



"Anpil men, chay pa lou."
 "With many hands,
 the load is not heavy."

Dear Friends of Matènwa,

We have exciting news to report; it has been a year filled with progress and promise. But first, we send you our sincere thanks for joining hands with us to make it all possible.



Your support and confidence give us the determination to prove every day that children in rural Haiti can learn in the language they all understand, without being hit or humiliated. We are determined to make this model the norm in schools across Haiti.

It has been 15 years since the Matènwa Community Learning Center (MCLC) began as a one-room schoolhouse. Now MCLC provides a preschool to ninth grade education and an arts campus with life giving programs that are shaped with the collaboration of many educators and activists from in and outside of Haiti. Instead of the common image of rote memorization, dictation, corporal punishment, and dictatorial classroom management, one sees hands on materials, critical thinkers, authors, and collaborative leaders for peace and justice.

As we celebrate 15 years, we celebrate you ~ our long-standing and our recent supporters. With many hands, the way forward is made possible.

With love and appreciation,
 Chris, Abner



& Juliette

Progress and Promise: Mother Tongue Books

"If you could only see how the children's eyes light up when new Mother Tongue Books come to Matènwa. They love these books so much!"
 (Writer and MTB mentor, Connie Biewald)



Books written by children for children are beginning to show a child centered way to meet Haiti's need for reading material written in Creole for elementary school children. It's literacy, it's empowerment, it's real cultural exchange as these trilingual (Creole,

French, and English) books are published and exchanged between Matènwa and US schools.



Early work has been supported by Rotary Clubs: Port Au Prince, Puerto Rico, and Skidaway, Rotary International, the Fayerweather Street School, and the Basic Science Partnership. There is much promise in this growing initiative. We encourage you to join in, through classroom and service learning projects, and through your financial support.

For examples of Mother Tongue Books, see: www.fayerweather.org, the "Matènwa" tag. A site for kids is in progress: www.lago.ht. To get involved contact Saskia: saskiavanvactor@yahoo.com.

Progress and Promise: In the News



Through the years, Matènwa educators have been collaborating with prominent Haitian linguists Yves Dejean (above) and Michel DeGraff (below) to further the cause of classroom instruction in Creole for Haiti's children. Haiti's Department of Education passed the Bernard Reform in 1979, stating that instruction should be in Creole through the 4th grade to promote universal Education. Implementation has been very slow.



But, there is promise and Matènwa has led the way. Articles in the [Boston Globe](#), "The Power of Creole" by Leon Neyfakh and on [BBC NEWS](#), "Should Creole Replace French in Haiti's Schools?" by Cordelia Hebblethwaite, both cite DeGraff's work in Matènwa. Through his research, DeGraff has witnessed the unsurprising: Children succeed if educational programs are offered in a language the students understand. DeGraff states: "Haiti will never be able to rise to its potential if you have 90 percent who cannot be instructed properly. Once you open up that reservoir.... Imagine how many well prepared minds you would have to try to solve the country's problems."

[FACES](#), a world cultures magazine for children ages 9-14, devoted its Fall 2011 issue to Haiti. Among its features were interviews with 11 Matènwa students. Here is a sample interview:

"My name is Chrisla Fleurant. I am 9 years old. I am a fourth grade student at the Matènwa Community School. I live in a family of 10 people. My mother and my father are the ones who work to give us what we need.



I love my country very much because it is a beautiful country that has a lot of fresh air, beautiful sun, and nice temperatures. We also have a beautiful culture that has a time for everything and a language that many other nations enjoy."

[Peace and Justice Award](#), Cambridge, MA

This award was given by the City of Cambridge, MA to Chris Low in June 2011 in recognition of her work to build bridges and create community between and among people, crossing divides of neighborhood, ethnicity, gender, race, and class. Family and friends were present to join in the applause!

[Schools for schools Partnerships](#) were started in Puerto Rico thanks to Anna Grimaldi Colomer.



