

History of Emmanuel's Dream.Org

In Ghana, and some other parts of Africa, it is often believed that persons with disabilities are cursed, and not worthy to be part of the society. They are often killed or ostracized. Most of their families suffer in poverty. Emmanuel's Educational Foundation and Sports Academy (EEFSA) for the physically challenged was established in 2000, by Emmanuel who himself is a physically challenged person. Emmanuel's Dream.org promotes the well-being of the challenged and vulnerable while creating global awareness about the rights and abilities of persons with disabilities.

When Emmanuel Ofori Yeboah was born in Ghana, he was missing most of his right shinbone. Ghanaian culture said he was cursed and worthless. His father and much of his extended family abandoned him. But his mother always believed in him, provided him an education and support and raised the boy into a man who has changed his country's view of people with disabilities.

By compiling small donations, the foundation made huge impact on many people's lives. 1000 wheelchairs were donated, where now those recipients know the joy of mobility after a lifetime of nothing more than crawling as a result of their disability. 12 tons of goods were distributed to needy families of disabled children. The foundation partnered with Dream Volunteers.Org to enroll 15 students with disabilities into schools. Twenty US youth volunteers from Dream Volunteers visited Ghana, met their counterparts and set up a computer training facility. And a major gift of land was given by the King to build a school.

In 2002, the new name became Emmanuel's Dream.org, a 501c3, with an expanded goal of building a school which includes an educational academy, an Adaptive Therapy Center, and Sports Academy for youth with disabilities, integrated with able-bodied youth.

During Emmanuel's epic 10-day, 600 km ride across Ghana in 2001 with one leg, Ghana and the world began to take notice of the possibilities for people with disabilities who were typically shunned and relegated to begging in poverty. Emmanuel raised awareness was able to convince kings, political leaders and community members of the worth of the mission.

An impressive documentary, "Emmanuel's Gift", narrated by Oprah Winfrey, was filmed of his bike journey. Unfortunately none of the royalties from the movies, books or other renditions of Emmanuel's story have financially benefitted Emmanuel or the organization, but it has helped change cultural beliefs. Emmanuel continues to serve as a role model for those both able-bodied and disabled.

Emmanuel was the first person with a disability invited into the palace of the Akyem Abuakwa Kingdom and met by King Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panyin II and they continue to work together. To date, Ghana has the most progressive legislation for inclusion, but lacks resources to innovate and develop the facilities and programs.

After meeting one of the prominent kings in Ghana, Emmanuel was able to meet with the king from his own hometown. Emmanuel was welcomed into the palace of Nana Professor Emeritus Oti Boateng, the paramount King of the New Juabeng Traditional Area. In this palace, Emmanuel was presented with the Daasebre Award of excellence.

In 2003, he was awarded the Challenged Athletes Foundation's Most-Inspirational Athlete of the Year, Cinequest's Life of a Maveric Award and Nike's \$25,000 Casey Martin Award. Combined with matching funds from the Challenged Athletes Foundation, Yeboah purchased wheelchairs for Ghanaians who had spent their lives on the ground or on makeshift scooters.

In 2005, ESPN awarded Emmanuel its ESPY Arthur Ashe Courage Award for single-handedly creating a movement that changed laws in Ghana. He met with Kofi Annan, then secretary general of the United Nations, and traveled to the White House to speak with then-President George W. Bush.

In 2006, the Parliament of Ghana passed the Persons with Disability bill granting people with disabilities the same rights in Ghana's constitution ascribed to the country's able-bodied citizens, according to the Challenged Athletes Foundation which sponsors Emmanuel.

Today, he is a member of the USA National Amputee Soccer team and works two jobs in San Diego County where he lives with his daughter, 11-year-old Linda Kim Yeboah, while his wife and two more daughters remain in Ghana and he continues his relentless efforts to help the disabled in Ghana.

A personal note from Emmanuel:

To those of you who have helped me in the past, please accept my humblest gratitude for your support and encouragement. With the support I have received, I have been able to sponsor 15 disabled children to go to school for many years now. Those 15 children have been so very blessed with the opportunity to make something of their lives through an education they would not have received otherwise.

There are still so many hundreds and thousands of disabled people in need and my dream is to enable them to have a chance at life provided by education at the first school for the disabled in Ghana. I have been blessed in life and am dreaming of ways that I can pay forward those blessings to many disabled people in need. I cannot do this on my own and ask your consideration to participate in my dream – To build schools for disabled people to attend for free. Non-disabled people will also be allowed to enroll. Additionally, I envision at least 40% of the school staff being disabled.

As a part of my journey to realize the dream of opening a school, I was blessed with a donation of land from the King of my village, where we did the groundbreaking on May 28, 2010.

Can you help me to build this school? Can you provide funding or fundraising efforts? I am currently raising money through motivational speaking engagements and other fundraising. Please help us if you can.

Thank you and God bless you!!