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Just One Frickin' Day Is All It Takes: Fashion Gives Back

Posted August 25, 2008 | 07:14 AM (EST)



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Infrastructure is something I have taken completely for granted. Paved roads, highways, street signs, traffic lights ... these all translate into efficient communication, transportation, and safety of citizens in most parts of the world. What would an ambulance do without a proper road? What would a hospital do without electricity?



A satellite image of nighttime Africa: a continent virtually without electricity.

This is hard to imagine for anyone -- and one would think it is even harder to imagine for someone who works in fashion, like me. Let's be honest, the reputation of the fashion world is not exactly on par with those of humanitarian organizations. But when I found out that a group of doctors and solar engineers were working together to build a solar powered hospital in Burundi, I knew exactly who to call for help: seven internationally renown designers.

Today we are launching JustOneFrickinDay.com, a site dedicated to helping some 60,000 Burundians gain access to energy and proper health care - pulled together by a small group of people across the globe world and from all walks of life.

This all began in the spring of 2007 when Bob Freling, founder of Solar Electric Light Fund (www.self.org), handed me a book titled *Mountains Beyond Mountains* and told me: "This guy, Dr. Paul Farmer, is a legend ... We have started projects with him building the first solar electric hospitals in Africa, can you believe it?" I couldn't. But reading the fantastic book made me see the relationship between energy issues and health care.

Bob later told me more about Burundi, where the first hospital was to be built: still in reparation after the neighboring Rwandan genocide, voted poorest in the world by the World Bank, limited infrastructure, no reliable electric grid, 156 patients for every doctor...

I wanted to help, but wondered how much the hospital project would cost. It's not exactly easy to raise a million dollars, much less ten million. United States argues that solar energy is too expensive as a mainstream energy source, so I reasoned that the costs would be astronomical. I learned quickly that this was not the case.

"Our projected costs are \$450,000, which would electrify the whole hospital for its entire existence," Bob said me.

Just \$450,000.

Putting together a single fashion show can cost about \$100,000. Each New York Fashion week - which happens twice a year - must cost many millions.

My boyfriend, James Marshall, and I thought: "What if we could create a site and ask people to donate one day of their salary?" (Hence, the term "just one frickin' day.") Perception among my friends is that if you can't afford to donate \$1,000 or more to a worthy cause, it's simply not worth it.

We did simple math to prove otherwise. If someone makes \$30,000 a year, they make approximately \$82.00 a day (we broke it down into 365 to make it easy). So if we could get about 5,500 people to donate \$82.00 we would make enough money to get solar energy to the hospital, and to the Burundian men, women, and children currently without access to health care.

A website would allow us to reach out to that many people. Two web designer friends, Paul Addy and Francis Lavery, volunteered to create our site, complete with a calculator that automatically breaks down any salary into daily and hourly payments. JustOneFrickinDay.com was born.



Rag and Bone limited edition t-Shirts available at JustOneFrickinDay.com.

JOFD's team spans the globe, digitally connected by emails and Skype. Despite our completely different lives and experiences, everyone involved with the project is united by a belief that health care and access to energy is a universal human right. Issues of energy and health care are a collective responsibility, whether you are a leader or citizen, city-dweller or farmer, a doctor or designer.

Just One Frickin' Day is all it takes.

Edited by Lesley M. M. Blume