Dear friends,

Usually, this time of year, when we sit down to write our annual “Update Letter”, we look back over the year and share with gratitude and pride all that we, with our Western Heritage Home partners in Ghana, and the help of so many Ghana Together supporters, have managed to achieve. Yes, with covid…it’s been a challenge, BUT we can say honestly, this year has made us even more grateful and yes, proud. We have so missed visiting and seeing what’s happening in person, BUT, we, together, have accomplished a lot in 2021---especially due to the outstanding efforts of Western Heritage Home leadership---James Kainyiah and Evans Arloo especially---and to YOUR faithful support, our dear readers, in spite of everything else going on in all of our lives. Thank you, thank you.

First best news! Frederick graduated in Aug. 2020 from CDVTI and is now getting hands-on electrical experience at a large hotel. WHH helped him apply to the Energy Commission of Ghana to get his professional electrician certification and he is now a certified electrician! He has loved electricity since his primary/JHS school days at Manye Academy, when the school electrician let him “help” with projects. Way to go Frederick!

Next best news! Godwin will graduate this year from the Community Development/Vocational Institute with general high school level courses and plumbing. As a graduate, we will award him the “Leif Pederson Graduation Award” of $300 in loving memory of Leif, one of our original founders who died in 2010. Way to go Godwin!

--Emmanuella started her third year for her Bachelor of Special Education this October at Winneba University. Because she has severe vision challenges, we supported her K-12 at the Blind & Deaf School near Cape Coast. She is studying to become a special education teacher. We’re inspired by her tenacity, savvy use of special computer technologies, deep purposefulness, and love of singing. We remember her singing at one of Chief Awulae’s dedications!

--Gifty also is starting her third year this October at Winneba University, working for her Bachelor of Education in Social Studies. She’s had to do a lot of “online studying”, due to covid. Ever resourceful, Gifty has also started a small business frying and selling plantain, to support herself during her vacations between terms!

--Ernestina has now completed her two-year diploma at Takoradi Technical University. She will continue her studies at Quest International University in Takoradi, specializing in computer applications in the tourism business.

--Larmine has finished his second year at Takoradi Tech, and is now doing an internship at Ghana Port and Harbor Authority. He will start his third year in Welding/Fabrication Engineering this October at Takoradi Tech.

---Ben and Gladys are both at Manye Academy still---our youngest Scholars! They are living with an “auntie” near Axim, which is good, because they have been complete orphans since their pre-school days, and now they have an experience with more normal “home life”. Ben is in JHS 2 and will graduate September 2022. Gladys is in JHS 1.

We are also supporting 8 students at two rural schools until Dec 2022 when they finish primary school. Tuition-free government schools are now available to their communities, so WHH is not sponsoring new students there going forward.

And maybe the best news of all---the new library construction is going well! First floor work is complete and awaiting paint and furnishings. Ghana Water Company has installed washrooms and a bio-digester, toilet seat, and a hand-washing station. Electronic cables for internet access are complete. Hand rails on stairs and ramp are awaiting installation.
The new building will be finished by early next year, and will be “handed over” to the Ghana National Library Authority, which will take charge of the building and services, with some operational support from the Municipal assembly for maintenance, electrical service, etc. WHH is working with local groups, such as the “Codelibrary” group of supportive elders, and businesses to support the furnishings of the new library. Getting a new building completed was more than they could do locally, but the local folks can help with interior furnishings.

The library staff was pleasantly surprised when Hayford Siaw, the Director of the Ghana National Library Authority dropped in late September to inspect progress during his tour of public libraries in the Western Region of Ghana. The Authority manages all public libraries in Ghana—101 in all. In fact, this year Ghana Library Authority is celebrating the 70th year of public library services in Ghana. And, the Ghana Library Authority was named “Library of the Year” at the London Book Fair (LBF) International Excellence Awards 2021! Amazing!! Ghana sees public libraries as a major way to support lifelong learning, computer/internet access, community meeting rooms, and reading skills from early childhood.

So, you may well ask, what’s for next year? Here’s the plan! **We have decided that 2022 will be our “Phase Out Year.”** Its time! **We will maintain our legal 501c3, non-profit status through the end of 2022, but not renew it for 2023.**

Remember, we started in 2006, when Nathan Ward came back from a business trip and challenged us to “help James”. Barbara Gilday (former member of the Canadian version of the Peace Corp serving in Ghana years ago) and Maryanne Ward met with Susan Partnow, head of Global Citizen Journey, to put together a trip to Ghana. We helped Western Heritage Home, a registered NGO which James Kainyiah had put together to help the children whose families had been so ravaged by HIV-AIDs, build a children’s home (thank you Boeing and all the Global Citizens folks for that first project!). We had such a good time that some of us decided to form another non-profit called Ghana Together (thank you Celia Chandler, for the name!), and continue to “help James!”

