

Todee Mission Update: A Summer of Activity

August 2007

As anyone who has ever met Ophelia Johnson can quickly see, she is a woman of formidable faith. She also possesses the boundless energy and enthusiasm of a young teenager coupled with the steely resolve of a field commander. Happily, these are precisely the attributes needed for the Herculean task of rebuilding Todee Mission.

In the few short months since she returned to Liberia in mid-June, Ophelia has been a whirlwind of activity. She has swept through government agencies, ambassadorial offices and building suppliers in Monrovia, garnering promises of money and assistance. And she has shuttled back and forth on nearly impassable roads to Todee to cheer on construction workers and build relationships with an often skeptical local population that has seen the ruined mission molder silently for two decades.

Reconstruction continues at an incremental pace. The rafters are up on the girls' dormitory. The zinc roofing material has been delivered, and soon the structure will be weather tight and ready to serve as Todee's first working building—a combination living, dining and classroom space to welcome the first students later this fall. The Liberian Education Ministry has promised to send two teachers (and pay their salaries!), while the Agricultural Ministry has pledged technicians for the school farm, and the Transportation Ministry has begun to repair the roads leading to the mission. Unfortunately, the Chinese ambassador who vowed to supply Todee with solar power and fund reconstruction of the boys' dormitory, has returned to China. Ophelia is re-negotiating with his successor, and has a special request for all of us: "Keep praying!"

Meanwhile, the Todee Committee back here in Alexandria has accomplished our first major goal: sending off a 40-foot container of books, furniture, classroom materials, tools and building supplies. It set sail August 6 from Newark to Monrovia. A heartfelt thanks to everyone who donated supplies and cash—and a special shout-out to our friend Jay Belding in Philadelphia, whose warehouse crew worked tirelessly for a solid day to fit the cargo like a jigsaw puzzle into the container!

Our upcoming plans include putting together another container of goods to ship later this fall, sending a small delegation of volunteers over to the mission in October, and holding a major fundraiser at the Liberian Embassy toward the end of the year. As always, any and all help is more than welcome. We are particularly eager to hear from anyone who has experience (or a willingness to learn on the job) with large-scale fundraising and entertaining. And, of course, please keep praying!

- Lydia Hicks