

Add Your Light Projects

Newsletter of the Add Your Light Charitable Foundation (www.addyourlight.org)

"you do whatever you can about the misery that's in front of you... add your light to the sum of light" (from the movie, "The Year of Living Dangerously")

Dear Friends of Add Your Light,

Thank you so much for your support over the past year. Your generosity and loyalty to Add Your Light have allowed us to continue expanding our water filter and lighting programs, while also caring for the children at the orphanage and helping out with some special medical needs.

In this letter, I have written a bit about the experiences and observations that have shaped the way Add Your Light utilizes your contributions (page 2). As you read, remember that this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner was Bangladeshi economist, Professor Muhammad Yunus, who developed the concept of microloans to help people, mostly women, start small businesses. This simple concept has had spectacular success. He recognized the spirit and dignity of the people of Bangladesh, and he understood the use of money as energy... something that needs to openly flow and that, if handled thoughtfully and skillfully, can be used again and again to ignite amazing growth from one small investment.



Jan & Cristian with his new hearing aid.

In the Dominican Republic, we become more convinced every day that micro-financing, whenever possible, is the respectful and appropriate way to assist people — whether that is to start up small businesses or to purchase basic products such as water filters or a lighting system to improve their quality of life. Over the next year, we will shift more and more into using donations as seed money for these kinds of “regenerative” initiatives.

I am sending this newsletter out early, because we have had to incur some unusually large expenses with the training videos and the LED lighting project. If you can possibly donate now instead of waiting until the end of the year, I would be very grateful. Thank you for your prayers and support during this Holy season! Blessings, Jan

OUR URGENT FINANCIAL NEEDS:

\$22,000 CAD (\$19,500 USD) for two completed training videos in Spanish and English (see page 3) - whether you can contribute \$25 or \$10,000 towards this important educational initiative, all help will be greatly appreciated!

\$17,000 CAD (\$15,000 USD) to light up the homes of 100 families (see page 3). The cost per system is \$170 CAD (\$150 USD), and we need 100 systems donated.

We are asking certain churches to help us with the orphanage (eg. Crossfield U.C.) so that there are funds available for March and onwards.

\$1000 CAD (\$875 USD) for Cristian to have access to speech therapy.

DONATING SECURITIES

New federal tax laws allow you to donate securities such as public company shares, mutual fund units, bonds, etc. without being taxed on capital gains. Add Your Light has a brokerage account set up at CIBC Wood-Gundy, and it is an easy transaction to arrange. Just contact jan@addyourlight.org if you wish to donate in this way. Thanks for thinking of us!

ABOVE ALL, DO NO HARM

I am not a philosopher, but 8 years of experience in the Dominican Republic has helped me understand the importance of “holding the vision” that there is abundance in this world and that, more than anything, people need to be supported to realize that they are CAPABLE.

Clearly, there are situations in which pure donations are necessary, eg. children who have no family, communities after a disaster, an expensive medical need, or where people are barely surviving and therefore have no physical or mental energy left. However, I have seen the following happen several times:

- 1) Some beneficiaries of donations develop the mindset that they should always be taken care of by outsiders... that, in fact, the world owes them and must take care of them. This is the “da-me” mentality, which means, “give me” in Spanish.
- 2) Some beneficiaries of donations are never encouraged to see that they can pay for something — they are treated like children or as if they are incompetent. They ultimately behave accordingly.
- 3) When something is donated, and there is a problem with it, the beneficiary of that item will usually throw it out or quit using it. When they are paying for it, however, they are more likely to value the item, treat it with care, and complain if there is a problem. That feedback then allows us to improve the quality of the program.
- 4) More often than not, if some community members receive free or subsidized items, then no one else is willing to pay the real price for that item. A sort of obstinate pride sets in, even when they know that the item will help them (eg. water filter). “I will NOT pay X for that, because I’d be paying more than so-and-so paid”, and then.... “I’d be seen to be a fool” ... or “it isn’t fair”. The attitude is, “I’ll wait for the next subsidized program to come and give me one.”

It is so EASY to give things away. It doesn’t require any thought and can make you feel like you’ve “done something”. But more and more, I believe it is the wrong path to take. In the same way that we damage children psychologically by giving them everything without requiring any responsibility on their part, we harm our overseas neighbors by treating them as “poor and helpless”. We take away their power, their pride, their self-respect.

