



Project B.E.E.S

Nutrition Program



(BREAKFAST gives ENERGY, stimulates ENTHUSIASM, and generates SUCCESS)

Thanks to a generous grant obtained from the Father Table's Foundation and the Ursuline Sisters, Project B.E.E.S. was set into motion in the Spring of 2006. It was conceived as a nutritional supplement for the malnourished students attending the 6 education centers sponsored by the Mission Office in order to boost their school attendance, attention, and overall cognitive functioning. Community volunteers prepare and serve the students their supplement before class begins in the morning. The breakfast supplement is strictly dispensed according to predetermined age/weight guidelines to optimize effectiveness of the program and ensure sustainability by keeping costs practical.

Background:

The Mission Office sponsors 6 education centers which are located in 6 small villages situated in the mountainous region of the Diocese of San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic. In the six years that these centers have been in existence, the children have shown a remarkable improvement on their pace of learning. They attend class five days a week for a total of 180 days per year. Substantial didactic materials have been donated by members of the Diocese of Orlando and the Teachers are now sponsored by the Mission Office and come from the same communities as the students. These practices have been vastly superior to the previous routine under the dilapidated government school system, where the children would receive about 8 hours of schooling per week and their teachers would many time fail to appear at all. School supplies and materials were non-existent. Children who may or may not have learned to read at a very low level by 8 years old are instead beginning to read quite well at 4 and 5 years. Children are now enthusiastic about their studies and the teachers are dedicated to their pupils.

It is true that the Education Program has been a success. But one particular difficulty has emerged which continues to threaten the viability of the program and the learning of the children; malnourishment. Malnourishment is a way of life for the vast majority of the communities in the mountains of the Dominican Republic. There are limited sources of work in this region and the men and women sustain large families where the few existing dietary options are spread out even more thin as a result. In reference to the education program, the already malnourished children walk long distances to school each day, many time crossing rivers and climbing steep paths, while remaining exposed to the mountain elements. By the time they reach their school, they have expended vital nutrients and energy that would be otherwise be required for good attention in class, high cognitive functioning, and good behavior. Children have become more lethargic and less attentive as each school year progresses. A clear plan of action was put forth; the Project B.E.E.S initiative.

This comprehensive breakfast plan was designed in conjunction with medical volunteers working closely with the Mission Office. This menu is heavily loaded with protein and calories to stabilize and boost the failing nutrition levels of the children. Ingredients were purchased and shipped overseas to the D.R. in early June 2006. Baseline figures for the children were collected in early spring to provide the program with a large degree of accountability as it progresses. We are currently searching for additional funding for Project B.E.E.S.

It is hoped that Project B.E.E.S. will provide our education program new impetus and vigor by providing these creative young minds with fuel in the morning by virtue of this breakfast supplement.

Project B.E.E.S.—New fuel for school!

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