

A Note from the Executive Director

As the summer came to an end, the Blue Mountain Project geared up for an exciting fall. Children returned to school equipped with school supplies they received at Back 2 School in Style, a collaborative effort between the BMP, Buru's Shop and the Hagley Gap Youth Club, held on August 27th. Children of all ages put on their school uniforms and headed to Hagley Gap Square to kick-off the 2005-2006 school year. Festivities included music by Jadat Sound, dominoes, loody, fried chicken by Madge and grab bags for all 135 children in attendance. Principal Denise (that's right, I was in full costume) asked trivia questions throughout the night and awarded sneakers, backpacks and large school supplies to the winners. It was a hit!

Now, with children equipped for school, it's Mom and Dad's turn. Adult learners are invited to Literacy Link, a reading, writing and speaking class, aimed at educating and empowering the illiterate with basic communication skills. Taught by Executive Assistant, Damian Anderson, Literacy Link will be held two days per week at the Hagley Gap Community Center at no cost to its participants.

Last, but certainly not least, Nutrition for Life, a monthly food commodity program will begin to distribute dry goods such as rice, kidney beans, milk powder, flour and sugar. The BMP partnered with Food for the Poor to provide food relief after Hurricane Dennis and in response to the overwhelming demand for foods, has committed to an on-going distribution program.

The BMP is excited to announce these new programs and would like to give an extra special thanks to its supporters and donors. We couldn't do it without you.

Denise Cagley-Jefferson

Executive Director



Upcoming Events

- January** Faith in Action
- January** Start Phase II of Clinic
- March & April** Alternative Spring Break
- May** Maymester with Ripon College
- June** Annual Jamaican Jamboree and Board Meeting in Hagley Gap

Faith In Action

The Blue Mountain Project is proud to host the first annual Faith In Action Month January 2006. This month gives workshop leaders a chance to present different faith based topics in the unique setting of a rural mountain village. Two different programs will be offered through the Service Learning Program. Jared Pulley will present "A Saving Grace" January 2-9th and Heather Allen will be exploring "Earth Honoring Traditions" January 9-16th. If you would like to register for either one of these event or if you have a group that would like to visit Hagley Gap then email Denise at denise@bluemountainproject.org.

Needs

Fungal and yeast infection Cream, Rolled bandages, Iron supplements, HIV/ AIDS literature, Condoms, High Protein food, Manual Blood Pressure Cuff, File folders for patient records, informative brochures on domestic violence, cotton balls, peroxide, water filters, and 4X4 vehicle.



This is the broken foot bridge that villagers must cross to get to Kingston when hurricane season strikes. All photos by Nigel Male

Internship Openings

Blue Mountain Project is proud to offer internships in the following areas:

- Marketing**
- Events Planner**
- Donations Coordinator**
- Film making**
- Radio**
- Graphic/Commercial Arts**
- Clinic Director in Hagley Gap, Jamaica**

If interested contact Sarah Beamer at sarah@bluemountainproject.org

A special thanks to Dale Bodmer for making a special donation in honor of John Hurlbut's 50th birthday... "Keep the Fire Burning!"

Reflections on the Blue Mountain Project

The first time I drove up to Gap from Kingston I was for some reason surprised at the time it took to reach. I had found the village on a map in my guidebook and it had not seemed too far from the capital as the crow flies (and road appeared straight on the map!) I was prepared for poor quality mountain roads but was still quite surprised by what I experienced! The road winds its way up and up, ever deeper into the imposing, but stunningly beautiful Blue Mountains, with hairpin bends, eroded roadsides, debris brought down the mountainside by hurricanes Dennis and Emily, and rivers flowing across the road as they flow down from the higher land. The road had only just become passable following the flood damage caused by hurricanes Dennis and Emily in July. The word 'remote' has a totally different meaning here than in western Europe, where it merely means 'a long drive from the nearest town' as electricity, running water, telephone lines and surfaced roads are 'normal' things we take for granted even in our 'remote' areas.

Tucked in a tight river valley, the people of Hagley Gap are disconnected from much of their own country due to the genuine remoteness of their location, yet it is a reflection of the world we live in that they are so well connected to places far away. I had traveled thousands of miles from home and found myself discussing terrorism in London, Premiership football and England beating Australia in cricket! The presence of electricity means that the people of Gap can inform themselves via radio and television about what goes on in the world outside. They all chat away on their mobile (cell) phones as eagerly as secondary (high) school children do here in the UK. At first I thought this slightly sad as it seemed so at odds with their remote, traditional environment and way of life but I soon realized that traditional should not mean 'living in the past' - Hagley Gap residents are just as entitled as anyone else to move with the times and live in the twenty-first century. I soon saw how in a place where there is no landline connection (or likelihood of getting one), mobile phones could be a lifeline to rural communities enabling them to improve their chances of getting work, helping each other out and allowing them to have regular contact with friends and relatives many miles away. Mobile technology and electricity can help the people of Hagley Gap to connect with the rest of Jamaica and the rest of the world, listening and learning about things beyond their locality. There is a saying, 'knowledge is power'. I hope this can be applied to Hagley Gap and that with the support of the BMP the people can (continue to) become empowered.

Liz Bennett, BMP Service Learning Program Volunteer
August 2005
Kent, UK