It is much harder and more time-consuming to help people recognize their own power, including their purchasing power. If they don’t have cash, they still have talents and muscles to contribute for the desired item. Creative ways must be found to help people contribute their share, even if cash per se doesn’t flow back. So it will be Add Your Light’s mission, more and more, to work with the new NGO, *Agrega Tu Luz*, first to mentor that group so that they understand the capacity they have to effect change in their own community, and then to simply assist them in developing micro-financing initiatives that are respectful of the Dominican people with whom they will be working. Clearly, we will still need capital to be able to start up micro-financing, but my hope is that the funds will recycle over and over again, helping many more people than a simple donation ever could. And, as they taught us in medical school, I hope to “above all, do no harm.”



Rick filming Ariel installing solar panel

José Rivas with his violin. Thanks, Seol-Gi!



The Community Action Center will be the home of the new Dominican NGO, *Agrega Tu Luz*. Thanks go to the Rotary Club of Calgary Chinook, which has applied for a matching grant through the Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta. Already, the Rotary Clubs of High River and Calgary South have added money to the Chinook pot, and we are hopeful that \$51,000 will be available by year-end. This would allow construction to start in January. With 360 solar panels having just arrived in the port of Santo Domingo, and the Biosand filter facilitator’s course almost ready on DVD, the need for this facility becomes more pressing every day. At this moment, there is literally no workspace or classroom space available. Again, thank you to the members of Calgary Chinook, and especially the World Community Service Committee, for their efforts to make this dream come true!

Rick Castiglione of Cielo Productions Inc. finished the Biosand filter training video and filmed the LED/solar training video while in the D.R. in October. I owe a HUGE debt of gratitude to Rick for his amazing generosity, not to speak of his obvious competence. I also sincerely want to thank **Bridget Durnford**, who has done fantastic editing work on the Biosand filter video. These user-friendly, professionally edited videos in English and Spanish will be useful to any group doing similar projects, anywhere in the world.

The **Biosand video** explains household water treatment, describes the Biosand filter, and details how to install the filter, maintain it, and avoid or solve the problems we have seen over the last six years of the Biosand program. The **LED/solar video** discusses why we are doing the project, what system components we use, and how we install the systems.

This kind of information, compiled succinctly on a DVD, can be **invaluable to organizations who are starting up new programs**, or having difficulties with their current programs. Our hard-won knowledge will help others leapfrog over the obstacles that we struggled with for years.

Rick also filmed five students from **La Loyola Agricultural Collegiate** in Dajabon, who have worked hard on an amazing demonstration project of organic, drip-irrigated horticulture. Calling themselves "**Los Dinamicos**" (The Dynamics), they are growing lettuce, cucumbers, etc., to show the community that they can grow their own food, and do so without the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticides. They are very grateful to **Glenn Annand** and the members of **Mossbank United Church** in Saskatchewan for the funds which made this project possible. The video on DVD will be available and I think many of you would enjoy seeing it. For copies, email jan@addyourlight.org.



Rick & "assistant", Andrea, filming "Los Dinamicos" as they plant seeds along the drip irrigation lines.

As soon as I have written the manual that goes with the Biosand video, you can expect to see clips of the videos on the website at www.addyourlight.org. The training videos will be used by us in the D.R. and also sold to other organizations to try to recover the costs of making them. Meanwhile, **I would greatly appreciate donations to help pay Cielo Productions for the two training videos. A total of \$22,000 CAD (\$19,500 USD) is needed.** Thank-you for supporting these initiatives to spread the Biosand filters and LED lighting to many more places!

Add Your Light Products Inc. is our new subsidiary company, formed primarily to handle the manufacture and sales of components for the LED/solar project. **Cindy McArthur**, as our new products manager, has worked hard over the last few months, and has contracted Innovative Manufacturing Source Inc. to solder and assemble 2000 lamps and ~ 400 charge controllers. Cindy tests and packages the lamps after assembly, and more recently, has spent a lot of time trying to find an appropriate epoxy in which to encase the printed circuit boards for the charge controllers (to make them completely waterproof). **We express our deep gratitude to an Ontario donor who has donated an injection mold to make the lamp housings!!** This huge donation will transform our ability to manufacture the lamps!

