office if you wish to contribute to this fund.

Please contact SRI staff with any questions about gifts that fall outside these guidelines. We know the desire to give gifts comes from a place of love for your sponsored student but ask that you respect these guidelines; they have been developed through past experiences within the program and with input from our Dominican partners. If you will not be travelling to the Dominican Republic and are therefore unable to personally deliver a gift to your sponsored student, arrangements should be made with acquaintances who are travelling to the Dominican Republic to deliver the gift. If needed, you can contact the SRI office for other group leaders who may be able to arrange the delivery of your gift. Please do not mail gifts directly to the SRI office without prior approval.

The Internet has made contact between people much easier than in years past and can be a great way to keep in touch with friends near and far. However, it also presents challenges, especially when communicating with someone who speaks a different language and is from a different cultural background. We encourage you to use letter writing through SRI rather than communicating directly with your sponsored student through email and/or social media. This recommendation is not made in order to limit contact, but rather to ensure the creation of a positive, healthy relationship.
MEETING YOUR SPONSORED STUDENT

Face-to-face contact is one of the most meaningful parts of a sponsorship relationship. We would love to arrange a time for you and your sponsored student to share together. If you are in the Dominican Republic as part of an SRI team, a time during your week of service will be arranged for you to meet with your sponsored student (and possibly with his/her parents too). If you happen to be in the area but not with SRI, please let us know and we will do our best to make arrangements for you to visit with your sponsored student as well.

Please use this time to get to know one another, sharing about each of your lives and families. You can play games, color, talk, share photos, etc. We desire this time to be a special one for both you and your sponsored student. We encourage you to reserve giving your student a gift until after you have spent some time visiting in order to keep the focus on the relationship rather than the gift.

SRI staff/translators will be present during your time with your sponsored student to help facilitate this time together. These meetings may be at the SRI guesthouse, the student’s school, or another community location. Having a staff person present and meeting at a neutral location are all part of our attempts in maintaining a safe, positive, and healthy relationship between you and your sponsored student. We believe that it is only right and responsible of us, as a North American Christian organization serving internationally, to take extra steps to ensure the safety of the children and families whom we serve.

A FINAL NOTE

Thank you again for your decision to sponsor a student. Without the support of our numerous sponsors, the five schools with which SRI partners would not be able to provide quality Christian education to nearly as many students. Your support has a lasting impact and we are very grateful!

We also thank you for respecting these sponsorship guidelines and appreciate your understanding the heart behind them. We do recognize there are sometimes exceptions to the above rules. In these situations, please discuss your desire or intent with SRI staff prior to the exception being acted upon. SRI staff in conjunction with the principal and staff of the child’s school will make the final decision regarding exceptions.