

MATÈNWA COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2025



COMMITMENT,

DEDICATION, AND

SELF-DETERMINATION

I couldn't be prouder of what's happening in and around the Matènwa Community Learning Center. Every day, **this community is leading a quiet revolution for language justice, gender equality, and children's rights** in Haiti. And Friends of Matènwa's dedicated supporters make this possible. You help train teachers, equip classrooms, and give children the educational opportunity to improve themselves and their communities. Matènwa proves that Haiti is not just the destitution you see on the news. There is another narrative to share: moving stories of commitment, dedication, and self-determination. Students develop pride in their language and their culture. They see their own potential—it's powerful. This movement is about every Haitian child and parent believing: *My language has value. My self-determination will change the trajectory of my life and the lives of people in my community. My voice matters.* ~ Chris

What moves me most about the Matènwa Community Learning Center is how committed, dedicated, and determined everyone is—from the leadership team to the teachers, parents, and students who bring the school to life each day. That same spirit shines through Friends of Matènwa's supporters who are standing with them through some of Haiti's hardest times. **I'm so grateful to now be part of this community full-time—it feels like joining a family that refuses to give up on hope.** I want to get to know FoM's supporters better, so I hope you can give me a few minutes of your time when I reach out to you: brian@matenwa.org | (305) 450-2561. ~ Brian

I have proudly served as the Finance Coordinator for Friends of Matènwa for the past seven years. Growing up in poverty in Haiti, I remember attending school on many mornings without having had breakfast. **Those experiences shaped my deep understanding of how essential education and daily nourishment are for a child's well-being and future.** Today, I am honored to be part of an organization that is changing children's lives in Lagonav by providing access to quality education and nutritious meals. Witnessing the impact of our programs reminds me every day that opportunity can transform a child's path. I am grateful to contribute to this mission and to help ensure that students in Lagonav receive the support many of us once dreamed of. ~ Pepito

I have been working with Friends of Matènwa since November 2022, and it has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. I love being part of an organization that is directly impacting the lives of children and helping to build a brighter future for Haiti. Through this work, **I feel deeply connected to my roots and proud to give back to my country** in such a powerful way. ~ Bianca



Bianca, Chris, Brian...and Pepito

Together we are building brighter futures—one child at a time.

FoM Board	FoM Administration	MCLC Direction Committee
Heather Yow, President Kenia Selem, Treasurer Tim Boysen Marie Francoise Gonzales Tim Kunin Vladimir LaBorde Chris Low Victoria Pasquet Barbara Sampson, (President Emerita)	Chris Low, Executive Director Brian Stevens, Deputy Director Pepito Laventure, Finance Coordinator Bianca Louis, Development Coordinator	Abner Sauveur, General Director Ednot Obel, Director of Secondary Samila Edmond, Director of Primary Feronel Jean, Treasurer Delson Engerville, Secretary Bidyori Sauveur, Ass. to General Director Williamson Jacques, FoM / MCLC Liaison

Cherica's Story: Finding Safety, Joy, and a Voice

When Cherica was little, she knew what hunger and fear felt like. Neglect and mistreatment had marked her early years. Her mother fled Port-au-Prince to Lagonav seeking safety, but still struggled to feed her. Then a kind family took Cherica in and helped her enroll at MCLC. Today, her life looks completely different. She's in fourth grade, starts each day with a hot breakfast, and has access to healthcare at the school clinic. She spends her afternoons singing, dancing, and reading in the library—discovering joy in learning and in herself.

Because of friends like you, children like Cherica find not only education, but safety, dignity, and a sense of belonging.



Djawens' Story: Growing Change

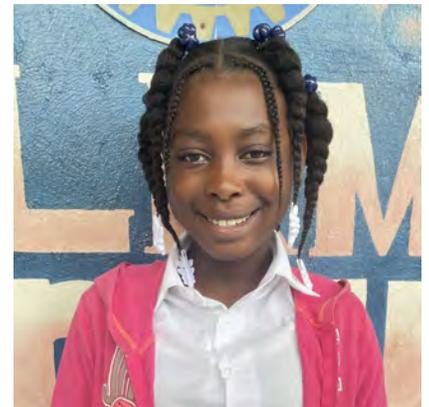
Djawens has been part of MCLC since kindergarten. From the start, he loved the feel of soil in his hands. Every weekend, you'll find him tending vegetables in the school garden—the same garden that helps feed his classmates a fresh breakfast each morning. Now, as the student in charge of the sixth grade's garden plot, Djawens leads his classmates in cultivating healthy, organic food for the school breakfast program. His dedication inspires both his classmates and teachers.

This is what your giving grows: confidence, responsibility, and a community that nourishes itself.

Dona's Story: Giving Breeds Happiness

I am in ninth grade. We give breakfast from MCLC to our elders in need. Everyone participates so that we all understand the needs of our community. We feel a civic obligation and responsibility to give and show respect. When I am at home I ask my parents if I can give some food to our neighbor Madan Wozi. She also needs help. Madan Wozi is always happy to see me and this makes me happy too.

You giving to the breakfast program not only feeds students, but enables the youth to also act on their civic duty to help their elders.



