

Hugs & Kisses:

Recently, a circuit representative said the La Gonave Circuit needed \$36,273.00 US to pay teacher salaries for the last 7 months of last year. Hardly 15% of tuition has been paid for those students in primary school. Parents and communities take little ownership or responsibility for improving school facilities or programs.

The first year of our appointment we paid over \$7,000.00 in tuition for 354 students then nearly all others refused to pay the rest of the year. The next year we purchased school books which spent the year in a small building on the compound. This year we sent a number of teachers and directors to Matenwa School and Training center and believe a slow transition has begun.

Two years ago we met with the Methodist Youth Group of nearly 70 students, age 13 to 24. They asked if we could help with tuition for university or vocational training? We provided an application form and received nearly 50 applications for everything from 7th grade to Medical School. Teams, churches and individuals have supported a limited scholarship program and we get the hugs and kisses!

We currently have 20 students enrolled in secondary, high school, university or vocational school. We did pay for exams for several 6th graders without money to pay and would have to take the entire year over. They all passed!

One medical student and his 6 physician instructors will be doing a 2 day medical clinic at Dent Griern Oct 9 and 10. We paid only transportation for the group. A civil engineering student finished this year with 100% in all classes and was 1st in his class of 129. Other students include a diesel mechanic in a 3 year vocational program; one 5 year university nursing student; one young woman in a 3 year nursing program; one university computer science student; and, several have taken 6 month intensive English courses or computer classes in vocational schools.

The last few days we have reviewed and interviewed new students and met with current students to view and copy reports and grades, take photos, and email progress to sponsors. One young woman and her mother sat on the sidewalk for nearly an hour waiting their turn to ask for assistance for the first year of secondary school. As soon as the envelope with the money was handed the mother we were all smothered with hugs and kisses.

As our appointment ends, the students are asking if the program will end. A few have sponsors committed for the entire enrollment period but others receive partial funds or one year at a time. Since we get the hugs and fun of being part of a "life-saving" procedure we are committed to return regularly, and manage the program. We will continue to search for sponsors and monitor student progress. There are still 30 applications in the growing file.

For information contact us at: sjelagonave@yahoo.com.

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