



## HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

---

From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

# Fall 2008

### In This Issue

#### In This Issue

- :: A Season of Storms for Haiti
- :: HELP Students Win US Scholarships
- :: Giving Back: HELP's first Alumni Contribution
- :: HELP Attends the Clinton Global Initiative
- :: Spotlight on Students: HELP Alumnus Joseph Florenal
- :: Six for Sixty for HELP

Dear Friends,

With this edition of our newsletter, we are aiming for a more engaging and reader-friendly format--part of a larger effort to improve our communication with supporters, actual and potential. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback on these changes, or with any other comments on the program. In Haiti, in the midst the unfortunate news of death and devastation, our students continue to excel. Two students won scholarships to complete their undergraduate degrees in the United States, and all of the seniors who graduated in 2008 are employed as accountants, bankers, lawyers and the like. As times grow tougher both in Haiti and in more prosperous countries around the world, today more than ever an investment in our students offers one of the best returns anywhere. Please consider donating today.

## A Season of Storms for Haiti



As many of you know, Haiti was hit by four consecutive storms over a three week period in August and September. Storms Fay, Gustav, Ike and Hanna hit Haiti with varying force from August 16th to September 5th. The most devastating storm was Hannah, which hit the central part of Haiti and caused extensive damage in the Artibonite Valley and the Central Plateau. Below are first-person accounts of how these storms affected HELP students and their families.

## Jerry Fevrin Helps Family During Hannah



It was 11pm on the first day of September and it had been raining hard in Port-au-Prince. The ring on my phone woke me up. Hurricane Hannah was tearing through Gonaives, our

## Giving Back: HELP's First Alumni Contribution



At a ceremony at the HELP center on September 22, the HELP Alumni Committee (pictured above) presented HELP with a check for \$270. This, along with Florenal Joseph's contribution at the HELP Happy Hour in July in New York City, are the first contribution from HELP alumni. Our thanks to the HELP alumni for their support of current and future HELP students.

## HELP Attends the Clinton Global Initiative

HELP was invited to attend this year's Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) September 24 - 27 in New York City. CGI is President Clinton's effort to bring together philanthropists, governments and NGO's to address four of the key development challenges today: education, environment and climate change, health and poverty reduction. In addition to Haitian President René Preval (pictured right with me) and other heads of state, this year's attendees included Bono, Tony Blair, Grameen Bank founder and Nobel Laureate

Continued...

hometown, where my mother, sister, brother and cousin lived. On the phone, my sister told me that her house had flooded so quickly, none of her family could get to the roof to escape the rising waters. Then, her cell phone battery died and I lost contact with her and my family for the next three days.

I didn't know what to do. I called HELP Director Garry Delice and he calmed me down. We found out later that our mom had figured out that help wasn't coming. She decided that to save the family she had to leave Gonaives. All roads were flooded. No transportation was available. They walked through knee-high water for miles, past several bridges that had collapsed. At long last, far from Gonaives, they found a bus that was traveling to the capital.

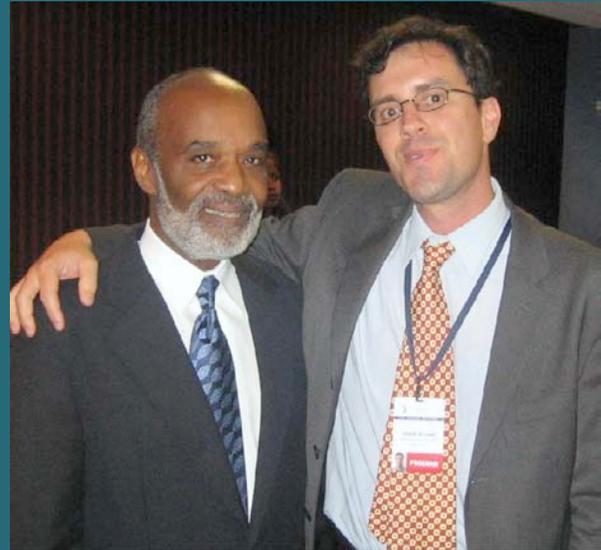
They left behind what little they had, beds, clothing, pots and pans -- all that was lost in the mud. A neighbor later told us that the roof of our house collapsed under the weight of the water.

Even today access to Gonaives is almost impossible. Our family doesn't know when they will get back to their homes. In the meantime, they live with one of our mother's friends here in Port-au-Prince. My brother, also a HELP student, and I are pooling our HELP stipends to make sure they have enough to eat every day.

*Jerry Fevrin is a second year accounting student at Quisqueya. This is the second time in four years that his family has been affected by hurricanes. During Hurricane Jeanne in 2004 he and his family spent several days living on the roof of their house. HELP has temporarily increased Jerry's stipend to help his family get back on its feet.*

Continued...

Muhammad Yunus, Paul Farmer of Partners in Health, and Yele Haiti founder Wyclef Jean.



