



**H E L P**

**HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

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From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

# HELP Fall 2009 Newsletter

## *A Season of Thanks*

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Dear Friends,

At HELP, it's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day tasks required to keep us moving ahead, so these newsletters provide a welcome opportunity to look at the big picture and reflect on our many successes. In August, we sent Stanley Clermont to Colorado to visit with HELP donors from the Haitian Timoun Foundation. Stanley represented HELP so well that our friends in Colorado joked that they didn't want to send him back. HELP alum Gina Francois is now the chief accountant for the largest Red Cross office in the hemisphere. And the feedback we continue to receive on HELP interns from local employers leads us to believe that this success will not be singular.

Of course, the greatest success is in sponsoring as many deserving students as possible – and this year we welcome an all-time high of 110, including 27 incoming students chosen from an highly competitive pool of 350 applicants. All of this is thanks to tremendous support from you in the face of unprecedented economic uncertainty. We are inspired by your vote of confidence in HELP and our students, and we invite you to continue to work with us to create even more success stories in a place where they are all too rare.

Conor

## HELP-Nominated Gingerbread Houses on World Monuments Fund 2010 Watchlist



*Bois Verna Gingerbread House*

In October, the World Monuments Fund announced that the HELP-nominated Gingerbread houses of Port-au-Prince earned a spot on the group's 2010 Watch List, a biennial list of the world's most endangered architectural sites.

The Gingerbread houses combine Caribbean and French influences to create a uniquely Haitian architecture featuring timber frames with brick infill, tall louvered windows and doors, and expansive verandas. Their most striking feature is the intricately patterned woodwork. The style was prominent from around 1880 to 1925. Unfortunately, there has been no concerted preservation movement, and these houses show the resulting decay and neglect.

Our place on the Watch List will bring exposure and support to these crumbling landmarks, and help our campaign to purchase and renovate one of these historic houses to create the HELP Center of the future. To read more about this effort, check out this [Financial Times article](#) featuring an interview with HELP Executive Director, Conor Bohan.

## Moving Mountains: Haitian Timoun Foundation Colorado Hosts HELP Student

*In August, the Haitian Timoun Foundation (HTF) invited HELP student Stanley Clermont to visit churches and schools in Littleton, Colorado to share his experience in Haiti. The following chronicle of Stanley's trip first appeared in Moving Mountains, the HTF newsletter.*

Stanley Clermont of the Haitian Education and Leadership Program was the featured speaker at HTF-Colorado's donor celebration in August. Not only is HTF enabling Stanley to obtain a degree in electrical engineering, but Stanley serves as an inspiration to us. He already has a job in place and hopes to establish himself to the point that he can someday pay for his teenage sister's college education.



*Stanley Clermont speaking to students in CO*

Stanley was a magnet for everyone who heard him speak. While in Colorado, he spoke to the fifth grade classes at two local elementary schools. His presentations compared a day in the life of a Haitian student to that of an American student. The children were happy to be included in his interactive discussions. He finished the day speaking to two "Cultures and Commerce" classes at a local middle school. Here his presence was even more impactful, spreading awareness and a desire to make a difference to those in attendance.

## Partying With a Purpose: HELP Fall Fundraiser in San Francisco and Miami



*Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco*

In 2009, HELP kicked its fundraising up a notch, holding four events – the most recent in San Francisco on September 24<sup>th</sup>, and in Miami on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Our long-time friend Matthew Millman hosted our first West Coast fundraiser at the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), introducing HELP to the San Francisco Bay Area and raising nearly \$10K for the organization. Matthew writes:

“The event featured great live music from Afro Combo, seriously delicious catered food from Celestin’s Pan-Caribbean Restaurant in Sacramento, specialty Mojitos and other



*Afro Combo Band at HELP's SF Fundraiser*

drinks served up by the generous folks at the Bubble Lounge, a spirited silent auction, and exclusive after-hours access to the museum. I was told that people never danced at these benefit parties, but the music and dancing ran right up until the museum kicked us out and everyone genuinely seemed to enjoy themselves.

