

# habele



OUTER ISLAND EDUCATION FUND

2009  
Annual Report

# habele

## OUTER ISLAND EDUCATION FUND – 2009 Annual Report

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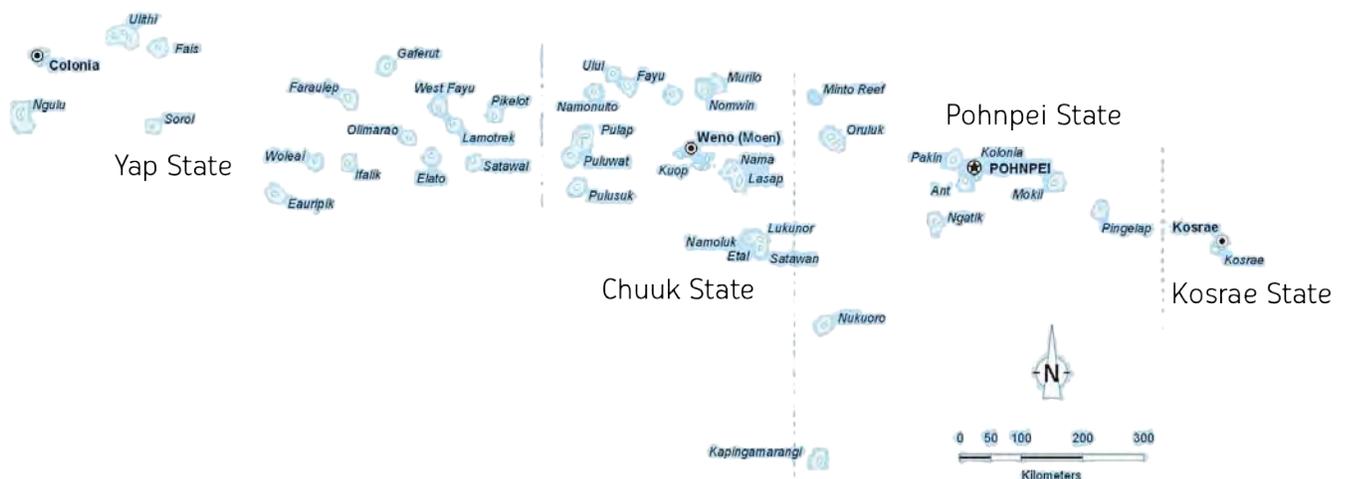
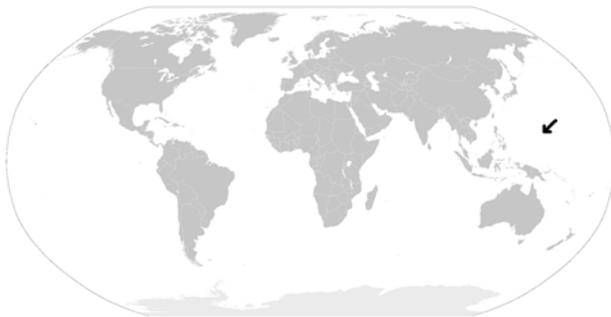
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# Introduction

Times are tough in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), particularly for communities in the Outer Islands and remote villages.

The national government now reports that over a fifth of households in the FSM fall below the Basic Needs Poverty Line. Education, long seen as the solution to development and educational problems, is suffering as well. A mere 10 percent of Micronesians who enroll in the nation's community college system actually graduate with a degree.

The issue is not a lack of support from the United States government. Peter Prahar, America's new Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, explained the situation to the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee this way:

"Under the Compact, the United States provides more than \$90 million in annual assistance to the FSM through FY 2023. Last year, total U.S. assistance to the country, including all federal services, programs, and grants, exceeded \$130 million"

Despite this generous government aid, major challenges remain – challenges that locally driven nonprofits such as Habele are tackling directly.

Miriam K. Hughes, the U.S. Ambassador to The Federated States of Micronesia from 2007-2009, repeatedly called for the strengthening of US-FSM relations through direct support of innovative local programs. She made the argument that heightened engagement by charities and other non-government organizations (NGOs) remains the key to building local capacity and expectations in Micronesia. Describing the work of NGOs in the FSM, Ambassador Hughes observed:

"The initiative of former Peace Corps Volunteers and teachers to support programs in K12 education reflects the best hands-on spirit that we can share with the Federated States of Micronesia.