At the conference, CGI member John McAslan of the London-based architecture firm McAslan & Partners ([www.mcaslan.co.uk](http://www.mcaslan.co.uk)), pledged pro-bono services for a "green" renovation of a historic building in Port-au-Prince that HELP would like to buy to house a permanent student center.

CGI was an inspiring event due in large part to the impressive people I met, including Grace Akolo of Uganda who was abducted from her school at the age of 15 and pressed into the service of the Lord's Revolutionary Army, eventually escaping seven months later in the midst of a battle and returning to her school. Akolo credits the teachers at her school with giving her the confidence and skills to overcome her traumatic experience. She now supports efforts to educate former child soldiers in her home country.

## HELP's Director Responds to Hurricanes



The hurricane season, from June to November, is a dangerous time in Haiti but I wasn't expecting the disaster to be so great this year, when four Hurricanes hit Haiti. I knew it would be tough when my phone rang at 4 a.m. on Sept. 2. Jerry Fevrin called to tell me that Gonaives was flooded, and many homes were under water. Fevrin was worried about his family. My mind raced to four years ago when Hurricane Jeanne slammed into Gonaives, flooding the city and leaving homes and streets buried in mud.

Two days later, it was Dany Selme's turn to panic. Her lodging in a suburb east of Port-au-Prince was threatened by high water. Dany, who's finishing her thesis in economics, needed a place to stay. All the beds at the HELP student house were taken so, after consulting with my wife, we took Dany into our home. We had no other option because she needed to be safe. Soon, Dany, along with other HELP students, will move into a second student house that we have rented close to the center.

Continued...

## Spotlight on Students: HELP Alumnus Joseph Florenal

Once without hope, I am now contemplating a life filled with possibilities. I am studying for a master's degree in biotechnology at Brooklyn College in the United States and I plan to work on biofuels in Haiti.



Without HELP, I would still be without hope. After graduating from high school in Haiti in 1996, I began to think about college. I come from a poor family from St. Michel in northern Haiti and I was lucky to find a donor who sponsored my first four semesters in agriculture at Quisqueya University. But my sponsor left the country and couldn't continue to support me. That meant the end of my tuition, and I thought, the end of my studies. I was working as a teacher but I didn't make nearly enough money to take care of my family, and pay tuition.

Once again, I was hopeless - until I applied for a HELP scholarship and was accepted. In 2002 I completed my degree. In the summer of 2004, I received another scholarship and came to study at Brooklyn College. This past spring, I received a bachelor's of science in biology. My interest in science is boundless, and HELP has stoked that interest. Thanks to the opportunity HELP has given me, I am confident that my scientific work will build a better world.

I am proof that HELP is preparing a new category of Haitians to lead our country. I now volunteer for HELP, speaking at events to  
Continued...

*Garry Delice is the Executive Director of HELP in Haiti.*

HELP can certainly put your contributions to good use these days, assisting our students and their families who were affected by the storms. If you would like to donate directly to the affected areas you can also consider Partners in Health ([www.pih.org](http://www.pih.org)), which has provided effective services on the ground for more than 20 years.

## HELP Students Win US Scholarships



Samuel Zephyr and Marc Rubens (both 4th year accounting students at Quisqueya University) were among the seven top students in a competition to complete their undergraduate

degrees at Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) in Joplin, Missouri. Under a U.S. Government-sponsored partnership, Quisqueya will receive support to strengthen its accounting and business departments while the top sophomores in these departments will be able to spend the final two years of university in Joplin. Zephyr and Rubens credit HELP's ESL classes for their selection, as an English test was part of the selection process. It is certainly a credit to our staff and students that two of the seven students chosen are from HELP.

raise awareness and hopefully some funds. HELP students are the future of Haiti. We can't claim that we will be the only solution, but we believe that education is the key to improving Haiti. As a country we're moving backward, not forward, despite the educated class we have there. The difference between the old educated class in Haiti and us is that we plan to use education to change our country, not just ourselves. HELP makes us discover the true value of honesty and love. I recall these lyrics from a song that says we have "one life to live." With HELP I can say we have "many lives to rescue."

## Six for Sixty for HELP

**Greta Greathouse has had a long career in the for-profit and non-profit banking sector around the world.**

She now runs a U.S. Government-funded microcredit project in Haiti, which has hired several HELP students as office and field interns.



Greta is celebrating her 60th birthday this year, and in order to include as many of her friends as possible, she decided to hold a series of parties in six cities (NY, Brussels, Haiti, Morocco, Miami and Washington DC). Instead of travelling around the globe collecting presents, Greta has asked her friends to donate to HELP. After three parties (NY, Brussels and Haiti) the effort has raised \$3,000 towards a HELP scholarship. Many thanks to Greta for a fun and generous idea!

Understandably the current financial and political turmoil is pushing many of us to be more cautious about spending our hard-earned money. I hope that the success stories of Florenal, Dany, Samuel, Marc and the other HELP students will remind you that HELP is one of the most cost-effective ways of breaking the cycle of poverty. Your donations amidst uncertainty means all the more to these students who continue to show themselves deserving of our support.

Thank you,

**Conor Bohan**  
**Haitian Education & Leadership Program**