But 16 years have passed. Age is taking its toll. But wow! Talk about a great retirement project---we have never been bored for even a minute! And, Ghana is not the same country it was then. AIDs is still with us, but it is understood and can be managed. Back then, Ghana had no tuition-free education; now the government supports tuition-free education K-12 for all! Axim did move from a very tiny library with mostly a few children’s books to a couple of small rooms in the 2nd floor of the Community Center, but it is simply not adequate given the popularity of libraries now, and supporting the mobile library service to 17 schools. By end of 2022 for sure, they will have a new purpose-built library managed and staffed by the Ghana Library Authority, under the national Dept of Education, with about 16,000 children’s books, computer room, internet, community meeting room, and plenty of community support...sometimes it just seems a miracle!

Together we’ve accomplished a lot. We are so grateful for the faithful support over all these years! And not only financial support, but also, and VERY importantly, knowledge and skills. In this, probably our last “Update Letter”, we want to acknowledge some of those.

---The **Days for Girls** workshop in Axim to help girls figure out how to handle their menstrual periods and not miss school!

---**Engineers Without Borders** who taught them how to build one urine diversification dehydration toilet and now there are three and as of an email on Sept 19 are working beautifully! We’d like to see more.

---**Whatcom County Public Health** and expertise on hand-washing, veronica buckets, etc.

---**Barry and Regina Lawler and their Episcopal Church** working with the Axim Anglican Church to outfit a Montessori pre-school classroom for a pre-school and training for teachers.

---**Suz Hirst’s HIV-AIDS/condoms workshops**, Dr Louise Wilkinson’s leadership workshop, and Jerome Chandler and his science buddies providing an entire set of hands-on science materials for first-year HS science. Wow!!

---Brilliant **Adam Holt** with the One Laptop Per Child computers and then the wizardry of Internet-in-a-Box!
--Paul LaGrange and his Marysville WA Legacy High School technology class providing at least 100 computers.

--Elena Robertson who, way back in 2012, used her John Parke Young Fund Research Fellowship from Occidental College to travel to Axim and research nutrition; economic opportunity; and quality of education back in 2012, leaving valuable quantifiable information to local Axim leadership. And also taught the kids how to create their own books, using scrap paper and wallpaper as book covers!

-- Ebby Mienza and his book-shipping genius and all who donated books!

And others—sharing info on project management, bookkeeping, planning, computer skills...We thank you all!

And we acknowledge our sadness in losing, over the years, our own Leif Pederson, Tom Castor, and Suz Hirst, and Ghanaians Nana Adjou Sika, Miss Frances Polley, and Father Paul Awuah. They all contributed so much to the effort.

And so, on behalf of Ghana Together and our Western Heritage Home colleagues, we say THANK YOU to you, our generous donors—we like to use the term “investors”---both financially and skill-wise---and also for the administrative skills, financial management, hard work, and caring of local Axim leaders. They are remarkable.

We ask for your financial support for our 2022 efforts to finish all we’ve started, especially tuition for those currently on our scholarship programs, whatever level, and we will complete the new library, absolutely!

We have discussed our phase-out plans thoroughly with James Kainyiah. He says he’s learned immeasurably from us, and he is at the age of life where he has the time to put even more into Western Heritage Home. He’s definitely going to continue, and he has shared with us that he wants to incorporate some of our very American ideas about local support via non-profit, charitable organizations. He told Maryanne on the last phone call (we communicate back and for every few days via-text, phone, photos...) that he had managed to acquire some 200 children’s shoes, contacted some of the schools’ heads, and gave them to children in the rural areas, who had no shoes and walk to school every day barefoot!

Of course, any funds we raise over and above what is needed to finish the projects Ghana Together has supported we will leave with WHH to help them make the transition as a more local, Ghanaian-supported organization. We have such a long relationship, and have built so much trust in our Ghanaian partners.

We assure you that 100% of your donations go to support 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!

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 may be able to use the PayPal link 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.

Yes, it’s been a difficult year, especially with the coronavirus worldwide. Please, take care all of you! But we are grateful for what we’ve been able to achieve with our dear partners and friends in Ghana.

With our sincere thanks...Ghana Together Directors: Maryanne Ward, Rich Ward, Jerome Chandler, Louise Wilkinson, Diana Franco Ward, Nathan Ward, and our Western Heritage Home associates, especially James Kainyiah (Chair of WHH), Evans Arloo (WHH Operations Mgr), and Mercy Ackah (Ghana Library Authority Regional Director)
Western Heritage Home “Scholars” in 2008. Most are now young adults and finding their way. But many still identify as “WHH Scholars” and stay in touch with a “Whatsapp Group”. They are “family”! And we’ve help so many other children in rural schools that are, beyond walking distance to government schools by refurbishing school buildings, mobile library services, toilets, 16,000 or so children’s books, hand-washing, etc. Tuition-free education packed the schools.

The new Axim Public Library --- in construction --- as of Nov 5, 2021. Books, computers, internet café, etc. will be on top floor, for security. Bottom floor will be for community meeting space, children’s story hours/activities, and facilitating the mobile library services to schools. Handrails on stairs and ramp are coming. They are awaiting floor completion before interior painting and furnishings. Soon this little girl will be finding her books in her brand-new Axim Public Library! There is growing local financial support to help finish the interior, now that the building itself is nearly finished, from Axim folks, and also from those who may be from the Axim area or have family/friends there and want to help.

Ghana Library Authority—are you ready for the handover??!!

Thank you!

We’re in this TOGETHER!!!