

INGEAR

THE NEWSLETTER OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS



JOHANA AND THE LEARNING BY TUTORIAL SYSTEM

By Karla Santana

Johana del Carmen Sanchez Gonzalez is 14 years old. She lives in the rural community of El Higuero, Nicaragua, some 16 km from the capital Managua, where she lives and works on her parents farm. Out of six children, she is the only one still attending school. She graduated from elementary school last year, but could no longer attend public school due to her responsibilities on the farm. However, thanks to Pedals for Progress and The Fabretto Center, she has been able to continue her education.

The Fabretto Center is an organization dedicated to helping impoverished children and their families in underserved communities to break the cycle of poverty and reach their full potential through programs that promote nutrition, health, education, community, and character development. For over 50 years they have been partnering with Nicaraguan communities, both urban and rural, to provide hope and a better future for their children. One such program is the Learning by Tutorial System (LTS) which promotes rural development by providing students with the technical training that they will need to improve agricultural practices for their families and their communities.



Johana on her way to school.

Essentially, LTS is a vocational high school program with great emphasis placed on the development of technical skills. LTS students are being equipped with the tools and knowledge to implement small-scale agriculturally productive projects to generate increased income. It is designed to meet the constraints of rural life. For example, the use of lightweight workbooks rather than texts lessens the load of students

who walk great distances to class. Course topics are relevant to rural concerns, such as animal husbandry for the study of science. Practical teaching occurs through projects like small plot farming that benefit the local community. Since this will eventually generate new economic opportunities, LTS also helps to reduce the migration of young people from the rural areas to the already over-crowded cities.

The effort to keep up with her studies has not been easy for Johana, however. During harvest season she doesn't attend class because she has to help on her family's farm. This means she has to put in that much more time and effort later to catch up on her studies. In addition, she lives eight kilometers from The Fabretto Center, a distance that takes five hours every day to walk there and back.

"Even though she has adult responsibilities, at such a young age, she is one of the top students in her class" says Johana's tutor. Currently in her first year of LTS, she participates in all the Fabretto activities and has showed a lot of interest in her studies. Her ambition is to become educated enough to reach a position in life from which she will be able to better the lives of her family and other people in need. Already, she uses her experience in agriculture to not only help teachers with school gardens but also to encourage her classmates to learn more about it.

Johana's is the type of situation in which bicycles from Pedals for Progress can take a hand. Thanks to our donors, we've been collecting and shipping bikes to partners in Nicaragua for 19 years, over 32,000 bicycles in total. Despite the distance, Johana wished to persist. It would not have been practical, however, had she not had access to the utility of the wheel.

With a bicycle from Pedals for Progress, Johana has been able to continue her studies and keep her dream of helping others alive. "All this time in Fabretto," she says, "has helped me not only to grow as a human being but also to learn new things and put into practice what I have learned with my parents. I love sharing my knowledge with my classmates. I am currently learning how to use a computer. I really enjoy it."

Country Facts: Nicaragua,
 Population: 5.5 million
 Literacy Rate: 68%,
 Life Expectancy: Age 69
 GDP per capita: \$2,200

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P4P bicycles for sale through partner Project OKURASE in Ghana

HELPING CHILDREN

In the United States, it's a common sight to see kids in schoolyards and backyards, on the beach or on the street, get together to play a casual game of football or just to toss the pigskin around. The same is true all over the world, except in most places the ball in play belongs to the other football—soccer. The boys and girls of Okurase, in Ghana, are no different than so many around the world; they use sports to compete, make friends, and lose themselves in happy play. It's good for health and socialization. Often, however, children in underdeveloped countries lack the resources for actual soccer equipment, so they improvise. Stones are wrapped around with duct tape, sandals substitute for athletic shoes, cardboard boxes stand in for nets. The children damage their feet and legs playing a game they love with inadequate gear. Again, unfortunately, Okurase is no different.

Last year, the students and faculty of South Brunswick (NJ) High School and the Westchester (NY) Cycle Club collected a large amount of soccer equipment that, combined with other small donations, added up to forty soccer balls and eight-six pairs of cleats which we placed in the second shipment to Ghana last year.

As a general rule, Pedals for Progress does not ship a great deal of sporting goods for the children in towns where we distribute bicycles. In the past, we've often had problems with foreign customs, so many of our overseas partners requested that we no longer include them in our shipments, even though the equipment is deeply coveted. So we now collect only a little bit every year. The inclusion of sporting goods does not meet P4P's mission goal of economic development, but in small amounts, for the smiles on children's faces, it is one of the best goodwill gestures. Poverty is especially difficult on children during their formative years and we believe that sports can lead to a more peaceful society.



