

University School Students Report on Missions to Haiti and Jamaica

Report by University School Senior Aku Acquaye, WIND (World in Distress) Member:



“On June 12, seven of my peers and I took a mission trip to Haiti with the organization Mission of Hope (MOH). For the next week, we ventured into villages with our two Haitian translators talking to Haitian locals about their lifestyle and their faith, and playing games with the Haitian children, which included soccer and a tricky hand-slapping game. On the days that we didn’t venture into villages, we painted homes.



“For the week that we lived in Haiti, we stayed on the MOH campus, which comprises a K-12 grade school, an orphanage, a church, a medical clinic, a prosthetics lab, a food storage facility, ‘3 cords’ and a mini-market. All the girls in the group love 3 cords, a MOH business that employs amputee women thereby allowing them to demonstrate their worth to society. These women make headbands, purses and accessories, which you will often see us wearing around school.

“I saw a drastic difference from the first time I visited Haiti. The Haitians have renovated their airport, and a lot of the roads are now tarred. Despite this progress, 55% of Haitians are illiterate. For every 100 children, 40 will never go to school. And according to the MOH website, of the 60 who receive an education, only a small percentage will graduate from high school. In addition, 96% of the Haitian population lacks access to basic health care. These issues hinder the development of Haiti; however, MOH provides educational opportunities and medical care through its school system and mobile health clinics.

“University School encourages students to be leaders in their community. I wouldn’t have gone to Haiti if it hadn’t been for Victoria Kohl, a fellow USchool student who took the initiative to lead a group of sophomores and juniors to Haiti.”

Report by University School Junior Matthew Lyn, WIND (World in Distress) Member:



“The purpose of my trip to Jamaica was to document the work of Mustard Seed, an organization dedicated to helping children whose families or governments are unable to provide shelter, food and care. This is done with a series of communities and homes spread across Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Zimbabwe and Jamaica. Each is staffed with nurses, doctors, cooks and caretakers who help abandoned children with disabilities ranging from cerebral palsy to HIV/AIDS live happily and unafraid.

“After building the first community, Mustard Seed realized that as the children got older, most could get jobs and move out of the dormitories, but the government cuts off funding as soon as children reach the age of 18, leaving mentally disabled adults unable to provide for themselves. So Jacob’s Ladder was built: a farming community that allows disabled adults with autism and other mental diseases to live quietly in the mountains.

“Being that far into the mountains had its own troubles, however, the main one being running water. The cost to drill a well was too expensive, so Mustard Seed searched for more sustainable ways to collect water for the community and the greenhouses that fulfilled most of the nutritional requirements of members with immune system diseases.

“University School’s Green Team responded to my presentation on Jacob’s Ladder with a donation to Mustard Seed. This helped the community devise a water catchment system (rain tanks) as well as a system to utilize the rivers traveling down the surrounding hills.

“Despite the positive news, however, I was left feeling a need to make the Green Team feel as great as I did about their donation. So, I planned a trip to Jamaica to document as much as I could about the impact their contribution made.

“I saw firsthand how the water allows the community to keep running and feeding not only its own members, but other children who stop by Mustard Seed looking for what might be their only meal of the day.

“While on my trip, I also met a young man named Michael who seemed to sum up the difference we made in partnership with Mustard Seed. Michael is autistic, and he enjoys shouting to the mountains his favorite dinners, namely rice and peas, chicken and jerk pork. He also adores High School Musical... but the DVD case, not the actual movie. He has never been able to watch the movie since the community does not have a DVD player, but he was happy and well fed, which would not have been possible without Mustard Seed and students like those on USchool’s Green Team.

“So thank you to the Green Team for donating to Jacob’s Ladder, and thank you to all the people who donate to and volunteer in Jamaica. I know that Mustard Seed appreciates your contributions and will continue to seek to make you feel just as good about their work as I do.”

Thank You University School Green Team!

Jacob's Ladder Moneague, Jamaica

"Is there a man among you who would lend his ear to a plea when he asked for bread?"

July 23, 2013
The Green Team of Nova University School
Attn: Don Ben-Reeven (President)
c/o Matthew Lyn
1306 Hollywood Blvd.
Hollywood, FL 33020, USA

Dear Don Ben-Reeven:
Greetings from Mustard Seed Communities!

Thank you very much for your kind donation of nine hundred dollars (\$900). That was generous of you, considering that you do not know very much about the work we do here in Jamaica.

Mustard Seed Communities is an NGO caring for over six hundred (600) abandoned physically and mentally challenged children, children afflicted with HIV/AIDS and pregnant teens. Matthew Lyn asked that we specifically use the money at Jacob's Ladder, (one of our fifteen (15) opportunities in Jamaica) located on 100 acres of donated land in the hills of Moneague, St. Ann.

In Jamaica, there are no facilities, government or otherwise, available to care for individuals with physical and mental disabilities after they turn 18 years of age. The vision for Jacob's Ladder is to fill this void by providing 500 young adults with homes where they can live out their lives in a pastoral setting. Upon completion, this opportunity will have 100 cottages for these abandoned teenagers and caregivers. There are presently 150 residents in 20 cottages, and new cottage construction is ongoing. We are taking full advantage of the expensive property to develop Jacob's Ladder as a hub for our sustainable agriculture program. Your donation will help in the harvesting of rain water (as of present, we have no running water at this opportunity).

Matthew will take pictures of Jacob's Ladder to assure you that your donation is being put to good use. We thank you for your selflessness and hope for your continued support.

In Christ,

Very Reverend Monsignor Gregory Ramkissoon
Founder



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