Néphtalie's Story: Strength After Loss

Before violence tore her family apart, Néphtalie Jean lived in Port-au-Prince with her parents and three siblings. Last year her father sent them to Lagonav, hoping they'd be safe and that Néphtalie could stay in school. Soon after, tragedy struck. Her dad fell ill and armed men came into his home and killed him. Néphtalie never saw her father again. The men had burned his body before the family could return to bury him. Néphtalie still manages to come to MCLC every day, greeted with a hot meal and steady encouragement. Now in 12th grade, she's working hard toward her dream of becoming an accountant.

Your support helps make that steady encouragement possible—turning grief slowly into hope.



🎵 **Manno’s Story: From Silence to Song**

As a small child, Manno was brought from Port-au-Prince to Lagonav by someone his parents trusted—only to face abuse and isolation. Then a kind family welcomed him in and enrolled him at MCLC. Now 21, Manno is in his final year of secondary school (Grade 13). He plays drums in the school’s marching band and at his church—and with every beat, he’s shaping his own future. He dreams of becoming not only a musician, but also an agronomist and biology teacher—someone who helps young people see what’s possible.

When you give, you help people like Manno turn hardship into harmony—and dreams into reality.

🌱 **Jean Agga: Future Agronomy Director**

Jean Agga graduated in 2023. That year there was no path to university. But in 2024, MCLC announced that their graduates would be able to take the University of Fondwa exam at MCLC. He won a scholarship to study agronomy. Now in his second year he reflects:

“Thanks to this opportunity that MCLC gave me, I will be a great agronomist. My dream is to start an agronomy school in my hometown so I can share all I have learned with all the youth there, so we can develop our community.”



👩 **Rosalineda: Future Business Woman**

Rosalineda graduated in 2022 and had to wait for permission to leave the safety of her island. She is a true child of MCLC—started in kindergarten and went all the way through school. Rosalinda has a great deal of ambition for herself and her community. This is why she chose to study administration. *“My objective is to become a business woman that creates a business in Matènwa. My business will allow me to give out loans to people enabling them to create their own businesses too. I want to be part of developing my country.”*

🐾 **Becanlove: Future Veterinarian and Educator**

Becanlove is in his second year at the University of Fondwa. The academic dean told MCLC that Becanlove is one of the hardest working students in their veterinary medicine program. *“Once I finish my veterinarian studies, I will work towards completing my thesis. After that, I want to create a project in animal health and nutrition. This project will allow me to educate and raise awareness in the community I live in about the importance of animals in our lives.”*



👩🏾 Carline: Future Veterinarian with a Focus on Improving the Local Economy

Carline graduated from MCLC in 2019. Initially, her parents wouldn't let her leave Lagonav to pursue further study, but after seeing several of our graduates go and return safely from the University of Fondwa, they let her apply. She received a full academic scholarship. *"My dream is to be an excellent veterinarian who is useful to my community. I am committed to training my community about animal husbandry, which will help increase our local economy. I want rural people to be financially independent so they can live with fewer challenges."*



👩🏾🩺 Tamika: Future Nurse

Tamika is studying at Wesleyan University. Now a junior in the nursing program, she's known for her focus and care during practical training sessions, especially in wound treatment. She is also the Secretary of the Nursing Students Committee. She's proud to be learning skills that will help her serve others with compassion and confidence. *"Sometimes I miss my family, but I stay strong by remembering why I am here. So I study, I do my homework, and I call home when I can."*

👦 Bityòs' Story: A Promise to Oneself

As an alum of MCLC and a member of the Matènwa community, I had made a promise to myself that even if I had the chance to move to another country, I would first come teach other children what I learned at university. Many won't get the chance to go to university. I had the privilege to go—I want to help other children get the same opportunity.

Your investment in Bityòs enabled him to help hundreds of others!



📖 Samila's Story: Witnessing Miracles

Seventeen years ago, I started here as an assistant teacher. Training and practice built my capacity and confidence as a full teacher. When you go from reading to them, to them reading to you, it is like *you made a miracle without knowing*. It makes me so happy! Today, I teach first grade two days a week and do observations, coaching, and administration the other days as the primary school director.

Because of your faith in us, Samila witnessed thousands of miracles!



Vana’s Story: Caring Beyond My Own

I have been working here since MCLC was founded. Even though my baby girl was born in the United States, I didn’t stay. I love my job as Director of the Institute of Learning—helping my community and my country. When I see that some of my *students* are now MCLC *teachers*, I feel so proud. Many teachers from other schools say they can teach reading because of MCLC training and are more creative and confident with their students. This gives me the motivation to continue this work.

Like Chris, Vana couldn’t give up her first baby (MCLC) for her second baby. And all are thriving!



Ednot’s Story: MCLC is Mine

I was a primary school director when I heard about MCLC. On my first visit, I felt that I had found *my school*. A school where the pedagogy was about non-violence, inclusivity, and respect, not about one’s appearance and economic level. Once I was teaching at MCLC, I couldn’t bear teaching at traditional schools. I have been the MCLC high school director for 8 years now. When I retire, I will still be here as a volunteer because *MCLC se pa m*—translation MCLC is mine!



