



**H E L P**

## HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

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From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

# HELP Fall 2010 Newsletter

## *Rebuilding for the Future*

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Dear Friends,

As the weeks and months go by and Haiti continues to struggle with the effects of the January earthquake, we are forced to reckon with just how devastating and destructive it was. Thanks to your support and the heroic work of our staff, HELP was able to quickly engage our students in the relief efforts, assisting tens of thousands of Haitians over a period of several months. Some students were back in school as early as April, and HELP students conducted the largest recruiting effort ever, resulting in our largest freshman class to date.

However, some days it seems like the recovery has barely started. Hundreds of thousands of people still live in tents in public parks, back yards, back alleys and highway median strips. They search for water by day and try to avoid the nighttime rains which flood the aging tents, or worse, simply collapse them. And although students are back in school, the universities still need to be planned and rebuilt.

True recovery will take years, not least because Haiti has one of the highest rates of brain drain in the world. This dark cloud's silver lining is that there is abundant economic opportunity in Haiti for people with the proper education. As the first HELP student, Dr. Isemonde Joseph, said, "Education must be the cornerstone of the new Haiti." As we struggle to overcome the devastation of the earthquake, we have an opportunity to lay this cornerstone together.

Conor

## Universities Reopen as HELP Expands



*HELP's Incoming Freshman Class*

The universities started to reopen their doors in April and May, though most with limited course offerings, and many classes were held in tents or at professors' homes. Because of the disruption, the "spring" semester didn't finish until August, and the 2010/2011 school year will begin in October at most schools. The exception is the badly damaged State University, which will complete the 2009/2010 academic year in December, and start the following year in January 2011.



*HELP Students Michel-Ange Dagrain & Theodule Jean-Baptiste Recruiting for HELP*

As soon as secondary schools reopened, HELP students hit the road to recruit our next class. Under the direction of Marie

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## Partners Support HELP's Recovery

We are pleased to announce the following grants from partners who share our conviction that university education is a critical component of rebuilding Haiti.



The **MasterCard Foundation** is already a HELP partner and is now working with us on a new initiative: funding the development of a

5-year strategic plan and IT upgrades for our new Student Center. The Foundation will also support scholarships for seven incoming students. The Foundation's work is based on their belief that "every person has the potential to transform their lives and improve the lives of their families and communities". HELP scholarships definitely transform the lives of each recipient and their families, so we are grateful for the partnership of this like-minded organization.



The **Open Society Foundations (OSF)** is a new partner for HELP. A grant of \$75,000 will provide scholarship support for fifteen finishing students. Of the many ways that the earthquake disrupted lives, an unforeseen one was the possibility that students would not complete their degrees due to an extended school calendar. This extra time requires more financial resources than either the students or HELP had planned for. Thanks to the insight of our friends at OSF, our students in their final year of study will complete their degrees and we are confident will sustain HELP's successful record of 100% employment for graduates.

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Montout (4th year, education), HELP students visited over 230 schools and spoke to over 140,000 high school students around the country.

Due to the large number of applications last year, we raised our requirements this year, accepting applications only from students who had an A or A+ average in secondary school. Out of 150 eligible applications, HELP accepted 55 new students, increasing our student body by 50%!

These new students began orientation in September in the new Student Center, a nice leafy property just a block from the old Center. Of course, we couldn't do any of this without your support. We look forward to introducing some of our new students to you and sharing their successes in the years to come.

## HELP Alum Florenal Joseph Envisions Biofuels in Haiti's Future



HELP Alum Florenal Joseph presenting his lab's research at the AFOSR 2010 Bioenergy Review

We recently caught up with HELP alum Florenal Joseph, who's completing his Master's degree at Brooklyn College and participated in the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) Bioenergy Review in July:

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Another new partner is California-based Direct Relief

**International (DRI)**. DRI, whose mission is to improve "the quality of life for people affected by poverty, disaster, and civil unrest", recognized that local Haitian non-profits were not the major recipients of the millions of dollars raised for earthquake relief. The organization created a "community grant" fund for local non-profits who played an important role in the relief efforts out of the media spotlight. In spite of the tragic loss of life and other challenges, HELP integrated over 80 students in the recovery effort while providing food, transportation and housing for staff and students. Like the February grant from the Ekta Foundation, \$25,000 from DRI enabled HELP to fund our relief efforts without dipping into our scholarship funds. Our thanks to DRI for its understanding of the needs and role of Haitian organizations.