Recipients of soccer equipment collected by the Westchester Cycle Club in Westchester, NY

MISSION STATEMENT

**TO DELIVER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AID BY
RECYCLING BICYCLES AND SEWING
MACHINES IN THE U.S. AND SHIPPING THEM TO
THE PEOPLE OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD**

FALL 2009 COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS



November 1st
Moravian Academy, Bethlehem, PA



October 17th
Tohickon Middle School, Doylestown, PA



October 17th
Marc Czepiel, an Eagle Scout Project
West Hartford United Methodist Church West Hartford, CT

Ghana Says “Medaase”

Project OKURASE, in Ghana, recently received their second container from Pedals for Progress, bringing the overall numbers shipped there to over 1,000 bicycles, 100 sewing machines, and even some soccer gear. These shipments have given a welcome boost to the Project’s mission to provide skills-training and formal education to vulnerable children and women, especially those effected by HIV/AIDS.



Project OKURASE building in Ghana

A number of undertakings and partnerships support the Project’s mission. Currently, one of the most dynamic initiatives is providing local women and children with a general education, vital job skills, and the opportunity for entrepreneurship. This is the area in which P4P has been able to most directly assist. With the bicycles received to date, the Project has been able to open two retail bike shops. The larger shop is located in the Dansoman district of Ghana’s capital, Accra, allowing the bikes to be distributed to the mass of people in the city. The second shop is located in the village of Okurase. Here, in addition to the main business of getting bicycles to those in need, interested villagers can learn bike repair and also the financial skills necessary to budget for a life-changing bicycle. The village has received the bicycle program very well.

But Project OKURASE’s name refers to more than just the village in which it is based. It is an acronym for the concepts its co-directors, Dr. Samuel Nkrumah Yeboah and Cynthia Cupit Swenson, PhD, see as the underpinnings of their mission: Opportunity, example, the distribution of bicycles supports this by not only helping farmers spend more time in their fields and less time in transit, or help vendors bring more goods to market, but also by helping people from far-flung surrounding communities reach the Project’s educational programs.

One of the most exciting of these educational programs is Rhion’s Sewing Centre. Established in Okurase upon the arrival of the first shipment of P4P sewing machines, it not only teaches young women needlecraft but also business skills. The Project’s U.S.-based volunteer creative

director, Rhion Magee (who is also a creative director for DreamWorks Animation) has helped the Project design and develop marketable products handcrafted from readily-available recyclable materials. One example of what the women make and sell is an attractive and durable marketbag made of repurposed flour and rice bags. This and other products are available globally from the Project’s website.

The women of Rhion’s Sewing Center are also supporting one of Project OKURASE’s most inspiring efforts. In a partnership with a nonprofit group in Los Angeles, they are introducing an international line of children’s clothing. These clothes will be made from Ghanaian fabric, in Los Angeles, by women who are in recovery from difficult life situations. A portion of the proceeds will return to the women of Rhion’s Sewing Centre so they can produce more fabrics, and also make school uniforms for orphans and impoverished children in Ghana.

Project OKURASE has also used P4P machines in their sewing outreach program. It is simply not possible for every interested woman or child to reach a place like Rhion’s Sewing Centre. So, the Project donates sewing machines to other local partner organizations. One such is the Street Children’s Academy in Accra, which serves hundreds of street children in its day programs. Until they received one of P4P’s sewing machines through Project OKURASE, they had not been able to offer sewing classes. Another donation was made to New Life Orphanage in the Central Region, one of Ghana’s poorest districts. Several of the residents there had expressed a strong interest in learning the seamstress trade, which had hitherto been closed to them for want of training and equipment.



Students with their final products

It is strong partners such as Project OKURASE that make it possible for P4P to do its overseas work. The United States is rich in equipment and resources that developing countries are desperately lacking and, with our supporters’ donations, we are able to collect a considerable amount of it, new and used, for distribution overseas. But it takes local

Country Facts: Ghana
Population: 20.5 million
Literacy Rate: 75%,
Life Expectancy: Age 57
GDP per capita: \$2,000.00

Project kurase

A UNITED LINK FOR BETTER LIVES

organizations in the destination countries to know how best to share out that equipment and those resources where they will do the most good. In supporting Pedals for Progress, our contributors also support the efforts of our partners, who live in those developing countries and have very real stakes in their economic development.

The people of Project OKURASE wish to give their thanks, or medaase, to Pedals for Progress and our supporters. We at P4P would like to say medaase to you as well. It would not be possible to operate without your continued assistance.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE - A PERMANENT HOME IS ON THE HORIZON

In 2000, P4P's Board of Trustees undertook to begin our Capital Campaign, the raising of funds specifically dedicated to the creation of a much-needed permanent facility for storage and cargo-loading operations. That this was even thought possible was due to the Rolex Corporation, who that year presented me with their Award for Enterprise. The seed funding for the Capital Campaign came from the accompanying prize money and over the next several years we raised a significant amount of money committed to the new facility.

Despite the challenges of the recent recession, the Capital Campaign is drawing to a successful close. In late 2008, the family of Hans F. and Charlotte M. Stoffel generously donated 72 acres of undeveloped land to P4P. Because of logistical and zoning issues we could not use the land directly, but recently we were fortunate to find a buyer for it. The proceeds of that sale, when finalized, will push the Capital Campaign to completion.