"Today, the FSM is a proud, young nation that plays a role on the world stage. However, internally this small island developing state is fragile. Schools that are severely under-equipped perform poorly. Health care is rudimentary.

"It is a pivotal time to renew America's engagement and friendship in a sensitive oceanic crossroads. Now more than ever, we need to think outside the box and engage the Micronesians in creative partnerships. They yearn increasingly to team up with us.

"Non-profit outreach to schools and students in Micronesia's outer islands has practical impact, building American partnership and bettering the lives of others who would otherwise not have a chance."

Habele's tuition scholarships and school donations are cost-effective, high-impact, and locally driven. They empower young Micronesians to exercise initiative and strive for educational and vocational excellence. That is something Micronesians have asked for directly, and something that large-scale government-to-government foreign aid still struggles to provide.

As you will read in this report, the money Habele receives goes **directly** to the educational needs of worthy individual Micronesian students.

# Letter from the President

*In 2009 Habele issued 17 full tuition scholarships for low-income and Outer Island children attending private elementary and high schools. We also sent over sixty boxes of books and school supplies to remote Outer Island public schools. This year we hope to expand the efforts and plan to publish a first-of-its-kind Ulithian-English Dictionary for students in Ulithi and Fais.*

The Habele Outer Island Education Fund is a no frills charity. We have no paid employees or salaried consultants. There is no full-time staff or bi-weekly payroll. The organization operates on a shoestring budget and spends over ninety cents per dollar on student scholarships and the delivery of school supplies. Volunteers do all the work –and the work is very important.

Micronesia is a beautiful and remote nation, consisting of hundreds of tiny islands spread across thousands of miles of open Pacific Ocean. The isolation, small scale, and lack of natural resources have been major obstacles in that nation’s development. Many of the Outer Islands still lack indoor plumbing and electricity. Even those living in the more densely populated state capitals face grim economic and employment prospects. Outsiders have long insisted that formal education was the key to improving local quality of life, but hundreds of millions of dollars in annual government aid has often created more problems than it has solved.

That is what makes Habele so unique. The individual islanders have made their voices clear. They want more equal access to quality classrooms that prepare them for local vocations and higher education; quality materials for their local public schools and community libraries; and local language resources for their islands. These requests are exactly what Habele is working to provide, one child and one classroom at a time.

Thank you for helping Habele to answer these calls,

Neil James Mellen  
President, Habele Board of Directors  
701 Garvais Street, Suite 150-244  
Columbia, SC 29201

njm@habele.org  
(803) 586-2358



# Scholarships

*This year Habel donors gave 17 low-income children real hope for a better future.*

The indicators are frustrating. The Micronesian National Government reports that one-third of Islanders now live below the Basic Needs Poverty Line, a measure of absolute minimum resources necessary for long-term physical well-being. On many islands, the public high school graduation rate remains below fifty percent. Nationwide, the on time college graduation rate is just ten percent – despite the fact that eighty three percent of the 2,457 students attending college in Micronesia are receiving US Pell Grants to pay for their tuition.

Money is not the problem.

Peter Alan Prahar, America’s newly confirmed Ambassador to Micronesia recently testified before the United States Senate. He explained how last year “total U.S. assistance to the country, including all federal services, programs, and grants exceeded \$130 million.” The funding, roughly \$1,170 per Micronesian citizen, is among the highest per-capita foreign aid programs in the world.

The economic and educational situation in Micronesia remains bleak. The problem lies in system design and local expectations.

The Micronesian education system is modeled after the traditional neighborhood school design employed in the United States. This structure is intended to channel students into American style higher education. The public schools in the FSM are modeled on the organizational structures of American public schools. Sadly, they commonly fall short of delivering instruction at a level that successfully prepares students for acceptance into –and more importantly success at– post secondary institutions in the FSM, Guam, Hawaii, or the U.S. mainland.

Equally troublesome, the primary orientation on higher education preparation ignores the reality that many FSM nationals would prefer, and benefit more from, instruction that equips them with tools required for more readily available employment options in agriculture, construction, maritime, the service economy, or enlistment in the United States military or Jobs Corps. These young islanders want an education that can provide benefits they can bring back home to their local communities.

Though complicated, the situation is not intractable. The challenge is to devise approaches that influence the underlying attitudes held by Micronesians about their relationships with island governments, nongovernmental organizations, the free market, and international donors. Expanding access to the popular and growing independent K-12 sector is one such strategy.





