



Bernie Zearth, right, the project co-ordinator with Freddylink, on a trip to Haiti in March.

Fundraiser looking to raise money for clean water in Haiti

By Emma Davie

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A group of Fredericton citizens committed to helping improve living situations in Haiti have started a fundraiser to address issues related to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Freddy Link is looking to raise \$50,000 to help a Haitian community of about 50,000 build hand-washing stations and latrines in schools and throughout the community.

"After the earthquake, they had a big outbreak of cholera and now with hurricane Matthew, they've had another big outbreak. So this is one of the things they've identified as a real need" said Bernie Zearth, FreddyLink project co-ordinator.

"You go to the schools and they have nothing. There's no bathrooms, there's no running water, there's no nothing. So how do you clean yourself? Basically there's the bushes out back, that's it. So the goal is to go into these schools and do that - build the hand-washing stations, build latrines, so they've got these facilities we take for granted. And that's how you fight something like cholera".

In March, Zearth and a handful of other FreddyLink volunteers spent a week in Haiti to see how things had improved in the community since their last trip. One school they visited, Zearth said, already had a hand-washing station installed.

"We went to a school and they had some of the students demonstrate for us, it was so cute. They've got their bar of soap and they're washing their hands, showing us how to do it really thoroughly and doing a great job" he said.

"As they train the students on how to do things correctly, they then go home and show their families and that's how you reach the whole community."

FreddyLink created a relationship with the Haitian communities of UDICC and Cobocol through their partnership with World Vision Canada around the time of the 2010 earthquake. Since then, Zebarth and others have been down to visit about four times.

The idea for Freddy link, he said, was a simple one.

"We had this crazy idea: wouldn't it be nice if the community of Fredericton could come alongside a community somewhere in the world that was in need and help them," he said.

"We're partnering with two communities, which are about the size of Fredericton total, so it's about 50,000 people there".

It was important to Zebarth and his two partners, who created the idea that they would be giving communities a hand up, not a hand out. And World Vision was the only group that did exactly that.

"World Vision goes into areas of extreme poverty. It's about a 15-year process, and they'll take that entire community from poverty to self-sufficiency in that time. And they take a holistic approach, they really engage that community" Zebarth said.

"Seeing them evolve and develop, it's really cool because each time we go, they're just a bit more advanced, they're

more entrepreneurial, they've got more structures in place, there's more youth engagement and responsibility for the youth."

One example, Zebarth said, is that the local people created a mothers club for women with children under the age of five, which gathers once a month.

"They talk about, given the food that they have available, how do you develop a nutritious diet for your child? Then they buy in bulk, they cook together, meet together and they're almost like a support group" he said.

Another example is the mostly agricultural community used to haul their grain com to another town for it to get it ground up.

"The first step was they thought, 'We'll get our own grain grinder,' which they did. But more recently they were saying 'Well, if we can grind grain for ourselves, we can grind it for other people, too' So now they're starting up a little business"

Zebarth said people in Fredericton can communicate with sponsored families on a regular basis. FreddyLink receives annual reports and volunteers visit the community almost every year to check in.

"When they donate to something like this, it really does make a difference. We've gone down and seen firsthand the funds are well spent. We know they're effective and we know they make a lasting difference. And this fundraiser now for water, this is particularly important because this is building infrastructure that will be there for decades" Zebarth said.

"You make a small donation now, and that creates a real legacy in Haiti that will affect many, many students for many, many years."



A student demonstrates good hand-washing techniques at a hand-washing station in Haiti