



2009 EPS FELLOW

Anna Finestone

HOMETOWN: Greenville, NC

MAJOR/DEGREE:
BA in International Studies,
Class of 2010

PROJECT TITLE:
Malnutrition Management and Income Generation
in Lawra, Ghana

FACULTY MENTOR:
Mike Emch,
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COMMUNITY PARTNER:
Abu Samson

PROJECT LOCATION:
Lawra, Ghana

“Lawra, Ghana is one of the warmest, most welcoming communities I have ever had the experience of being a part of. It was so gratifying, not only to be able to travel back to Ghana this summer, but to return with the means to greatly improve the well-being of the community.”



UNC ENTREPRENEURIAL PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWSHIP (EPS)

Malnutrition Management and Income Generation in Lawra, Ghana

Lawra, Ghana is an area of severe malnutrition. Lawra is a rural village located in the upperwest corner of Ghana, one of many northern villages in which 33% of children under five are classified as underweight and 48% as stunted. My project brought together hospital personnel and community members in a sustainable agri-business scheme to provide the community of Lawra with a means of malnutrition rehabilitation and a method for economic development. I obtained the means to make four Universal Nut Shellers and purchased a startup supply of ready-to-use Therapeutic Food. This will allow the distribution of fortified food to malnourished children, as well as provide a source of income generation for the hospital and community.



Project Goals

1. Order the molds for four Universal Nut Shellers from Full Belly Project and assemble the nut shellers in Lawra.
2. Train a team of 3 community members on the assembly and use of the nut shellers.
3. Promote a local agri-business scheme which will simultaneously improve the nutrition and well-being of the Lawra community while providing a means of economic sustainability for the community members.

As a member of Project Heal's 2008 summer service trip, I witnessed firsthand the difficulties Lawra faced in addressing issues of malnutrition. After learning that the hospital currently had no malnutrition services and interacting with Kuaban, a 9 year old who was so malnourished as to weigh less than 40 lbs, I decided to work with Project Heal to find a means of lessening the malnutrition rate.

It was in the scorching heat, exhausted and dehydrated after a nine hour bus ride from Kumasi, that I arrived in Lawra for the first time this summer. We arrived in the middle of the day and quickly headed over to the hospital. After hearing several hospital staff members mention a funeral that was starting soon, I discovered that the funeral was for Gal, the Nutrition Director, who had just died the previous day. I was in shock. Gal? Who I had planned this project with last summer? I had barely been in Lawra for an hour when I was thrown the biggest hurdle I would have to overcome in implementing this project.

Despite the loss of an admired administrator, the hospital continued to function. I already knew just how welcoming Lawra is, but this summer I also learned how resilient the community is. Eric and Thomas, two local masons, called me at six in the morning several days, having already gone to the hospital to start mixing the concrete for the shellers. On the day of my workshop, volunteers from the village of Nandem had travelled miles on foot or by bike in order to attend. The community was so grateful and so optimistic about this project and the benefits it would have for their children.

I encountered some surprises and delays, but the project was completed and the nutshellers constructed. There are plans to construct nutshellers for each adjacent village and the 38 hospitals surrounding the Lawra District. It will also remain an aspect of Project Heal's annual summer service trip in which the trip members will be trained to direct the expansion of the nutsheller initiative and to work with Thomas and Eric to facilitate the construction and assembly of the shellers.



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