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JULY 2013

Makochon's First Year of School

Dear {tag_recipientfirstname},

A few weeks ago, eighty-five children way up in the mountains of La Gonave completed their very first year of school. Ever. They started with nothing, essentially. To house it, we found a dilapidated and abandoned, tiny old church building that was pretty much unsafe. The walls were crumbling and the roof, well, you didn't want to stand under it. And most of the village's children were sickly and malnourished, which is what happens when you don't eat every day.

The village desperately wanted a school. We told them that if they could make the building safe, we would provide them with some supplies for the task. Inspired, they cut the walls down to half their original height and stripped the roof of everything but its wooden frames. For a roof, we found and sent down the biggest, heaviest tarp available, the kind semi-trucks use to haul loads. They partitioned off the inside. They built benches. They built blackboards. We spent very few dollars to ready the



The village school in Makochon, La Gonave.

structure. A thousand dollars at most. We would pour more into people.



We found capable and energetic teachers and a very good principal. We figured out how to provide the children with a meal every day. We registered the school with local island jurisdictions. We provided them with basic supplies for conducting this place of learning. We provided them with a flag and a school bell. Children wore uniforms made right there on the island. They chose blue as their color.

In form, they were unlike any other school. Their building, barely a building. Except for their benches and chalkboard, their classrooms were bare of things that would look like a place where learning happens.

In function, they were as much a school as any other school in the world. They met every day. The teachers wore dresses and ties. They took attendance. They administered tests. They issued report cards. Learning happened.

And not just the kids! We have learned, too, the village and us. We have learned how to listen and cooperate and be patient and forgive. Turns out, learning is not the only thing that has happened in one village in the mountains.

Quite a bit of grace is goin' on, too.

Steve

Steve Edmondson

NEWS



The last of 1,400 banana trees have been distributed to farmers across the island. We just placed our order for 2,016 plants for distribution next spring.

Construction on La Gonave's new hospital, Hospital Wesleyan La Gonave, is making good progress and is on schedule for a September completion (minus the solar energy system). Scottish charity, [Lemon Aid](#), primary funder of the project, is still receiving donations toward the build. Starfys is partnering with Lemon Aid, serving as the United States [donation](#) vehicle for accepting funds toward the build, and is still receiving donations against a [\\$90,000 project matching grant](#). Supplies and equipment for the new hospital are being gathered, some already en route.

Water purifying filters continue to be installed. On several occasions, [Starfysh has responded](#) to villages on the western, most remote parts of La Gonave, and installed filters in those communities.

Makochon's teachers and principal have just completed an intensive



Makochon's school is growing this year, in both form and function! A fourth grade class is being added and the village is looking for a site where they can build a new school.

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week of teacher training and will go through a second week of training in July. We are excited that our teachers have such a desire to learn!

Twelve future small business owners are nearing completion of their training. Those who show understanding and proficiency of the material, and provide a credible business plan, will receive small (micro) business loans from Starfysh.

SAVE THE DATE!

November 21, 2013:
Starfysh Vision-Casting & Fundraising Dinner
- Prince Conference Center, Grand Rapids MI
- Additional details will be available soon

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