Habele's Directors and local volunteers have devised and implemented a program of tuition assistance for students looking to attend private schools in the four state capitals of Micronesia. It is a needs-based award, currently targeted to serve students from Outer Island families. We see our efforts as working toward the creation of a series of effective and comprehensive "pipelines" which islanders can travel through, ascending from appropriate primary and secondary instruction on to relevant and effective options in job training or higher education.

The advantages of the Habele's K-12 private school scholarship model include:

- Providing individual students with a higher quality of classroom instruction, and a greater chance of obtaining an on-time high school diploma.
- Increasing parental engagement and expectations in the children's education by providing families with choices of different types of schools.
- Modeling free market consumer behaviors and reducing expectations for entitlements by demonstrating how the private and NGO sectors can effectively deliver public goods.
- Facilitating growth in the private and NGO sectors (both at the independent schools themselves and the local businesses that serve them) by expanding the pool of students with the resources required to attend the private schools.
- Raising broad community expectations of public school performance and student achievement through the example set by scholarship winners who benefit from private school instruction.
- Increasing per-pupil spending in public schools and lowering teacher to student ratios when children transfer out to attend private schools.

Students awarded Habele support receive full tuition scholarships (averaging \$550) for one year at a time. According to reports from the FSM National Department of Education, per-pupil spending at public schools across Micronesia averaged \$992 in 2007. The figure was \$1,899 in Yap State, or three and a half times the average Habele full tuition scholarship (and almost half of per-capita income in Micronesia). Habele scholars attend day schools, living with relatives and sponsors during the academic year and returning to their home islands over the summer.

Scholarship students commit to providing the Fund's Directors with detailed academic and disciplinary reports, photos, and personal letters. The 17 students now in the program attend Saint Mary's and SDA School on Yap; Berea, Saramen, and the SDA School on Chuuk; and Pohnpei Catholic. Peace Corps Volunteers, clergy, local government officials, and private school staff submit scholarship applications to the Fund. Applications are also received directly from students' parents and sponsors. For the first year in 2009, local demand for scholarships far exceeded the Fund's ability to supply it.

Habele supplements Micronesia's network of public schools. Our goal is expand access to quality educational options (access

already enjoyed by parents who can afford to pay tuition fees) with a particular focus on supporting students from Outer Islands, rural villages, and low-income families. This works to expand individual students' experiences beyond the limits of their local island or village.

Habele believes this will reduce inequality and raise local expectations for all types of K-12 instruction. It is these community expectations that are essential for local political and civic leaders to harness as they develop and implement systemic reforms. Local aspirations are the real key in realizing popular and cost-effective policies that truly work for locally defined needs and wants.

Parents and students are telling Habele this approach is working, and our own track record shows the results. Both of Habele's initial scholarship winners, two young women from the Outer Islands of Yap who attended private high schools in Palau, are on track to graduate with distinction from the College of Micronesia!

The need for these scholarships is stark. The demand for Habele scholarships continues to grow. The program is working –and with your help– can continue to thrive.



Dear HABELLE

Greetings from the island of Stone Money. Hope this letter finds you in good health. As for me and the rest of the family, we are all fine. I'm writing this letter to send my appreciation and a big thank you for the financial assistance you provided for me again this year. I'm greatly thankful for it. This assistance has not only help me financially but also motivates me to do my best in school. I have been doing well in my studies and will continue to do my best.

Inclosed is my grades for the first quarter. I'm sorry that i have two F's but even myself was surprised because i thought those were my best subjects. Unfortunately somebody did not think so. I will prove in the quarters to come that this is a mistake. In my previous grades from grades one to now, i have never gotten any F's. I promise i will not disapoint you in the remaining quarters. Once again thank you very much. I hope to stay a recipient of this financial assistance for many more years.



For now me and my grandparents would like to wish you a very peaceful and prosperose new year.

Sincerely yours,

Shania J. M. Marpa.

