

## R.E.L.A.Y. - Rotarians Enhancing Learning for African Youth Project

Traveling to Ghana has been a dream of ours for many years.

We had heard many stories about places like Anomabo, Kumasi, Cape Coast, and Accra from Michael's mom, Phillippa Duben, who grew up in Ghana. We knew that we wanted to start an education project in one of these areas, so two years ago, we started collecting school supplies, with the intention of bringing them to a school in a rural area in the Central Region of Ghana.



The project was put on hold though, due to Phillippa's illness. Phillippa's passing in 2004 reignited our desire to travel to her hometown of Anomabo and do something to help the village, in her name. After a series of phone calls and emails, we were able to make contact with the headmistress of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, and with Nikoi Amasa, the president of the Rotary Club of Sekondi-Takoradi, both of whom were very enthusiastic about the project.

The idea of an education project in rural Ghana was embraced by our own International Committee as well. The first phase of the project involved organizing the supplies we had previously collected, purchasing teaching aids, and sending all of these items to the Rotary Club of Sekondi-Takoradi, whose members would deliver them to the school.

Our shipment arrived in Accra, Ghana in the early part of September, and after some delay in customs, will be delivered to St. Mary's School in early October. The second phase of the project will involve repairing the school, which is a fourteen room building with over 500 students. It is obvious from the photos that the school is in a state of disrepair, and the toilet facilities are abysmal.



The school was built in 1934 and there have been no real renovations since then. Our contact in Ghana in the construction industry has met with the headmistress of the school to compile a "priorities list" for the renovations at the school, and we are currently waiting for quotes regarding the cost of the repairs. We hope to be able to proceed with some of these renovations soon.

The third part of this exciting project is our favourite part, as Mike and I will be traveling to Ghana in December to actually work at the school. I hope to work with the teachers and bring them more teaching aids, while Mike will run sports camps and leadership seminars with the children. We'll buy some of their required textbooks as well, and we plan help with some painting and minor repairs. By providing school supplies and textbooks to the students, providing teaching aids to the teachers, by repairing the school building, and by working with the students and teachers, we know that we can improve the quality of education for these 500 students who attend St. Mary's Catholic Primary School. And through improved education, we hope to improve the quality of life for these children.

As an added bonus, we are planning to bring with us, about 1500 pairs of used eyeglasses, which have been cleaned and graded by Dr. Bell and his associates and by members of our own Club. These glasses will be given to the Christian Eye Clinic in Cape Coast, and from there they will be distributed to needy people in the rural areas of Ghana.

The preparations for our journey have already begun. We've started our many vaccinations, identified our "leave behind" luggage, and discovered our Ghanaian names. Mike's name is Kojo, meaning "Monday boy" and I am Efua, or "Friday girl". We're starting to learn some words in the Fantse language, and we're collecting photos of Mike's relatives and of their old family homes.

Although this project is starting at our Club level, we are hoping that other Clubs in the District will take an interest in this needy school. Please contact Shelly Duben at (519) 257-3043 for further details or to find out how your Club can help!