

## References (*Using Our Earthly Endeavors*)

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## Until They Know – **We are Sancocho** by Meghan Roddy, Pharm.D.



Meet Brad Jenkins, the founder of *Until They Know* (UTK). UTK is a mission organization in the heart of Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. UTK was officially founded in 2011, though the founders have been involved since May of 2008. This is the mission statement of UTK: *Until They Know exists to assist the church in its efforts to proclaim the message of the Gospel of Christ and encourage sustainability for individuals and communities by developing biblical community.* I can attest first hand to UTK's commitment to developing communities.

Community and relationships are what matters in the Dominican Republic.

Relationships are so important that the first phrase I learned upon landing in the Dominican Republic was "Somos sancocho". Somos sancocho literally translates to "We are soup" in English. Sancocho is a soup designed for family gatherings and celebrations. Each family in a community will bring something to put in the sancocho pot – meat, vegetables or spices – and it is all thrown into one pot, like what we call "gumbo" in Louisiana. There is always something for everyone to enjoy in sancocho. UTK uses the sancocho tradition and meaning and applies it to their community-building ministry. Everyone has something from God to offer such as abilities, talents and spiritual gifts. Each person brings what he or she has and adds it to the community of God, and everyone benefits from the unity of all believers coming together. Here is one way that UTK is helping build Godly communities:

While I was in the Dominican Republic, I visited many villages as part of a medical team to serve those in need of medical attention. The first village we visited

was Munoz, and when we arrived in the village, we saw this scene below. Many of us were hesitant to purchase anything from them until Brad told us about them. That is when I learned that UTK is involved in micro financing businesses in the Dominican Republic.

Micro financing businesses is a way that UTK helps the Dominican Republic in a powerful way. It empowers and gives





pride to those who start the businesses, as well as sustains the community for years to come. Many businesses have been started as a result of the program that Brad initiated, and thirteen loans have been completely repaid. Some of the businesses include an artisan business for paintings, metal crafts and simple jewelry, clothing and accessories shops, pig, chicken and goat farms, a sound system for hire, school supplies and copy shops, and fishing nets to provide jobs for fishermen. A water filter business is in process, as well as other businesses to partner with the water filter business to benefit the local communities.

Brad takes the time to educate individuals interested in starting a business. They must complete a program before a loan will be given. In this program they learn things such as budgeting, managing inventory, and how to market their products. A typical model involves a group of people applying for a business loan together to ensure accountability and appropriate usage of funds (i.e. not using funds to pay individual debt). Most of the loans range from \$150 – \$250, and they are paid back within one year. It usually takes approximately 8 – 12 months to start a business once the process has begun.

All of the principles taught in the program are based on Scripture. Some of the Scriptures used include: Colossians 3:23 ESV – “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men”; Proverbs 3:9 ESV – “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce”; and Proverbs 10:4 ESV – “A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.” UTK understands the importance of putting God as the focus of anything, be it a business endeavor or choosing the right persons to visit with a medical team.

The businesses that have been started through UTK are far reaching in the Dominican Republic, but there is a specific one that I would like to highlight – Blanco’s Kids (pictured above). Blanco took out three consecutive loans for \$180, \$215 and then \$500. Each of these loans was paid back in one year. He initially purchased 10 pigs, and the farm has grown to have 45-70 pigs at all times. He has now added chickens and goats. With this business, Blanco provides and funds care for 32 children in foster care and pays schoolteachers. Because Brad followed the Lord’s prompting, these children are healthy and receiving the education they deserve and need.

UTK is effectively spreading the Gospel of Christ in many ways, all while empowering those in the Dominican Republic to make a difference in their personal lives, as well as their home country. I am blessed to know and to have served with such world changers!

You can stay up to date with UTK on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UntilTheyKnow?fref=ts> †

*I have always felt that God has called me to be a long-term medical missionary in Africa, and I am eagerly waiting for the day that He opens those doors for me. I met Brad Jenkins in April 2014 on a medical mission outreach through my university. After attending the Global Missions Health Conference in 2013, I was overwhelmed with thoughts about how to make short-term mission trips meaningful in the long term. We learned a lot about “when helping hurts” at the conference, and I was thrilled to learn about UTK’s commitment to community building and long-term presence in the Dominican Republic. Visiting the Dominican Republic taught me a lot, and I am excited to implement those things in my future ministry. I hope this story inspires many people who think their dreams are too large to accomplish, just the way it has inspired me! No dream is too big when God has placed it within our hearts!*



*Meghan Roddy*