By helping build MCLC, you helped Ednot find a place to dedicate himself to for life.



Abner’s Message

I’ve been reading about Maria Montessori and thinking about legacy—how to ensure our school keeps doing what we set out to do: help people read and write, end hunger, and offer resources not as handouts but as hand-ups, with respect. I was trained to teach adults to read in Creole, but meeting Chris made my dream reachable. When she first brought me to the U.S., her confidence in me deepened my commitment to this work. I did not want her to have any regrets.

Our community trusts the MCLC Direction Committee. Many of us are working for change that changes lives. But we need tools to keep going— people want to farm, but don’t have tools and seed. Children want to learn, but parents can’t always afford pencils and notebooks. Families are fleeing to Lagonav to escape gang violence and are seeking refuge. I ask you to keep partnering with us; your donations are what make this progress possible. ~ *Abner Sauveur, MCLC Co-Founder & Director*

Heather’s Message

As you read these MCLC student stories, notice how each of them wants to give back what they’ve gained from their education—paying it forward to the next generation. MCLC is proof that hope is very much alive and that nonviolent, native language education is the key to a successful and meaningful life. When we come together as a community, we can overcome and persevere through even the most trying circumstances. These student success stories and the dedication of MCLC leaders inspire me to want to pay it forward by supporting Friends of Matènwa, so that I know I made a difference. ~ *Heather Yow, FoM Board President*



Statement of Activities				
REVENUE	2024		2025	
Grants and Contributions	\$933,152.00		\$895,280.00	
Investment Income	\$31,573.89		\$45,672.00	
Other	\$16,081.51		\$1,319.00	
TOTAL	\$980,807.40		\$942,271.00	
EXPENSES				
Programs	\$754,018.00	82.0%	\$658,296.00	76.3%
Administration	\$69,303.94	7.5%	\$71,419.00	8.3%
Fundraising	\$95,756.00	10.4%	\$132,569.00	15.4%
TOTAL	\$919,077.94		\$862,284.00	
Beginning Fiscal Year Assets	\$1,528,468.00		\$1,329,515.00	
End of Year Assets	\$1,329,515.00		\$1,409,502.00	



The information above is drawn from Friends of Matènwa's financial statements that were audited by Smith Sullivan and Brown. Our Form 990 is available online at www.matenwa.org/irs-990

Ever since I first visited Matènwa, I knew it was special. The programs make a transformative, lasting difference. I have seen firsthand the cultivation of native edible plants, heard the joyful sounds of students playing music on handmade instruments, and sat with school leadership discussing the Mother Tongue book program. MCLC is not only unusual, it's irreplaceable. My monthly gift represents a lifelong commitment to the Haitian spirit of resilience. ~ *Brittany Boles, monthly Breakfast Club donor*



As a pediatric physician, I know how vulnerable children are when they don't have educational opportunities, and I know that those opportunities can completely change their lives. What could be a better cause than that? That's why I joined the Visionary Circle. ~ *Meryl Cohen, Visionary Circle member*

Leaders in philanthropy are emphasizing shifting power to local communities and leaders. Shifting power should also include children through child-centric teaching and programs based on honoring the dignity and agency of every child. That's the North Star for Matènwa. ~ *Karen Keating Ansara, Ansara Family Fund*



As a small foundation, we have appreciated the ability to support initiatives that have helped to build capacity over the years. We are always impressed at the commitment Matènwa demonstrates to thoughtfully, carefully, and methodically build a sustainable, learning community from the ground up. ~ *Anne Marie Stein, Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart*



WHAT YOUR GENEROSITY MADE POSSIBLE IN 2025

 344 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN MCLC THIS FALL  223 FAMILIES PLANTED NEW ORGANIC GARDENS

 187 VISITS CONDUCTED TO OBSERVE CLASSROOMS AND GARDENS  101 TEACHERS TRAINED IN CHILD-CENTERED PRACTICES

 75 RAINWATER TANKS & 30 WHEELBARROWS PROVIDED TO FAMILIES  32 SCHOOL GARDENS STRENGTHENED FOOD SECURITY

 32 SCHOOL DIRECTORS MENTORED IN NONVIOLENT LEADERSHIP

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes! I will transform lives by <u>Giving Monthly</u>:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Breakfast Club – daily nutritious meals</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$40 Books/tuition/materials for a student</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$42 Leadership Circle – <i>unrestricted giving</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$85 Visionary Circle – <i>unrestricted giving</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Salaries for teachers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$400 Full university scholarship</p>	<p>Or Choose Your Own Monthly Giving Amount:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____</p> <p>Or Make a One-Time Gift:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thank you for supporting the Matènwa Community Learning Center!</i></p>
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Payment information

Check enclosed Credit card

Name on card _____ Exp. / CVV _____

Card # _____

Billing address _____

Email _____ Phone _____



TRANSLATION: SUPPORTERS, WE APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS. WE LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.

Friends of Matènwa is a 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Additional options

This gift is in honor of in memory of (Name) _____

Please notify _____

My employer matches charitable gifts – please contact me

Please send information about legacy / planned giving

Prefer to give online? Make a secure gift anytime at www.matenwa.org

