



Newsletter

August 2015



Grant Projects: An Invitation to Smart Giving

Though the heart of our mission are the transformative letters between students in Ghana and the Pacific Northwest, we offer our Ghana partners modest grants, usually about \$500 per year. These grants require and foster local initiative: we support projects that schools have started and funded.

Several schools are still shaping their requests, but here are this year's projects so far:

Anani Memorial International School This K-6 school is located in the heart of Nima, one of the largest slums in Accra, Ghana's capital. Although tuition is just \$100.00 per year, many parents are unable to pay it. But some twenty parents, such as the mother shown here, have donated roughly \$300 worth of time, skills, and goods to the school: cooking oil, onions, music lessons, trash removal, and much more in a place where thousands of people work twelve hours a day for a dollar or two. In exchange Yo Ghana! provides scholarship assistance. Headmaster Kofi Anane reports that this focus on self-help has raised the community's sense of pride and investment in the school.



St. Kizito School, K-9, a public school run by two exceptionally dedicated priests, is located in a remote part of Ghana's Northern Region. The school has to turn away students to keep its overcrowding from becoming even worse. So the community has built the foundation and walls for three new classrooms (see the photo in our banner, above) that would

take the average kindergarten class down from ninety to fifty students. Yo Ghana! contributed one third of the costs of roofing the new classrooms, and once the school is able to match that amount we will provide the final third.

Evangelical Church of Ghana School in Tamale, the Northern Region's capital city, is an outstanding K-9 private school with modest tuition. But many strong students struggle to make their payments. Napari, described by his teacher, Madam Clara, as “one of the bright students in the class,” is from a family of thirteen, and his father is not able to earn enough from farming and carpentry to pay all of his children’s school fees. Yo Ghana! is contributing to a scholarship fund so that bright students such as Napari can keep attending this school.

Angel's Academy on the outskirts of Accra began as a free school in Mr. Ernest Opoku-Ansah’s living room. More than twenty years later it has become a very successful private school that continues to serve many students from poorer families. The school took a big risk in building a computer laboratory and staff room with its own funds and has asked Yo Ghana! for help in providing new or reconditioned laptops for it.

Savelugu Senior High School, shown here, is one of the leading and largest educational institutions in Northern Ghana, with particular attention to the sciences. The school’s PTA has contributed both funds and labor to create two sets of urinals for its students and women faculty, which will save them much time and inconvenience. Yo Ghana! is matching their contribution.



Nipaba Brew School in Sampa, on the border of Côte d'Ivoire, is an outstanding private school that serves many students from families of modest means. It excels at teaching literacy at a very young age. The school estimates that the 3-in-1 printer that Yo Ghana has helped it to purchase will pay for itself in a year as well as saving many hours of staff time a month.

Smart phones. As internet connections are often spotty in rural Ghana, we are providing smart phones costing roughly \$90.00 each to several of our Ghana schools so that they can send pdfs of letters when the internet is down and more easily share photos with their U.S. partners.

Laptops. Many of our schools are looking for sturdy laptops, which can be much more easily carried to Ghana than desktop computers. Please let us know if you have some to donate.

Remember, your contributions are tax deductible, and our overhead is next to nothing. We have no offices or even a PO box, and our board members donate their time, travel expenses, and several thousand dollars a year. Our very busy teachers do their Yo Ghana! work on top of their many other duties, and our Ghana teachers commonly dig into their own pockets to buy internet and phone time to communicate with us. So if you are looking for a scrappy little nonprofit where your money will go a long way and to the right places, we are glad you are reading this.

There is a link to our Paypal account on our [website](#), or e-mail yoghana.org@gmail.com to send a check.