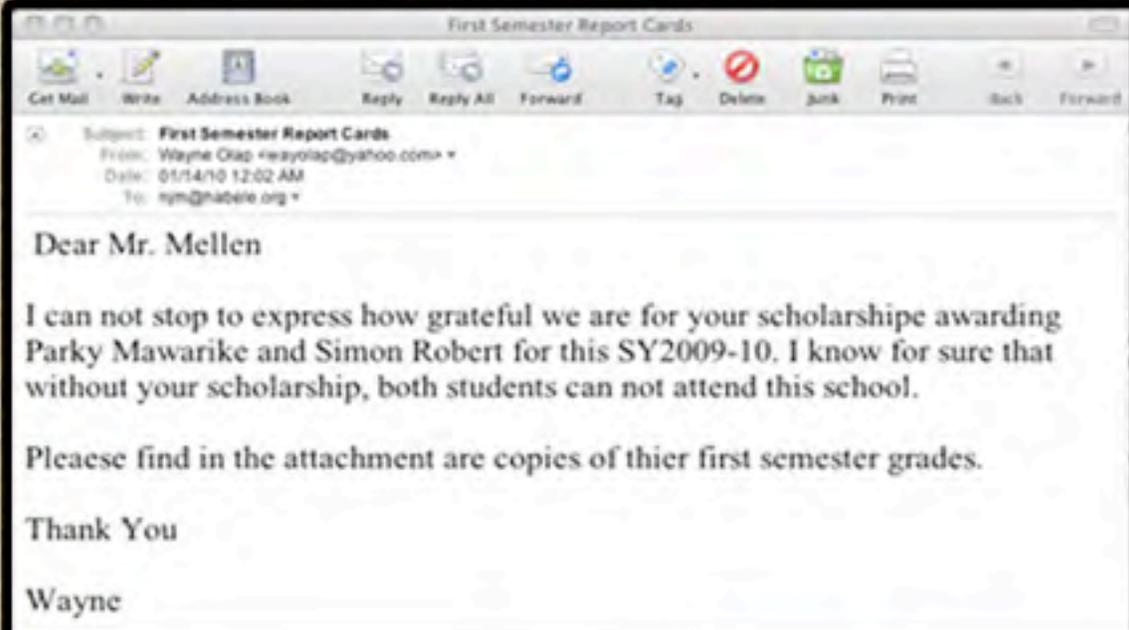
Student's Name: **MARPA, Shania Jane** Grade: **5**

**Quarters and Semesters**

SUBJECTS	1st
Bible	A 96%
English	B- 82%
Handwriting	F 50%
Math	F 57%
Reading	A- 95%
Science	C- 72%
Social Studies	A 96%
Spelling	A- 94%
Arts & Crafts	B- 80%
Music	A- 92%
Physical Education	A 100%
Health	A 98%
Subject # 13	
Subject # 14	
Subject # 15	
<b>GPA</b>	<b>2.84</b>

Evaluation	1st
Work-Study Habits	A
Citizenship	A
Days Present	44
Days Absent	0
Days Tardy	4

1st	Teacher/Subject
Grasp abstract concepts well	Miss Olivia
Participates actively and positively in class	Miss Olivia
Demonstrates a consistently good performance	Miss Olivia
Good understanding of theory/applications	Miss Olivia
Works well with others	Miss Olivia



SUBJECT AREAS	TRS. NAME	Q1	E	B	Q2	E	B	1SEM	Q3
English Lit I	Dion	77	3	3	75	4	4	76	
English Skills I	Matt	95	5	5	93	4	4	94	
Algebra	Alexicia	92	4	4	70	3	4	81	
Religion I	Sr. Jane	92	3	3	80	4	4	86	
General Science	Sr. Ina	81	3	3	66	4	4	74	
Geography	Wayne	72.9	3	3	71.2	3	3	72.1	
Study Skills	Sr. Jane	84	3	4	75	3	3	80	
		84.84							
G.P.A.					75.74			80.443	



SUBJECT AREAS	TRS. NAME	Q1	E	B	Q2	E	B	1SEM	Q3
English Lit II	Tyler	98	5	5	95	5	5	96.5	
English Skills II	Jessica	95.7	5	5	97	5	5	96	
Geometry	Julia	97.4	4	3	97.8	4	5	97.8	
Religion II	Sr. Fausti	85	4	4	74.5	3	4	79.75	
Health	Sr. Erenca	96	4	5	98	4	5	97	
English Composition	Tyler	97	5	5	94	4	5	95	
Social Studies	Marz	97	4	4	95	4	4	95	
G.P.A.		95.16			93.04			93.864	



# School Supplies

*This year Habel donors and volunteers sent dozens of boxes of books and supplies to isolated and under-resourced public schools across Yap and Chuuk States.*

Each community school in the Outer Islands has its own small public library. The development of this system was a major aim of the Trust Territory, and in recent years the mission has been carried forward by US Peace Corps Volunteers.

These small collections of books serve as the only source of reading material for readers living on remote and isolated atolls. In order to sustain and expand these libraries, Habel supplies local teachers and librarians with regular book donations and school supplies.