The Interact Club working with the Parkville and Commonwealth schools spearheads an annual [Heart for Haiti](#) community celebration, which has led to funding of the Matènwa Library. It is one outstanding example of what can be done. We are hoping that other schools and clubs will get involved. Please contact Pam Smith at pam@fesmith.com

Progress and Promise: In the Gardens

Across rural Haiti, most families survive by farming small plots of depleted, non-irrigated soil. Little attention is given to improving the knowledge or techniques used by farmers even though such skills determine the very survival of the family. But in Matènwa gardening is an integral part of the curriculum, and the school garden serves as hands-on experience, breakfast food, and a demonstration site.



Students and teachers make a wall to stop erosion. Children work together at school and bring these techniques back to their home gardens.

Home Gardens for Ten Families

Thanks to a grant from Pacific Rim Voices, MCLC has initiated a home gardens program. In 2011 ten families each received 2 water drums, 2 gutters with installation, *kandelam* plants for live fencing of a 10 square meter space, and wire fencing to keep out goats and chickens until the live fencing grows to a secure height and width.

Luisine speaks about her garden: "I have already benefited from my garden. We have eaten from it and sold from it. I live close to the water pump so even though the rains were not coming I walked to the pump and carried buckets of water to my home each day."



Ten Communities embrace the Matènwa model



For more than a decade, MCLC has served as a model for what education might be in rural Haiti – a place that respects the rights of children, offers instruction in Creole, includes both core academic and arts classes, provides teacher training in pedagogy, content, and classroom management, and prepares students as critical thinkers capable of improving their lives in their mountain community.

This year, with many thanks for a grant from The Boston Foundation and support from Beyond Borders, MCLC is bringing its model to ten surrounding communities. Our goal is to reach out to schools across Lagonav. How wide an impact we can have depends on your compassion and generosity to support our work.



"Everyone is very motivated to work together. We give a little theory and then go try it. Walter, (one of the Home Gardens beneficiaries) is explaining how organic composting has made his vegetables flourish." Says Creole Gardens Outreach Coordinator Abner Sauveur

Progress and Promise: Arts and Music



The MCLC Arts Colony comes to life!

Our beehive buildings are providing arts, crafts, and music classes with support from you and the Magpie Giving Circle and from the Hand/Eye Fund.



There is much enthusiasm as the community works to create jobs and income. We need your help to market items for local and international sales.



Progress and Promise: Building Friendships

Last year, teachers asked for educational games. Volunteers brought Bananagrams donated by the company, and other games to play. It worked so well that in July 2012 we will start another exciting experiment. We invite those of you who speak Creole (adults and children), or who can afford a translator, to come share your talents with the Matènwa Community. Matènwa children and adults will express what they would like to learn and we will try to match those interests with volunteers' desires to teach.



Volunteers can come for one to four weeks.
Contact:
chriswlow@aol.com

Progress and Promise: With your help!

We began many new initiatives this year. Many children and parents of Matènwa are putting their heart and soul, their mind and strength into working for a brighter tomorrow.

Will you join us?

Give alternative gifts for holiday presents

*82 cents/day ~ \$25/month will provide books and breakfast for a child for a year.

*Less than \$1/day ~ \$30/month will cover a child's education for a year.

*1.50/day ~ \$550/year will provide the fencing, tools, and seeds for one home vegetable garden.

*200/month ~ \$2,400/year will support a teacher's salary.

*250/month ~ \$3,000/year will support change in one of our surrounding community's school and garden for a year.

*Mother Tongue Books ~ create and publish in your classroom; contribute to Matènwa's MTBs publication initiative.

*Art and Music ~ help us to market local crafts; come to Matènwa and teach a skill.

Please send your tax-exempt contribution to:
Friends of Matènwa,
P.O. Box 494,
Lincoln, MA. 01773



Stay in touch! www.matenwaclo.org

Best wishes to you for the 2012 New Year from
all of us in Matènwa!

December 2011