This year P4P will break ground on its long-awaited permanent facility. The benefits will be enormous. We will be able to improve our efficiency by housing our administrative and warehouse operations under one roof. It will be a safer and more comfortable working environment than our previous storage space and its design will be tailored to P4P's specific functional needs. Our production will increase by allowing us to collect, process, and load bikes for shipment even during inclement winter months. The goal is to have the new facility built as soon as possible—possibly just in time for P4P's 20th anniversary in February 2011!

P4P RECIPIENT SPOTLIGHT

Name: Eliseo Perez
Age: 16 años
Parents: Cristobal Manuel Perez y Catalina Valverde
Born in: Diriamba Carazo, Nicaragua
School: Colegio la Palmera
Completed 3rd grade of elementary school
Family: 4 brothers

Meet Eliseo Perez. When he was very young, he was diagnosed with leukemia and doctors discovered a brain tumor. Not only could he not ride a bicycle, but he could only walk with the aid of a cane. As he got older, and with treatment, his condition improved. At the age of ten, he stopped using the cane and began to play, ride a bicycle, and play soccer. His doctors told him he should not play sports due to his illness,

but his poor health could not keep him from being an active teenager. Once he started biking regularly his health improved—the exercise helped his body develop. His bicycle became much more than a means of transport; it gave him his life back. The use of the bicycle gave him the opportunity to develop the potential of employment. He now works as a gardener, so he can contribute financially to the family income. What a difference a bike can make.



CYCLE RECYCLE

When Greg Sucharew graduated from North Hunterdon Regional High School, in Annandale, NJ, the world seemed full of possibilities, but of the future he knew only two things. He would be making films and he would be a positive force in the world. In 2009, these two certainties dovetailed to become his short film, *Cycle Recycle: Economic Development in Sierra Leone*.

Shortly after graduation, Greg began attending college and working full-time. In addition, he volunteered his spare time to Pedals for Progress. "Volunteering was not really work to me, it was something I really enjoyed," he says. "It was a way I could be just a little part in making a big difference in someone's life a world away." He became a familiar face, assisting P4P staff with bicycle collection and processing. Eventually, while still both going to school and working full-time, he hired on with P4P as a part-time employee responsible for transporting bikes and loading shipping containers. He says, "I was just happy I could help."

Meanwhile, in 2004, Greg was admitted into the prestigious New School in New York City to study film production and screenwriting. "I've always had a desire to be creative and film is such a powerful medium," he says. "I have all these ideas and things I want to say." After he graduated in 2007, Greg worked on a variety of projects in the film industry. He learned his trade hands-on as a production assistant, editor, and/or cameraman on several feature films and network television shows while also writing and filming some of his own.



Greg in action with his camera.

Early last year, Pedals for Progress asked Greg to make a film that would raise awareness about its mission. He says he "jumped" at the chance to work on the project. He had always wanted to see for himself what conditions were like on the other side of P4P's operation, what uses the bicycles were put to, and meet some of the people that benefited from them. So he traveled to Sierra Leone to document the effects P4P's bicycles have had on communities at what he calls "the end of the road, the places on the very edge of the country's infrastructure."

The result was *Cycle Recycle*. In it, Greg documents the process of getting P4P bicycles to their end-users, from the corporate sponsorship of the Sierra Leone container, the bicycle collections, and the loading of the shipment in New Jersey, to the unloading of the shipment in the capital Freetown, the arrival of the bicycles in the far western town of Kenema, and their distribution under the auspices of the Center for Research, Training, and Program Development (CRTPD). What he wanted to do with the film, he says, "is show the viewer what exactly it is that Pedals for Progress does, the really intricate way that partnerships are formed between shipment sponsors, Pedals

for Progress, and the overseas programs, and the way that bikes can improve an ordinary person's life. The whole process is really amazing."

Cycle Recycle was presented in New York's 2009 Bicycle Film Festival and has been selected to be screened this February at the 2010 Peace On Earth Film Festival in Chicago. Greg is working on a feature length version of the film in order to more fully explore the dynamics of recycling bicycles and the economic effects of their distribution.

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FROM BOY SCOUT TO EAGLE SCOUT

After seeing an article in Readers Digest about recycling used bikes Michael Cucco of Wayne, NJ, contacted Pedals for Progress to work with us as part of his Eagle Scout certification. To this end, he planned and prepared a weekend bicycle collection for October 10th. He secured a collection site, ran ads in his local newspapers, and rounded up volunteer help. With help from his family, fellow troop members, and his community he collected 248 bikes and a sewing machine! Mike attends Wayne Valley High School and is a member of Boy Scout Troop 192. He officially became an Eagle Scout on December 3rd, 2009. **Congratulations, Mike!**



Michael with his troop flag.

For more information visit www.p4p.org.



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