Friends of Matènwa

2026
ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

MATÈNWA GRADUATES

# Next stop: *university.*



**From left:** Shnaider Jean, veterinary medicine; Delcaneji Magloire, agronomy; Alensky Occeas and Owens Mityl, business administration.

Four more Matènwa graduates have begun their studies at University of Fondwa, joining nine others there. With three nursing students at Wesleyan University, we now have a total of 16 Matènwa graduates gaining skills to better serve their communities.

MEET THEM INSIDE →

**16**

Matènwa graduates now pursuing degrees at University of Fondwa and Wesleyan University, thanks to our scholarship donors.

ALSO INSIDE

3 One of Haiti's top teachers teaches at Matènwa.

5 From school gardens to breakfast bowls.



**Tamika** with one of the two newborns she helped deliver one evening during her hospital nursing internship.

MATÈNWA GRADUATES

# Two babies. *One unforgettable night.*

In one night, Tamika Nonnonme helped two women give birth—a baby girl and a boy—under the supervision of the hospital's medical staff. For this Matènwa graduate, who is completing her final nursing internship in a hospital in Southern Haiti, it was her first time assisting births. "It makes me feel so proud and happy. It was an unforgettable night for me," she said.

After her internship and final examination, Tamika plans to complete a year of service at the Wesleyan Hospital on Lagonav, where she studied. Her goal: to care for children and adults in her community who cannot afford to go to the hospital.

*"It was an unforgettable night for me."*

TAMIKA NONNONME



The 13 **Matènwa graduates** studying at University of Fondwa. Three others are studying nursing at Wesleyan University on Lagonav.

16 AND COUNTING

## And four more graduates are *just beginning.*

Shnaider, Delcaneji, Alensky, and Owens have started at the University of Fondwa, studying veterinary medicine, agronomy, and business administration. They join 12 other Matènwa graduates pursuing university degrees.

Your support helps these young people keep going, through years of classes, exams, and practical training. And now, for Tamika, that learning is becoming care for others.




**Louiseda Sumé** with her fourth graders earlier this year.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

# One of Haiti's top teachers *teaches right here in Matènwa.*

Matènwa's own Louiseda Sumé was named **Teacher of the Year for the West Department** in Haiti, which includes Port-au-Prince. She was one of ten national finalists from 10 departments, chosen from more than 2,000 nominees.

What makes us especially proud? *Before Louiseda taught third and fourth grade here, she was one of our students.*

She knows what it means to learn in Haitian Creole, have teachers who listen, and to be treated with respect.

"It is a pleasure for me to give back what I received from my school. My teachers taught me with lots of love, and so I teach the children with lots of love too. I tell them that one day they may take my place, they could teach my children too."

Your generosity helps sustain a school where education comes full circle. Thank you for being part of Louiseda's story—and the stories her students are just beginning.



**Chris Low and Louiseda** celebrate her Teacher of the Year recognition.

**TOP 10** national finalist, chosen from more than 2,000 nominated teachers.

> *"My teachers taught me with lots of love, and so I teach the children with lots of love."*
>
> LOUISEDA SUMÉ

# Even the preschoolers *were making books.*



**Visiting teachers** observe a Mother Tongue Books session in Matènwa's preschool.

**36** **TEACHERS**
THREE SCHOOLS · A THREE-YEAR PARTNERSHIP BEGINNING IN 2026

The visiting teachers couldn't believe their eyes. Even preschoolers were confidently offering sentences to create their own storybooks in Haitian Creole.




**MIT linguist Michel DeGraff** and Chris Low hold his new book, *Our Own Language* (*Lang a Nou* in Haitian Creole), which highlights the transformative impact of Matènwa's Mother Tongue Books.

Thirty-six teachers from three schools in Carrefour, Port-au-Prince, came to train at Matènwa's Institute for Learning. It was a week-long reprieve from their gang-controlled neighborhoods.

> *"They were struck by how the children were actively participating and how comfortable they were speaking."*
>
> VANA EDMOND, INSTITUTE LEADER

They saw children learning without the threat of being hit. They spoke freely with teachers who welcomed their questions and affection.

Vana wants these practices to travel: teaching in Creole, creating Mother Tongue Books, and holding morning circles where children living with violence can talk and feel heard. Your support helps Matènwa's educators bring these possibilities to more classrooms.

IN MEMORY OF

## Chris Affleck



Chris shares a picture book with a young friend.

