



World Wide Village, Inc.

Interview with Bill Brass- No shoes? Then no school!

(May 5, 2010)

As noted in the last newsletter, World Wide Village is currently publishing interviews from people who have recently traveled to Haiti with WWV. Last week we heard from Nikki Gibbons. This week we continue the mini-series with an interview with Bill Brass, a project manager with a large Twin Cities construction company:

Interview with Bill Brass:

How many times have you been to Haiti with WWV, or was this your first time?

This has been Val's and my second time in Haiti

What activities did you participate in? Where did you go? What did you see?

We sorted medical supplies in the Leogane hospital, and went to the Dumont school and took pictures of all of the kids. We distributed the pictures to the kids and are using them for the "sponsor a child" picture. We also brought art projects for the kids in Dumont and taught them how to use scissors. Very few of the children had ever used them before. This skill increases the children's ability to expand their thinking and creativity. They currently do not have any [art] programs in the schools. In Haiti, they teach children the basics of Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic only.

From pictures that came back with you, it looks like you visited a school. What struck you most about the school visit?

What struck me the most was that they still have a law that kids cannot come to school if they do not have shoes. A pair of shoes costs approximately \$20.00 US in Port Salute, equivalent to two weeks pay-this is a huge set back. Even if we get the kids sponsored they may not have shoes. I think we need to send a container of shoes or buy shoes and distribute them to the schools to hand out if kids do not have them. It reminds me of my (parochial) school I went to for grades K-3. If we showed up without our ties, we had to go down to the office and rent them for the day.



We could do that too! If the kids show up without shoes we loan them a pair for the day and they can turn them back in at the end of the day. I think we could come up with a bunch of flip flops that would count as shoes? If not we could come up with Crocs or something in that line????

(NOTE: World Wide Village is working on a project to provide school children with a backpack filled with school supplies and a pair of shoes at the beginning of each school year. Watch for ways you can help!)

You were at the school during a mealtime--was there anything that surprised you?



The one thing that surprised me was that in Dumont the kids had to bring their own utensils for mealtime.

Did any of the children say or do something that made you think? If so, what was it?

I asked three kids why they were not in school and they said it was because they didn't have any shoes.

How did going to Haiti change how you face life back in the United States?

Haiti changed my way of thinking about how far our currency goes in Haiti.

What was the most encouraging part of the trip for you? Discouraging?

The most encouraging thing I saw this trip was that the South Coast does have a higher standard of living than Chambrun or Arcahaie. I think other villages could at least grow their own food to help feed themselves if they were shown how, given some land for community gardens, given seeds to start their own gardens and a way to irrigate the gardens. I know that sounds like a lot but we could start small.

The most discouraging thing I saw was that very few of the buildings or houses that were damaged still sat since the earthquake. The explanation given to me was that the owners of these buildings were probably dead. Very sad.

What would you like anyone who has never been to Haiti to know?

What I would like people to know is that we are making a difference.

How would you describe the work being done in Haiti by WWV?

I would describe the work being done by WWV as this: We are starting with the most basic need which is feeding the children. Secondly, we are trying to help them help themselves by creating jobs and providing the funds to pay for these jobs.

How would you respond to someone indicating fear/nervousness about going to Haiti?

I might be naive but I never felt any fear at anytime in Haiti. I fear more walking downtown Minneapolis at night then I do there.

If you are interested in participating in a future WWV trip to Haiti, please feel free to call our office at 651-777-6908 for more information. It will change your life and the lives of those you work with in Haiti!

Donations can be made via our website (www.worldwidevillage.org) or by mailing checks to:

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Donations received for earthquake relief will be used solely for the recovery and rebuilding of Haiti.