Among the high points were speeches from HELP students Marc Rubens Claude and Samuel Zephir, who traveled to San Francisco from their study abroad programs in Missouri specifically for the event. Speaking to a crowd who generally knew little about HELP or Haiti, they powerfully conveyed the challenges they faced growing up in Haiti and the impact HELP has made on their education and their lives. Many thanks go to MoAD and event co-sponsor, the Bubble Lounge. The event was personally very satisfying for me, and I look forward to working on the second annual benefit party next year!”



*HELP supporters cutting the rug in SF*

The Miami event, hosted by HELP board member Yves Colon and his wife, Melissa Moonves, also raised awareness and support for HELP. Yves writes:

“Against a background of giant fanciful sculptures, about 75 Miamians gathered at the studio of renowned Haitian artist Edouard

*Continued...*

Duval-Carrié in the Little Haiti district. The venue was a hit with all who came. Attendees took in Duval-Carrié's large, vivid paintings and sculptures of figures from Haiti's Vodou pantheon and dined on Haitian food while listening to traditional Haitian music.



*RPCV's Lisa Frankel & husband Tom in Miami*

The event raised nearly \$10K, which included sales from silent auction of "Tainted Party Girl," a painting donated by Duval-Carrié, and "Innocence," a photograph donated by Miami Herald photographer Carl Juste."

HELP is grateful to the host committee members, volunteers, and attendees who helped to make both events fun and successful!

## The Future of Haiti: HELP Student Success Stories

According to the statistics, nowhere in the hemisphere is it harder to find work than in Haiti. However, armed with the proper training and attitude, HELP students continue to flourish after graduation, maintaining a 100 percent employment rate and garnering praise from employers and colleagues alike.

As an accounting major, Gina Francois distinguished herself with the highest GPA among HELP students, and she continues to excel in the work force. After only 18 months in her post as the junior accountant for the American Red Cross Caribbean HQ in Port-au-Prince, Gina was recently promoted to chief accountant.



*Gina Francois at the American Red Cross Office*

In a show of gratitude, Gina made a generous donation to HELP out of her first paycheck. Not coincidentally, the Red Cross chose another HELP graduate, Ermine Cibile, to fill the junior accountant position.

Livens Charles excelled this summer at his job with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) office in St. Marc. Now in his fourth year of a civil engineering degree, Livens was assigned to a difficult bridge construction project, an incredible vote of confidence on the part of his employers. At the end of the summer, Livens' supervisor praised HELP, saying, "Thank you so much for your great work educating young people in Haiti. It is really inspiring to meet the next generation of Haitians armed with the tools that they need to not only succeed, but to change their country for the better."

## HELP Inspires New Donors To Invest in Haiti's Future

We asked, and you answered! In August, HELP's matching gift challenge came to an end, raising \$6K over our original \$25K goal. Our anonymous challenge donor was inspired to match the total amount raised, bringing the grand total to \$62K!

Also inspired by the passion, integrity and talent of our students, several significant donors have recently joined the HELP family of supporters, allowing HELP to expand to an all-time high of 110 scholarships this school year.

In October, the Clinton Family Foundation, the personal family foundation of President and Secretary of State Clinton, awarded HELP a \$25K grant, providing five fully funded scholarships for HELP's incoming freshman class.

After meeting with HELP earlier this year, Reeta Roy, President of the Mastercard Foundation, was moved to personally sponsor a HELP student, providing a full scholarship and "the promise of HELP" to one of our talented scholars.

The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation, committed supporters of education efforts worldwide, pledged \$125K over five years, to fully fund undergraduate education for five students.

During his visit to the HELP center in the spring, President Clinton said that HELP is one of the programs that show that success is possible in Haiti. We are so grateful to our generous donors, who allow our students to make that success a reality.

**Donate Now**

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