*Chris, you were one of Matènwa's first supporters. You opened your home for fundraising events and to Haitian visitors. After you retired, you helped lay out, edit, and translate dozens of Mother Tongue Books made by young students at Fayerweather Street School. You were also a member of our Breakfast Club. Thank you for always being there for us. We miss you.*

— CHRIS LOW

BREAKFAST · SCHOOL GARDENS · COMMUNITY GROWING

# A school day starts *with their care.*



**From left to right:** Magarette Beissance, Janose Remedore, Anetude (Zaza) Geffrard, Dieula (Nini) Florvil, Carole Dorisca, Marithese Saint-Luc.

Magarette Beissance began her catering business in March 2004. "This enabled me to house, feed, and educate my four children," she says. "Now they're all adults, and one of them teaches physical education at the school."

As the number of students grew, Magarette employed more women to cook. This group of six has a contract with the school to prepare **341** student breakfasts and **20+** for elders in need, every school morning.

Janose shares, *"The children feel comfortable with me and they love me. I am a mother to them and they are my breath."*

Thanks to our breakfast donors, students are starting the day with a cooked meal—and a local women-owned business is thriving.

IN MEMORY OF

## Larry Siegel



**From left:** Larry Siegel, Juliette Low Fleury, Chris Low, and Kathy Morris.

*Larry, every time Matènwa teachers visited Cambridge, they marveled at your backyard full of organic vegetables and fruit trees—so much variety and abundance. You were living proof that a family can grow enough to feed itself. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with Matènwa staff, in Haiti and at your home in Royalston, Massachusetts. You inspired us all, and we learned so much from you.*

— CHRIS LOW



### Grown by the children *themselves*

Each class grew its own vegetables for the school kitchen. Children learned to prepare beds and mix soil with manure. Then came the reward: eating spinach, cabbage, and peppers they had grown themselves.



### Terracing *beyond the school*

By September, nearly **200** people had trained to build and prepare **60** terraces across **10** communities. Growers in Bwa Nwa had already completed **2** harvests.

OUR CAMPUS · MATÈNWA, LAGONAV, HAITI

# The Matènwa Community Learning Center, *from above.*

*Held up by educators who believe in every child, families who believe in their children's teachers, and friends near and far who believe in this community.*



# Their voices. Their hopes. *Their Haiti.*




**"Long live peace for a different Haiti without violence."** A student's sign carries the hope behind the march.



**12th grader Elmanika Antoine** says, "Peace means understanding among people in their school, church, family, and community."

## « *Viv lapè pou Ayiti !* »

Long live peace for Haiti!

On September 21, Matènwa's students and staff carried their call for peace into the community. For children growing up as violence forces families from their homes, those words carry weight.

At school, they practice what they marched for: speaking freely, listening to one another, and resolving differences without hitting. Your support helps give children a place to learn those lessons—and the confidence to make their voices heard.

**500**

### A record summer camp!

More than half of this year's 500 campers came from other communities. Summer camp is one more way we share the Matènwa Way beyond our own community.



### 500 children. *A summer to discover.*

Campers wind bright yarn and work at knitting looms, turning simple materials into something of their own. Former campers returned to teach a new generation.



### You filled *their backpacks.*

You met the campaign's 300-backpack goal! Students from first grade through secondary school received backpacks and learning supplies—a tangible reminder that this community is behind them.

STANDING WITH HAITIANS IN SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

# Standing beside a family. *Every step of the way.*



**Haitian Support Center staff and volunteers** support families going through uncertainty, fear, anxiety, food insecurity, and the suicide of a child.

Pierre Damas Bel was 20 years old and one week into his first semester at Wright State University, studying neuroscience. He dreamed of becoming a doctor and one day building a hospital in Haiti. At Springfield High School he was an honor student, a JROTC cadet, and a varsity soccer player.

Pierre came to the United States legally and had applied for asylum. When the government ended Temporary Protected Status for Haitians in July, ICE put a GPS ankle monitor on him, which limited his ability to play soccer. Twice, he asked ICE to remove it, bringing letters of support from his coach and school. Twice, ICE refused. His college peers taunted him. "I came to this country to pursue my education," he wrote on Instagram. "I didn't come here to commit a crime or hurt anyone." He felt deep shame and humiliation. On August 31, Pierre died by suicide on Interstate 70.

Haitians who came here legally on TPS are being detained, shackled, and deported, with no chance to settle their affairs.

Viles, Rose, and Pepitho of Springfield's Haitian Support Center stood with Pierre's family through every hard moment, from identifying his body to his burial. FoM Deputy Director Brian Stevens chairs the center's board and provides fundraising support. Sharing our human resources helps the center keep caring for its neighbors—with food, counseling, and support—day after day.



REMEMBERING

**Pierre Damas Bel**

High School Graduation

If you or someone you know is struggling, call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline).

