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P.E.T. New York – East Jewett, Inc

Benin Distribution 2010

The 2010 distribution to Benin included 20 P.E.T.s from Maine, 55 P.E.T.s from Tennessee and 91 P.E.T.s from New York. All were adult size. The Maine Lions also included canes, crutches, and walkers in the P.E.T. boxes. The P.E.T.s were shipped from Elizabeth, New Jersey to Cotonou, Benin in a 40 foot container. From Cotonou they were trucked to a children's home in Abomey, Benin for safe storage until we arrived.

Benin has two very dependable rainy seasons per year. We arrived in the middle of the second. There was heavy rain, thunder, lightning, and flooding nearly every day. Last year we thought that the roads couldn't get much worse. As we traveled farther into the interior of the country we discovered how wrong we were.

Our first stop was the medical clinic where we distributed 18 adult size P.E.T.s last year. We had asked that last year's recipients return their P.E.T.s for an inspection and tune-up. About a dozen people returned, but because of the muddy roads and flooding only four came with their P.E.T.s. All were well used and mud covered. One needed a chain tightened but other wise were in very good condition. We were very pleased with the durability of the P.E.T.s and elated over the life improvement of the recipients. When asked for suggestions for improvements: all agreed that they needed more leg room, found the brake handle difficult to use for both braking and steering, wanted more of an angle to the seat back and more speed. We are currently working on this as most only require minor modifications.

On our way to Abomey we stopped for church where our distribution partner Daslin Small was speaking. The service was in French but we had no trouble understanding the joy and excitement of the parishioners in their worship. We stayed for dinner after the service.

The next stop was the children's home in Abomey. We had visited here last year and stayed for three days this time. The children helped us to unpack and assemble 45 P.E.T.s in one afternoon. They were distributed the next day. We had only planned on distributing 40, but word had gotten-out that P.E.T.s were here. Most of the recipients suffered from polio, birth defects, or amputations due to infections. All were extremely grateful. Abomey's mayor, his entire cabinet, and several village chiefs as well as the local TV station were present. During the many speeches and merci beaucoup the mayor said that P.E.T.s should be built in a factory in Abomey and he would donate the land. The next day we watched the TV coverage of the distribution on the mid-day news with the children, loaded 50 P.E.T.s on an open truck, in the pouring rain, and left for Dassa to the North.

The mayor of Dassa was extremely grateful for what we were doing and refused to allow us to make the long trip back to Abomey each night. He arranged for hotel rooms, food, car, and a driver at his expense while we were in Dassa. The next day we traveled about 20 minutes South to a school that was located on the main road and opposite a village. The 4 check-points on the road were no problem with the mayor's car and driver. After what seemed like a long wait our 50 P.E.T.s arrived and at least as many villagers to unload,

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unpack and help assemble the P.E.T.s. The next day was about the same. School doesn't start until October first in Benin allowing the P.E.T.s to be secured in the school at night. Fortunately there were no major assembly problems as there is no electrical power within 30 miles of here. The villagers speak a combination of French and Fawn and Steve and I only English. Communicating how to assemble a P.E.T. did not seem to be a problem.

Distribution day at Dassa turned out to be a major event! When we arrived all 100 P.E.T.s were lined-up in the school yard, a tent was set-up to cover the chairs, recipients and officials. Over 200 people had gathered and more kept coming. Food of all kinds was available. By the time the ceremony had begun over 500 people were in attendance including Dassa's mayor, his cabinet, several village chiefs, and Benin's Vice-President of the Parliament and of course the local TV station. The officials helped to seat recipients to their P.E.T.s and translate instructions to them. This was followed by many speeches and merci beaucoup. Again, most of the recipients had polio, birth defects or amputations due to infections. We only had 100 P.E.T.s and had to turn away many needy individuals. Hundreds could have been given-out if we had them. Once again the recipients were extremely grateful. The Vice-President of the Parliament invited us back to our hotel to toast the success of our mission and left for another event. We left to begin many hours of driving back to Cotonou and our 2:00 AM flight home. The many prayers by our church family at home provided support for an exhausting schedule under very trying conditions.



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