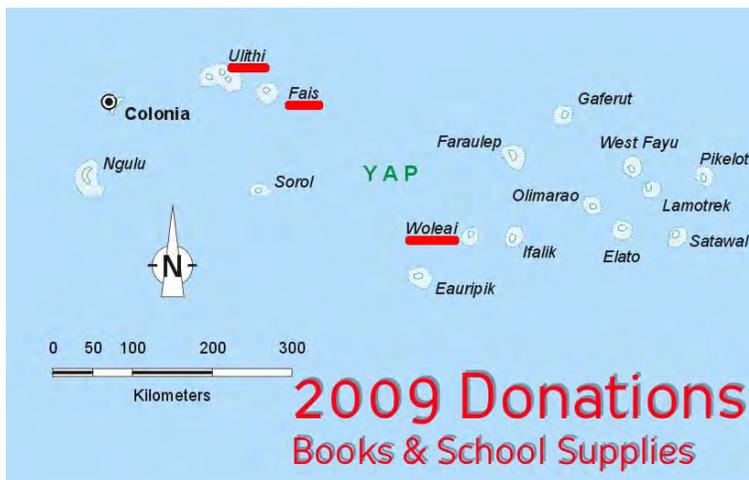
In addition to purchasing and mailing materials for the Outer Island schools, Habel also serves to direct and deliver the donations of other groups and individuals. A significant use of Habel's donations is paying for the shipment of materials such as books, pens, tote bags, t-shirts, and pencils. These shipments often are the only addition the libraries have seen for many years.

This year Habel teamed up with partners including the Robotics Team at Chaminade College Prep High School in West Hills, California. The team collected, packed, and shipped over fifty boxes of text and reading books for students at the Outer Island High School on the Ulithi Atoll. Habel also provided targeted donations to newly placed Peace Corps Volunteers serving as classroom teachers and librarians in the Outer Islands of Yap and Chuuk.





In addition to providing over fifty boxes of school supplies directly to the Outer Island High School (OIHS) on Falalop Island, Uliith Atoll, Habele also sent boxes of classroom materials and instructional resources to newly placed United States Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs).



Recipients included Emily Huriamek on Falalus, Woleai (pictured above), Eric Porter on Falalop, Woleai, Charity “Gita” Drew on Falalop Woleai, and Catherine Pacheco on Mormog, Uliith.

Special thanks to Board Member Regina Raigetel who coordinated the donations to Peace Corps volunteers in the field, as well as Deborah and Amelia Weiss (pictured page 10) who organized

and coordinated the donations from Chaminade Prep with Nancy McIntyre. All donations of books were delivered to the islands through the use of USPS “Media Mail.”



# Language Development

*Next year Habelé will release the first comprehensive Ulithian Dictionary and distribute it freely to students in the Outer Islands of Yap.*

Habelé Directors and volunteers spent 2009 creating a Ulithian-English dictionary for publication and distribution in mid 2010.

This work constitutes the most comprehensive and linguistically complex attempt to document the Ulithian language to date. It includes important developments in speech sounds and a phonological system that make the dictionary useful for both young island students and native English speakers learning Ulithian.



Habelé is committed to delivering materials of high academic and linguistic quality, which display a consistent and intuitive pattern of Roman alphabet spelling. This careful and unprecedented approach allows young island learners to more easily make the difficult transition from reading and writing in their native tongue to mastery of oral and written English.

Until last century, Micronesian islanders had no written languages. Despite numerous attempts by westerners over the course of many decades, Micronesian Outer Island languages such as Ulithian, Woleaian, and Satawalese still lack stable spelling systems. Non-native speakers have found existing language materials to be confusing, inconsistent, and even unhelpful. Local teachers have complained that previous materials developed by outside researchers and local governments have confused and stifled young island students who are working to properly pronounce and spell words.

To best meet the needs of students and teachers, Habelé's experts have developed new and important improvements towards more systematic, and thus predictable, written languages that are more phonetically accurate and more easily learnable for non-native speakers. These innovations include careful depiction of extra word boundaries, adoption of a base-form system of representing words, and updating certain alphabetic characters.

Habelé will provide public and private educators in Yap State with free copies of the dictionary. We will also work to disseminate the dictionary freely to Peace Corps Volunteers and other native English speaking development workers in the Outer Islands. This far-reaching and important project could not have been accomplished without the leadership and encouragement of Mr. Clarence Caldwell "C.C." Guy and Mrs. Lillian Woo, as well as the pro bono linguistic expertise of Mr. Johnny Hancock.

