Cyber-Café Plans for St. Mark's Center

Breaking the Digital Divide

Mama Elimerita Memorial Cyber-Café

When 7 young teenage girls came to Mass for the first time in 2015, Bishop Thomas was worried. "We don't have enough food to give 7 more people today." A magnet for neighborhood youth and orphans, food is always short and cots to accomodate more orphans are even more scarce. Following the Mass he approached them to welcome them and converse with them.

Much to his surprise, these young women did not come looking for food. Four were orphans whose parents had died of AIDS and 3 were orphans whose parents had been victims of increasing violence in the area. "We want to study. We want to learn how to read and write. We need pencils and paper." Bishop Thomas was pleasantly surprised and provided them with pencils and paper. A relationship was born. A dream for education for teenagers was born. What if our community center had a cyber-café so youth could have access to technology? What if we could do our part to help break the digital divide? What if a rural village had a cyber-café?

Elimerita was a loving mother and community leader, who believed in education and in encouragement of youth to work hard and meet their goals. She helped her grandchildren to break traditional forms for growing up an to educate themselves in new things. Keeping in line with a tradition begun in 2017 to avoid expensive burial fees, when she passed on to the other side in 2018, a tree was planted in her ashes buried on the compound of St. Mark's Community Center. The compound now has several elders watching over it as they grow with the children they are helping to raise.

The Elimerita Memorial Cyber-café will have 30 work stations occupying one of the five-story building to be constructed on the site. This will require electrical and Wifi installations to accomodate this use. In an area where schools are few with limited resources, this cyber-café will help bring the digital divide between the rural and urban, poor and rich. In addition to providing computer skills and Internet access, the Cyber-café will have a small café enabling youth to gather and socialize, perhaps sharing gifts of poety, music and dance. The Cyber-café will be a safe space for youth to gather and build networks for safety and services.

Plans call for the Elimerita Memoral Cyber-café to occupy the space of the first floor of the five-story building which will house an orphange for 100 children, a clinic, the cyber-café and a community meeting room. This dynamic center will open new doors for community development and youth advancement. The Cyber-café—an integral part to the development of popular material to be used in healthcare education—is an essential step in the growth of St. Mark's Community Center. We need your help in raising the needed $110,000 for construction and equipment of this cyber-café.