



GHANA TOGETHER

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Dear friends,

We, along with our Ghanaian Western Heritage Home friends, parents, and children, are so totally grateful! Thanks to YOU, there are...

- Eight original WHH scholars (who "grew up" as orphaned or vulnerable children in the Children's Home) in University!
- Forty-seven scholars in Maako, Apewosika Village, and Manye schools, grades K-JHS
- Nine in the Axim Vocational/Technical School
- At least 15,000 children's books circulating through seventeen schools via the mobile-library tricycle
- 110 computer towers with up-to-date software are at the Vocational/Technical Institute and the Axim Library (thank you, Marysville Arts and Tech High School, for this wonderful school service project!)
- A new, updated, Internet-in-a-Box is soon to be installed at Axim Girls SHS
- WHH has agreements to acquire a centrally-located plot of land that will be the future home of the new Axim Public Library (thanks, Axim Methodists, for offering to tear down the unused old building on the site and for helping to facilitate the land transfer)
- And there so many more small, but wonderful happenings---like a school uniform here and there where sisters were "sharing", notebooks and textbooks, snack money, personal sanitary supplies, transportation, application forms, etc.

It is amazing to us what can be accomplished when Ghanaians and Americans join efforts! On behalf of Ghana Together and our Western Heritage Home colleagues, we say THANK YOU to all our "investors"---financial, in-kind, and hard-work---both in the US and in Ghana. The US dollar goes a long way in Ghana! Thanks to your generous donations, and the administrative skills, care, and hard work of local Axim leaders, we have achieved a lot.

We aim to help our Ghanaian colleagues accomplish what they want to accomplish if, after mutual discussion, it seems reasonable, possible, and do-able given our mutual resources and expertise. We work closely together, using Whatsapp, CamScanner, email, text messages, good old voice communication---amazing tools---and onsite visits, too.

So what do our Ghanaian colleagues want to accomplish in 2020 and how can we help?

Yes! We will continue to support education in as many ways as possible and as funding permits---we are pretty fanatic about education! So, yes, we'll definitely continue to support the students currently in the program and work with Western Heritage Home associates as they see opportunities. These students are our top priority.

However, thanks to the fact that the Ghanaian Education Service is now providing tuition-free schooling K-12, the local leaders see a new purpose-built Axim Public Library as crucial to strengthening reading skills, lifelong learning, and literacy skills needed for a citizenship in a democracy---for all age groups. This has emerged as a priority.

The current library is located on the 2nd floor "loft" of an aging community center, built by the US Peace Corps about 50 years ago. It has a leaking roof and steep stairs that challenge small kids and seniors, and make it difficult to carry heavy boxes of books up and down to the mobile library. There is no easily accessible parking space for the mobile tricycle. Books are piled on the floor because the shelves are totally full! Electrical service is spotty (on/off as they say). Staff workspace is actually outdoors on a kind of deck that overlooks the street. There is little space for computers and the much-needed publicly-available WiFi access.

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In spite of space limitations, Axim Library is providing on-going library service to 17 primary/JHS schools, via the mobile-library tricycle we helped them acquire a few years ago. Although Ghana is making good progress in funding education, most schools have only a few dozen very worn-out books or no library at all. The children are getting reading instruction, but have almost nothing to practice on! And, when the staff checks out a book to a child, they determine the reading level, and also “instruct” the child to “take the book home and read it to your mother”---thereby improving literacy among women as well. And reading scores are improving. Five other communities have set up children’s rooms in their libraries based on the model we helped set up in Axim.

What is lacking? A facility to support this growing community resource. The Axim Library services are thriving, even within the limitations. The Axim community wants and needs a new public library, and has truly made maximum use of their current, very limited resources. But it’s time to put the years of book donations, mobile library services, children and adult computers, reading nooks, children’s library, and staff space into a building designed for the purpose, that the community can truly use and enjoy.

Local resources are not sufficient to get it done. But, thanks to efforts by the Ghana National Library Authority, and also by many in the community, including an active support group of about 40 local “elders”, and with our financial help, a new purpose-built library can be accomplished.

So, Dear Reader---maybe you’ve been with us for a while. Or maybe this is all pretty new to you! Either way, you can go to our website at <http://ghanatogether.org> to fill in the details of our nearly fourteen years of working with our Western Heritage Home long-term associates in the Axim, Ghana area. So many projects! So many wonderful collaborations!

We ask for your financial support for our 2020 efforts. We assure you that we use 100% of your donations toward our projects. We on the Ghana Together Board handle all administrative costs ourselves, including all travel expenses (including to Ghana), office expenses, mailing, wire/bank charges, communication, etc. We are a qualified US non-profit 501c3, registered in the State of Washington. Our Federal ID is EIN 26-2182965. Your donations are tax-deductible. If you need more info or have ideas to share, please contact us!

In the US or elsewhere, you can contribute with a check payable to Ghana Together via US mail, sent to our address at 808 Addison Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273. Or you can use the PayPal link on our website at <http://ghanatogether.org/HTML/Donations.html>. If you are in Ghana, you can deposit funds into the Western Heritage Home account at Ghana Commercial Bank.

With our sincere thanks...Ghana Together Directors: Maryanne Beukelman Ward, Rich Ward, Jerome Chandler, Louise Wilkinson, Diana Franco Ward, Nathan Ward, and our Western Heritage Home associates, especially James Kainyah, Evans Arloo, and Mercy Ackah

“We LOVE it when the mobile library comes to our school---We are so proud WE CAN READ!!!!”