# Finances

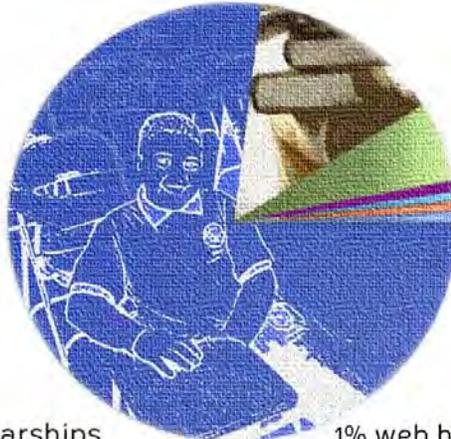
2008 Rollover: \$766.09 Checking  
\$23.97 PayPal  
\$4,564.36 Securities

Donations: \$9,201.95



62% individual donors  
33% board of directors      5% corporations

Expenditures: \$10,511.69



77% scholarships  
14% school supplies & books  
6% office & mailing supplies  
1% web hosting & domain  
1% UPS box rental  
>1% domestic postage  
>1% PayPal fees

2009 Rollover: \$1,464.87 Checking  
\$5,602.89 Securities

# Appendixes

**I. *Pacific Daily News* Article**

**II. National Geographic *Traveler* Article**

**III. IRS Tax Exemption Determination Letter**

**IV. Habele Board of Directors**

# Scholarships awarded to 16 students in FSM

By Faith V. Realica

*Pacific Daily News*  
fvrealica@guampdn.com

Sixteen young scholars from the Federated States of Micronesia have been awarded educational aid under the Habele Outer Island Education.

The students — who received a combined \$7,500 in scholarships — were from the islands of Kutu, Ta, and Lekinioch in Chuuk State, and from Ulithi, Woleai, Ifaluk, Eauripik, Satawal and Fais in Yap State, according to a news release from the program.

Habele, meaning “to be” or “to make,” is an all-volunteer, U.S.-based, nonprofit organization that gives students from the outer islands of Micronesia the opportunity to attend prestigious private schools in the district capitals.

According to the release, Habele teams up with traditional leaders, teachers, community organizations and volunteers to build libraries, provide school supplies, and issue tuition scholarships to students.

The recipients’ families also play a role in the scholar’s education.

The program works with each family to design an educational contract for each recipient. And they must provide transportation and boarding costs, and send report cards and progress reports to Habele.

Students also need to maintain a minimum grade point average to stay in the program.

The first scholarship recipient was awarded in 2003 for Bethania High School in Palau.

## HOW TO HELP

▲ For more information about how you can support a student or provide school materials to outer island Micronesian classrooms, visit [habele.org](http://habele.org) or e-mail [njm@habele.org](mailto:njm@habele.org).

## Donations

Interested individuals who want to donate supplies, such as books, to the Habele scholarship organization can contact the program.

Habele will forward donations to the schools or the program will provide a contact for direct mailing.