## WAYS TO GIVE: Think Outside the Envelope!

While gifts of cash and stock are always welcome, there are other ways to contribute to HELP that you may not have thought about:

**CREDIT CARD POINTS:** If you have an American Express, Bank of America, Capital One, Chase or Citibank credit card and earn reward points, you can donate them to your favorite charity. This article (<http://bucks.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/27/how-to-donate-reward-points-to-help-haiti/>) provides additional information, but please check with your particular institution on the rules regarding which charities you can



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**HELP:** *Can you tell us about your current research using algae as a source of fuel?*

**Florenal Joseph:** Conventional biofuels are harvested from corn-based crops for ethanol, and rapeseed or palm for oil. However, food costs are rising because farm land is used to produce biofuels instead of food. Microalgae is a large and diverse group of organisms--they exist in a wide range of habitats from fresh to hyper-saline water and low to high temperatures, and they have much higher biomass and oil productivity than other plants. This makes them a plentiful, viable and potentially better source of biofuel than land-based crops.

**HELP:** *What is the Air Force Bioenergy Review?*

**FJ:** The AFOSR organizes an annual conference in which the directors of AFOSR-funded projects present their work. As an Assistant Researcher on one of these projects, I did a poster presentation on our research.

**HELP:** *What did participation in the review mean for you, as a researcher?*

**FJ:** This conference is really well-fitted to what I am doing. I learned a lot from the other scientists who were at the conference. Moreover, it helps me to have a broader view on cultivating microalgae for not only biofuels, but also to learn about the use of microalgae by-products.

**HELP:** *How can you apply what you are researching to the further development of Haiti?*

**FJ:** Scientists in Haiti are working on alternative biofuels - I know of one major

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designate to receive your contribution.



**AIRLINE MILES:** HELP staff are often on the road, traveling to and from Haiti, and to HELP events across the U.S.

Paying for these trips with donated miles allows us to sponsor more students in Haiti. Check out this article (<http://www.johnnyjet.com/folder/charity.html>) to learn more about donating your airline miles to HELP.

### SPECIAL RECOGNITION



*Students in the back yard of the HELP Center. Photo by Jake Price.*

We would also like to acknowledge another method of giving to HELP:

donating time and

talent. Recently we've been the recipient of in-kind support from talented photographers Jake Price, Ray Tolliver and Colby Brown. We've benefited from a wonderful selection of their photos from Haiti, which make our work come alive. We thank them for giving so generously of their talents.

investor involved in the production of biodiesel using the Jatropha plant. It would be even better if we could have more. I have a lot of ideas about building a biotechnology center in Haiti to help my country move forward. I am so grateful to learn all the techniques here in United States, but it would be interesting to apply these techniques in the most needy areas; and Haiti is one.

***HELP: What are the HELP resources you feel have helped you in your Master's program?***

***FJ:*** My story is not new to HELP. This organization not only helped me achieve my dream of an education, but today they are providing scholarships to the most needy and intelligent students in Haiti. Now, while I am finishing my Master's, I am in the process of applying for my PhD. This dream would not be possible without HELP.

In the midst of the most severe worldwide recession in 90 years, and natural disasters reducing Haiti's GDP by 20% over the past four years, HELP has completed our most successful fundraising year ever, enabling us to increase our student body by 50%! This is a testament to the dedication of our friends around the world as well as to the dedication of our staff and students in Haiti. Over the past year, we have been approached by several foundations that have been referred to us by our supporters. These referrals have resulted in grants totaling over \$100,000. In addition to your financial support, you have been a priceless source of positive publicity, which directly creates opportunities for more deserving young men and women in Haiti.

Mesi anpil, thank you,

**Conor**

**Please Consider Donating Today!**