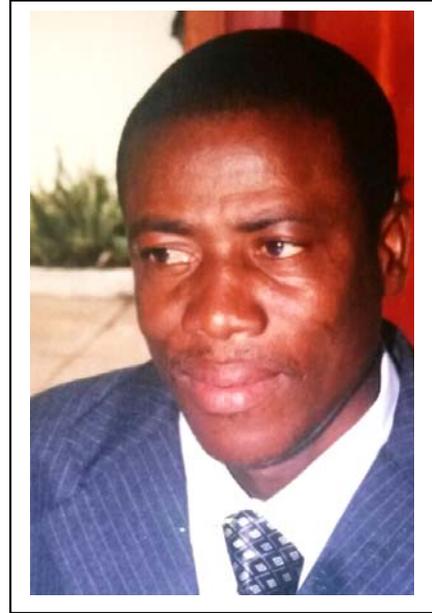
Vounteer Profile

Mr. Dominic Fordwour grew up in Wiae, a village in northern Ghana. Though his parents lacked ormal education, he received a degree at the University of Education, Winneba and did graduate work in Health Education. He taught and served as a headmaster at primary and junior secondary schools before accepting an appointment to teach at Dambai Training College, where he became a department head, and he also oversaw a group of schools.

He emigrated to the U.S. in 2013 and soon used his extensive knowledge of Ghana's education system to guide Yo Ghana! to three outstanding schools in the Volta and Northern Regions. He has been tireless in arranging for our visits to these schools and in keeping the letters from them flowing. He also linked us to a fine middle school near his home in Salem.

Mr. Fordwour believes that Yo Ghana! "motivates students to learn how to read and write" and "to understand a different culture and each other." It also helps "teachers to be more effective and broad minded."

This father of two has a deep passion for education and for helping Yo Ghana! to make learning more engaging and exciting on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.



Yo Ghana! Research

This summer our schools in Ghana and the Pacific Northwest have been filling out surveys to identify what is working and what is not. The biggest hurdles they point to are the technological challenges that can keep letters from flowing, so our board at its summer retreat resolved to focus on solving these difficulties over the coming school year with innovations such as Dr. Eric Donkoh's customized and private websites for each partnership.

Even so, our twenty-eight schools formed nineteen partnerships and exchanged some 4,800 letters.

Administrators and teachers expressed much enthusiasm for the program. Mr. Gilbert Brew, Headmaster of Nipaba Brew School, reports that the letters "brought inspiration for everyone involved." "It has built student self confidence," remarks a teacher at Anani International School. "The students were thrilled to have pen pals from Ghana," reports Ms. Alexa Arnold of Vernon School. "The best part was the look on the student's faces when their letters arrived." Mrs. Ginny Hoke of Briggs Middle School is gratified that the letters get her students "looking outside of themselves." In fact many Pacific Northwest teachers report that the exchanges help their students to break out of their "bubbles."

We are also working on more scholarly research. Board members Dr. Eric Ananga and Dr. David Peterson del Mar devised a questionnaire that about 200 of our Ghana students have filled out to discern what impact the letter writing is having on their perceptions of America and of their own culture and nation. The Ghana students report being particularly intrigued by American foods, sports, holidays, and school life. Several older students wrote that they were surprised to learn that their American counterparts "are not more than us," that Ghana's

education system, with all its challenges, has many strengths. Indeed, more than 90 percent of the respondents report that sharing letters with students in the U.S. has made them more proud of their culture, school, and nation.

Board member Dr. Yves Labissiere and Marcella Chiromo, a doctoral student in International Psychology at the University of Chicago, are joining Eric and David on a related project with our new schools: measuring how the letter exchanges affect both sets of student's perceptions of each other over the coming school year. Do the letters break down stereotypes that Africans have of America and that Americans have of Africa?

We hope that these projects will help us to more precisely measure the impact of our programs, knowledge that will help us both to improve and to publicize our work.

Ghana Trip September 2015

Board members Ms. Elizabeth Fosler-Jones and Dr. David del Mar will be in Ghana from August 30 to September 26 to visit all of our schools there. Our Accra-Area coordinator, Miss Lucy Dawu, will join them on many days. We covet your used, but sturdy and reliable, laptops. Read about the trip through Elizabeth's [Facebook](#) and David's [blog](#).

News

Board member Dr. Kofi Agorsah retired as Chair of Portland State University's Black Studies Department. He arrived at PSU nearly a quarter century ago.

Board member Dr. David Peterson del Mar signed a contract with Zed Books in London to publish: *Africa Existential: American Quests from 'The African Queen' to KONY 2012*.

Board member Ms. Elizabeth Fosler-Jones was featured on KATU TV and spoke of her work in getting Yo Ghana! off the ground at the age of fourteen. Click [here](#) for the video.



Yo Ghana has been approved as a 501(c)3 public charity by the IRS.
Your contributions are tax deductible.

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