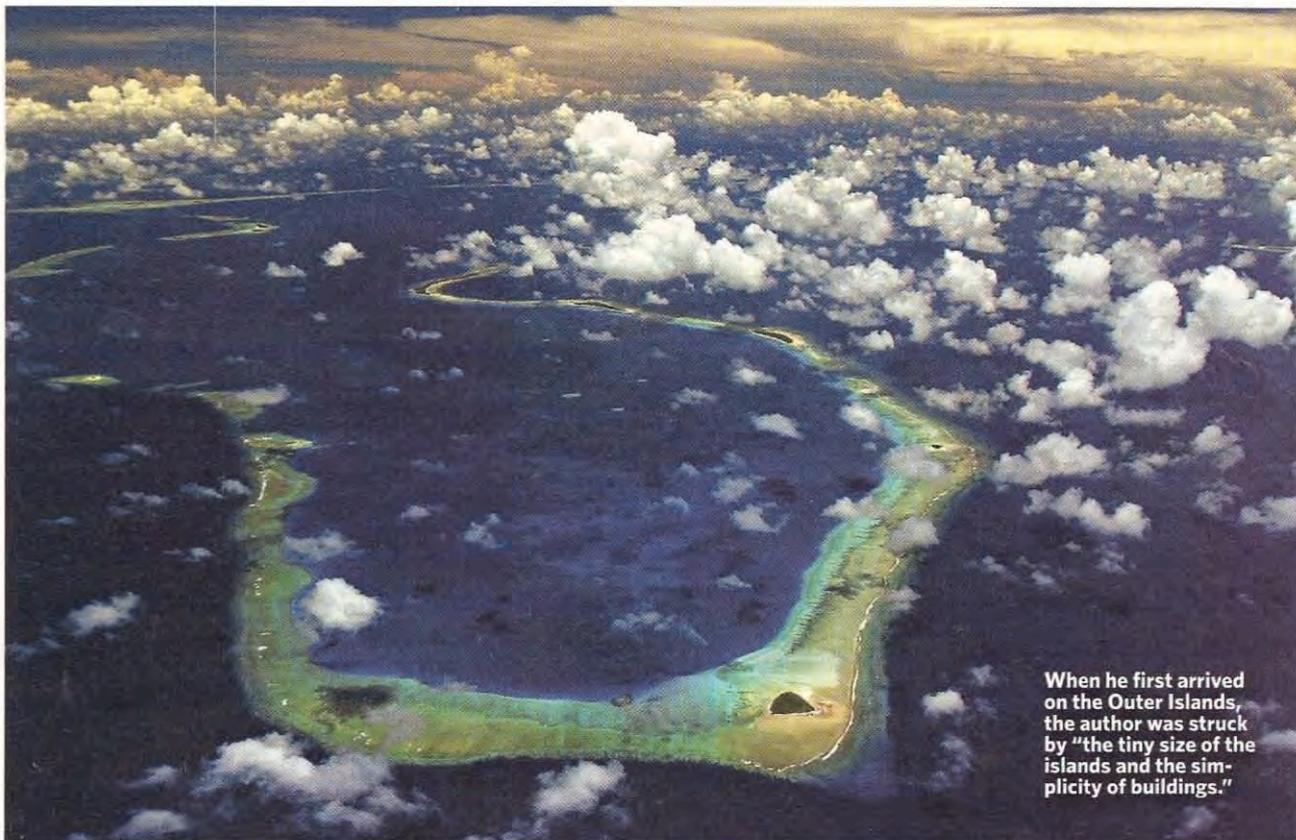
Habele is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service and donations to the program are tax-deductible.

“They’ve been helping a lot of kids from the Micronesian Islands,” said Louis J. Rama, a senior consul at the Federated States of Micronesia Consulate on Guam.

“They’re helping kids whose parents are not able to send them off to better schools. It’s a pretty good program,” he said.

# Way Out and Warmhearted

In remote Micronesia, a strong traditional island culture and clear waters rife with sea life greet a hardy few travelers. BY NEIL MELLEN



When he first arrived on the Outer Islands, the author was struck by "the tiny size of the islands and the simplicity of buildings."

**T**he Outer Islands of Yap are among the most picturesque and remote destinations Western travelers are ever likely to visit. Only a handful of outsiders in any given year pass through these sun-bleached, low-lying coral atolls—14 of them in all, with only a few islands populated permanently.

Travelers who do find their way here dive unsullied reefs alive with sharks, nudibranchs, and brightly striped mandarin fish; deep-sea fish for wahoo, mahi-mahi, and red snapper; and inevitably sample a drink called *falubwa*, also known as tuba, a fermented toddy of coconut sap. The scarcity of visitors and the cultural esteem placed on hospitality ensure that all newcomers feel welcome. As the sun goes down, the men of the various extended families get together and form a drinking circle where they pass around a cup of tuba and recount their exploits of the day. All visitors to the island, both men and women, are eagerly encouraged to join in.

Far off the beaten path, these isolated islands provide a glimpse of a simpler, more sustainable lifestyle. Travelers often find it surprising how the islanders use a few local staples for such a wide variety of needs; the coconut tree, for instance,

can provide everything from baby food to building material.

I particularly remember the day of the funeral for a local chief's wife. The young men of the island of Asor (pop. 60) brought in a huge net full of reef fish for the post-burial feast. As I helped them haul in the net, I cut my toe on the fin of a poisonous fish. My foot first went numb, then a jutting pain began to work up my leg, quickly approaching my groin. An elder summoned a boy and ordered him to fetch the fish that cut me, take out the liver, and rub it on my wound. I felt better within minutes. I admired the insight and ingenuity of the islanders' traditional medicine skills.