> *"Rose, Pepitho, and I are deeply grateful for the extraordinary solidarity and support from Friends of Matènwa. You've stood with us through the hardest times, strengthened us, and made us better at what we do."*
>
> VILES DORSAINVIL · EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HAITIAN SUPPORT CENTER

# Built by the Community. *Sustained by You.*

*Every breakfast served. Every book a child wrote in Haitian Creole. Every graduate who walked into a university classroom. Our supporters made it possible.*

Thanks to you, **341 students** start every school day at Matènwa with a hot breakfast; **500 summer campers** enjoyed a meal and art activities during the month of July; and we helped **16 Matènwa graduates** pursue university degrees. You stood with teachers, families, and neighbors despite all the bad news coming out about Haiti.

Thank you for believing in the children, families, and educators of Matènwa. Every gift—regardless of size—helps create opportunities that last a lifetime. The names on these pages are the community that keeps this school growing.



*It has been a most rewarding experience to partner with the Matènwa Community Learning Center. It affirms what is possible: to promote and protect every child's right to a meaningful education.*

**ANNA GRIMALDI COLOMER**
Longtime supporter, fundraiser & Visionary Circle member

## Thank you to our supporters

● Recurring donor ◆ Breakfast Club member

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First Parish in Lincoln
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Second Union Church of San Juan
St. Cecilia Roman Catholic Church

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*We make every effort to list names accurately. If your name is missing or misspelled, please contact brian@matenwa.org or (305) 450-2561.*

## Leave a gift *that keeps growing.*

Many of our supporters choose to remember Matènwa with a gift in their will. It costs nothing today, and it helps children learn in their own language for generations to come. If you have already included us, please tell us so we can thank you.

A simple sentence is all it takes:

*"I give [amount or percentage of my estate] to Friends of Matènwa, EIN 27-2898086."*

To learn more, contact Chris Low at **chris@matenwa.org** or **(617) 543-8844**.

## Independently rated

for accountability and transparency

**Four-Star Rating**
Charity Navigator

**Top-Ranked Organization**
GlobalGiving

**Platinum Transparency**
Candid

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP · FY 2026

## Your gifts, *carefully stewarded.*

# 81¢

of every dollar we spent in FY 2026 went directly to programs for children, teachers, and families in Matènwa.



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Program services | **81%** | $812,744 |
| Management & administration | **6%** | $62,679 |
| Fundraising | **13%** | $132,132 |

| | FY 2025 | FY 2026 |
|---|---|---|
| **REVENUE** | | |
| Grants & contributions | $895,280 | $931,490 |
| Investment income | $45,672 | $32,812 |
| Other | $1,319 | $0 |
| **Total revenue** | **$942,271** | **$964,303** |
| **EXPENSES** | | |
| Program services | $658,296 | $812,744 |
| Management & administration | $71,419 | $62,679 |
| Fundraising | $132,569 | $132,132 |
| **Total expenses** | **$862,284** | **$1,007,555** |
| **TOTAL ASSETS** | | |
| Beginning of year | $1,329,515 | $1,409,502 |
| **End of fiscal year** | **$1,409,502** | **$1,395,747** |

**Friends of Matènwa is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, EIN 27-2898086.** Gifts are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Our Form 990 and audited financial statements are available at **matenwa.org/about/financials**.

HELP KEEP THIS GROWING

# Help a child discover *what's possible.*



**Chris** shares breakfast with students at Matènwa. **Will you too?** For just $30 a month, you can provide a child breakfast.

*Dear Friends,*

This summer I turned 65. How did 30 years go by so fast? Our one-room schoolhouse has grown, one classroom, garden, and partnership at a time, into a nationally known model school where 341 children learn in their own language. Thank you for making it possible.

Now I'm thinking about the next 30 years. Louiseda Sumé, Teacher of the Year for Haiti's West Department, was once our student. Matènwa is already in the hands of the people it raised.

### Will you help Matènwa thrive for generations?

- **Give monthly** so teachers can plan each year with confidence.
- **Give to our endowment,** invested to support the school every year.
- **Include Matènwa in your estate plans** to help children learn for years to come—and if you already have, please tell me so I can thank you.

I'm so grateful we get to keep building this community together.

*With hope and love,*

**Chris Low**
CO-FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GIVE ONLINE

**matenwa.org**

Click **Donate** to give once or monthly—by card, PayPal, Apple Pay, or Venmo.

MATÈNWA · 30 YEARS · CELEBRATING 2027
30
years

We're planning a celebration for Matènwa's 30th year in 2027. Check your inbox for a

**SAVE THE DATE**
**email, coming soon!**

✂ DETACH AND RETURN IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE

## Yes! I want to help children *learn and thrive.*

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