To obtain best pricing, we had to purchase lamps in large quantities, more than we needed for our current project. Therefore, we have a lot of cash tied up in inventory. We will either sell off this inventory to other organizations, or use the lamps for more homes in the D.R., but for the moment, we have a temporary and severe shortage of funds. **Simply put, we need \$17,000 CAD, or the equivalent of donations for 100 systems at \$170 per system. Please consider giving safe, clean LED lights to a family this Christmas!! Light up someone's life!!**

The Wild Rose Foundation of Alberta approved our grant application and contributed \$21,282 to the project to provide **LED/solar lighting to 300 homes!!** We are very grateful for this wonderful help!! Add Your Light had to match these funds with donations from Alberta donors. The solar panels have arrived already in the D.R., so the project is starting up.

Could you sponsor Cristian to attend the Special School? On the first page is a photo of Cristian, and you can see his new hearing aid on his left ear. Cristian and his family are very happy, because now he should be able to learn to speak! However, the public school system has refused to accept him, and clearly, he would be much better off in the Escuela Especial, where his need for intensive assistance could be met. The problem is that Cristian lives out in the country, and would need to take a bus to and from Dajabon daily to attend the Special School. He also needs a uniform and some materials. His dad works in the fields and this kind of expense is beyond their ability to pay. I think that \$1000 would give this boy the chance he needs for the next year at least. Could you help make this reality?

Margaret Castrillon is doing a great job of managing the orphanage at Puerto Rico a

Pie, and I'm grateful for the way she is organizing all her receipts, etc. It certainly makes the accounting work easier.

Add Your Light continues to provide them with the funds for food, propane, medicine, clothing, school uniforms, and school supplies. We cover all staff salaries and pay for three of the older girls to go to university. The Dominican government has not yet committed any resources. We are okay until February, but after that, your support is definitely going to be needed to make sure these kids are well cared for.

We also **need funds to allow Margaret to take a couple of weeks of vacation** after 8 years of unpaid work. She needs some "intensive care" or she will burn out. Without Margaret, the kids would have no home, so please consider this special request. Thank you to Anne-Marie Claessens, her aunt, and the Board of **Oportunidades Para Niños** (Netherlands), who provided the funds for landfill and a swing set, as well as extra funds for gifts and food during the Christmas season!



New classroom at Los Miches, thanks to ACCS!

The Alberta Centennial Charitable Society (ACCS) has applied to the Wild Rose Foundation for a grant to build three more classrooms in three separate communities. Add Your Light is involved because ACCS hires José to supervise the school construction, and I do all the translating and make sure the receipts are returned to ACCS. The first classroom at **Los Miches** (photos above) is almost done, using some of the ACCS funds, and we hope the grant will be approved soon, allowing José to go forward with the other classrooms.

Sometimes, if you didn't laugh, you'd cry. In the last few newsletters, I told you about a project that was primarily funded by the Rotary Clubs of Calgary Chinook and Dajabon. Solar panels (5 watts) and LED lamps were installed in 200 homes, and the people were paying for their systems slowly over 18 months. The frustration is that, after so much work and funding on the part of so many people (Dominicans and Canadians alike), the Dominican government went and installed solar panels (50 watts), compact fluorescent lamps and big batteries into many of the very same homes. They subsidized the big systems heavily, so of course, the people no longer needed or wanted our little systems.

No one knows why the government technicians would continue installing when they knew our systems were already in, but I imagine they were getting paid to do a job and they didn't really care. Although the program had been announced, no one knew which communities it would involve. Anyway, apparently, the program is now over. But now the Dajabon Rotarians have to go and de-install the small systems from about 80 houses! It is a big waste of money and time. And in two years, those big batteries and CFLs will be dead and no one will be able to afford to replace them. Then the people will sell their big panels to someone else, and be left in the dark again.

We will find a way to re-use those de-installed systems in other communities. Lots of people want the small systems. But I thought I'd tell you this story, so you'd know what we face at times. Keep smiling!

The members of the Board of Add Your Light wish peace & joy to all of you who so graciously donate to the Add Your Light projects!! For those of you who are of the Christian faith, have a happy and wonder-filled Christmas season!

Jan is a medical doctor with specialist certification in Community Medicine & a Masters in Health Care & Epidemiology. To make a tax-deductible donation, see the enclosed donation form, or contact Jan directly. Jan's email is jan@addyourlight.org & her fax is 403-670-0163. See www.addyourlight.org.