



2107 North Decatur Road, Box 308  
Decatur, GA | 30033  
404-354-4432 | [info@SustainableLiberia.org](mailto:info@SustainableLiberia.org)



# Spring Ministry Update

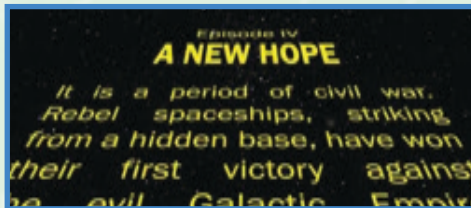
*Countering Hopelessness in Liberia*



## A Tale of Numbers: Cocoa Processing Facility Update 2017.....5.....180.....2420.....1

**By Jack Stallins**

**W**hat do these seemingly random numbers mean? They represent the success of Brendi Cocoa Company, an idea hatched about one year ago. More on the numbers later...consider the next paragraph like the Star Wars intro...



In October 2016, a team from Dunwoody Baptist Church, along with members of the board of directors of Sustainable Liberia, conducted a feasibility study in rural Liberia focused on identifying God-given, natural strengths of the country. The Liberian countryside is lush and perfect for agriculture. More specifically, the climate is ripe for cocoa production, which requires lots of rain for an



extended period, followed by months of humidity and heat. In fact, the West African region, where Liberia resides, produces over 70% of the world's cocoa for chocolate production, and the harvest season runs from September to January.

We certainly weren't the first ones to realize the potential for cocoa production in Liberia. Before two civil wars that lasted decades, Liberia joined its neighbors, Ivory Coast and Ghana, as a top producer of cocoa. Unfortunately, those wars ruined the infrastructure in Liberia for local farmers to sell their cocoa directly into global markets. After working in the country for over 12 years, Sustainable Liberia has

developed deep relationships with elders, farmers, and villagers. As a result, we have an intimate knowledge of how to empower the community to help make Liberian cocoa great again.

On to the numbers...

**Brendi Cocoa Company (BCC), a medium-sized sustainable enterprise started by Sustainable Liberia, commenced operations in October 2017.** The enterprise was fully funded by the many generous donors who wanted to support the idea of using business as evangelism. BCC buys cocoa from local farmers, ferments and dries the beans at drying facilities and aggregates cocoa in 50 kilogram bags to sell to port buyers.





*"The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart,  
who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."  
Luke 8:15 (NIV)*

BCC employs **5** full-time employees, **3** of which were fully scholarshiped by Sustainable Liberia, and BCC is projected to employ **15** at full scale in a couple of years. With an unemployment rate of close to 80%, the number one social issue in the country is job opportunities. If you add in the dozens that were involved and paid daily wages to help with construction of facilities, the number employed creates a substantial positive in these communities. **BCC works with nearly 180 farmers and estimates that we have doubled incomes for farmers** since we pay market rates for cocoa, purchase full quantities of produce, and farmers have additional time to produce other cash crops. Before BCC, cocoa would literally rot on the ground because farmers didn't have the scale to get it to the port of Monrovia. **In October 2017 alone, 2,420 pounds of cocoa was processed by BCC.** That's over 10,000 Hershey's Kisses!

And the best for last: **1** is the most important number of all. **We serve 1 God with 1 mission: to share the love of Christ with our brothers and sisters in Liberia.** Our staff (who are all Christians) are always asked by farmers, many of whom are not Christians, why BCC exists. This gives us a natural platform to spread the Gospel and share the Good News. At the end of the day, BCC is another ministry platform for Sustainable Liberia and we are blessed to have you all support this endeavor.



## Tractors and Transformation

### By Jack Stallins

In our newsletter last summer, we told you how members of Haddock Baptist Church, a vibrant church in the small farming community of Haddock, Georgia, was moved by the Holy Spirit to begin efforts to fill a forty-foot container full of farming equipment and send it on a ship across the Atlantic to help the farmers in Liberia with whom we work.

We are excited to bring you an update: the container has arrived! This equipment will have both an immediate and long-lasting impact, not only for the farmers growing cocoa, but also by enabling us to better empower this region through community gardens and improved agricultural practices.

The church's work was a grand undertaking – it required the generous donations of many people and the dedicated work of people like Lonnie Smith, Rex Lee, and Shirley Knowles.

Yet, this is more than merely sending a package. This is a ministry that both enables the people of the community to empower themselves, as well as an opportunity for a church to unite in the work of spreading Christ's love. We could not be more grateful! This gift will impact our ministry for years to come.



Jutumo driving the tractor for the first time.



"Thank you for all of the goodies!"

*"For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow,  
so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations."  
Isaiah 61:11 (NIV)*



## Seeds of Hope 2019



For an incredibly dedicated 5th year, from February 8-10, 1,259 volunteers from Peachtree Presbyterian Church and all over Atlanta, Georgia, gathered to pack 190,055 seed envelopes! As a mission partner, Sustainable Liberia has received a portion of these seeds and we are deeply grateful. Volunteers were as old as 5 and as young as 95. At each table and at each of the 7 shifts they welcomed over 545 non-Peachtree members to the event. From high school volunteer clubs, girl and boy scout troops, rotary clubs, student athletes, a 6-year old's birthday party, and more joined in serving the people of Liberia. Following each shift, they gathered to pray over the boxed seeds before their journey from stateside to community gardens in Liberia. Additional food sources are especially critical right now in the midst of Liberia's economic instability; prices for food staples are greatly inflated and continue to rise. Each seed planted will help fortify and stabilize the food supply through gardens in the communities we serve.

We thank each person who labeled, scooped, packed, and prayed over this event and the amazing hope that will shine through each envelope. Here is a sample of people serving and Jessy showing the fruits of that labor.

**We appreciate you. A seed planted is a life transformed!**



Jessy holding cabbages grown by local farmers.



Bill Ginn teasing "Team Cabbage" to "Ketchup" to the other teams.



Ella (11) and her grandparents on "Team Onion".

## Inagural Graduation Ceremony - 27 Students



On March 16, 2019, 22 students graduated from the Sustainable Witness (Liberia) Driver's Education Program and 5 more earned certificates in Computer Science.



Driver's Education is a two-month program and Computer Science is four months. Classes are based out of the Coal Pot Queens Training Facility.



In a country with more than 80% unemployment, Driver's Ed is an important skill-set for jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities. 40% of the men in Liberia earn a living as taxi drivers or private chauffeurs.







## **Dedication Ceremony: Rebuilding Gou's School**

**By Linda Flagler**

Nothing remained of the tiny school in Gou village after the tornado ripped through it. Unable to afford the zinc for a new roof or nails to put up doors, the students and teachers met for classes in two churches in the village. With the hope of rebuilding, the men of Gou made new adobe bricks from soil and plant material, housing them under a tarp to protect them from disintegration in the heavy precipitation of the rainy season.

In November, when our team arrived in nearby Gbansue village, Bill Ginn and Allen Taliaferro hiked through the jungle on a tiny path, across 16 log bridges, to visit Gou. Their purpose was to inspect the cocoa farms, supervise the grafting of the new cocoa plants, build trust and relationships with the farmers and village elders, and to deliver the encouraging word that money had been donated from people in the USA for a new roof for the school. Recently, we were sent a picture of smiling children, gathered around candles, at the ceremony that marked the dedication of the new Gou School. Thank you!



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### **Mailing Address:**

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Decatur, GA 30033 USA

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