Life on this paradise has its inequities and struggles, but people are warmhearted and friendly, and they willingly share their natural bounty. Sitting communally as the sun set, passing a cup of tuba and contributing my own stories, I realized that around this drinking circle the kindness of the Outer Islands people shines the brightest.

*Neil Mellen spent three years in the Outer Islands of Yap as a Peace Corps volunteer. He is a founder and the president of Habele, a nonprofit organization providing scholarships to Outer Islands children.*

#### VITAL STATS Location:

Pacific Ocean east of the Yap Islands

• **Climate:** Tropical

• **Size:** Over 600 miles, mostly ocean

• **Number of islands:** Over 100

• **Number of inhabited islands:** 18

• **Number of islands with electricity:** 3

• **Population:** 4,000-5,000

• **Languages:** Ulithian, Woleaian, English

• **Notable:** The people of the Outer Islands are descendants of Polynesian settlers, not migrants from the Malay Peninsula like those of Yap; Falalop, in the Ulithi atoll, is the only Outer Island with a resort hotel.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
P. O. BOX 2508  
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: **SEP 13 2006**

HABELE OUTER ISLAND EDUCATION FUND  
C/O NEIL MELLEN  
701 GERVAIS ST STE 150-244  
COLUMBIA, SC 29201

Employer Identification Number:  
51-0581553  
DLN:  
206229017  
Contact Person:  
DEL TRIMBLE ID# 31309  
Contact Telephone Number:  
(877) 829-5500  
Accounting Period Ending:  
December 31  
Public Charity Status:  
170(b)(1)(A)(vi)  
Form 990 Required:  
Yes  
Effective Date of Exemption:  
May 4, 2006  
Contribution Deductibility:  
Yes  
Advance Ruling Ending Date:  
December 31, 2010

Dear Applicant:

We are pleased to inform you that upon review of your application for tax exempt status we have determined that you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to you are deductible under section 170 of the Code. You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code. Because this letter could help resolve any questions regarding your exempt status, you should keep it in your permanent records.

Organizations exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Code are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. During your advance ruling period, you will be treated as a public charity. Your advance ruling period begins with the effective date of your exemption and ends with advance ruling ending date shown in the heading of the letter.

Shortly before the end of your advance ruling period, we will send you Form 8734, Support Schedule for Advance Ruling Period. You will have 90 days after the end of your advance ruling period to return the completed form. We will then notify you, in writing, about your public charity status.

Please see enclosed Information for Exempt Organizations Under Section 501(c)(3) for some helpful information about your responsibilities as an exempt organization.

If you distribute funds to other organizations, your records must show whether they are exempt under section 501(c)(3). In cases where the recipient organization is not exempt under section 501(c)(3), you must have evidence the funds will be used for section 501(c)(3) purposes.

Letter 1045 (DO/CG)

## Board of Directors

**Neil Mellen** is President of the Board of the Directors. He is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, and a former Peace Corps Volunteer (Yap Outer Islands 2002-05). Mr. Mellen is a member of the South Carolina Educational Broadband Service Commission. He also serves as the Communications Director at South Carolinians for Responsible Government, a non-partisan political advocacy group. Mr. Mellen has a Masters Degree in Philosophy.

**Alexander Sidles** is Secretary of the Habele Board Directors. He is a former classroom teacher with experience in Chuuk and Yap States (2000-03). Mr. Sidles is a Staff Non-Commissioned Officer in the United States Marine Corps and a veteran of four deployments to Iraq, where he earned a Combat Action Ribbon and a Purple Heart.

**Regina Raglmar Raigetal** is a member of the Habele Board of Directors. She attended Xavier High School and the College of Micronesia. She serves as the United States Peace Corps' Field Representative in the State of Yap. She has also worked for the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JICA) as well as the Federated States of Micronesia National Office of Planning and Budget.

**Marc McNamara** is Treasurer of the Board of Directors. He is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and a former Peace Corps Volunteer who served as a community health adviser and classroom teacher (Republic of Madagascar 2003-2005). Mr. McNamara is an analyst at the United States Department of State. He has a Master's degree in public administration.

**Maureen Nunn** is a member of the Habele Board of Directors. She is an author, teen guidance counselor, and award-winning television host. She is active in a range in of nonprofit, philanthropic, and education organizations in the greater Los Angeles area and has participated in Faith in Practice, a non-profit group that works in Guatemala. Mrs. Nunn is the proud mother of five children. She holds a Bachelors and Master's degree from the University of Southern California.

