



## Spring 2012 Updates

Dear Friends,

In the winter 2011 newsletter, I wrote about the new opportunities HELP students have to travel and study abroad. This newsletter features the happy complement: foreigners who have been captivated by Haiti through HELP.

Sandra Macías del Villar tells us how her experience as a summer intern in 2008 spurred her to found her own scholarship fund and why she keeps coming back to Haiti. HELP ESL Instructor Stephanie Rapp writes about being swept away in a multi-city, multi-week Carnival tour, and our new friends from Kenya talk about “quickly falling in love with Haiti and HELP.”

Although it’s not part of HELP’s mission to introduce visitors to Haiti’s lively and beautiful culture, it turns out that it’s a fortunate accident of our work, and one in which our students often take the lead, as you can see from the stories below.

Once again, all of this is possible only because of you. We at HELP are continually, and pleasantly, surprised at all the good things that come from your support.

Thank you,

Conor

### From Kenya to Haiti

#### GLOBAL STUDENT EXCHANGE AT HELP



This past November, we welcomed a team from the Global Give Back Circle (GGBC) to the HELP Student Center in Port-au-Prince for a 10-day exchange and training program facilitated by The MasterCard Foundation. GGBC’s mission of guiding disadvantaged girls to complete their education, gain marketable skills, and become agents of change has much in common with HELP’s goals. The visit was designed to bring together our complementary scholarship organizations and to expand HELP’s existing mentorship program using the GGBC model.

The GGBC team that visited HELP was composed of Assistant Project Coordinator

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#### Matching Gift Success

As many of you know, at the end of 2011, an anonymous donor offered to match all unrestricted donations to HELP at \$0.50 on the dollar up to \$50,000. Thanks to an outpouring of support in response to our year-end appeal, including a major gift from the Jean-Joseph Dorvil Memorial Fund, HELP was able to meet this challenge, bringing in an additional \$50,000! Our sincere thanks to the anonymous donor and, of course, to everyone who gave - we couldn't have done it without YOU!

Lizzie Lahey and two stand-out GGBC students from Kenya: Mary Mwende and Damaris Wanjiku. They worked closely with five HELP students and HELP staff.

HELP's current mentorship program matches incoming students with older students who can provide academic support and personal encouragement, and share advice and experience from their time at HELP and at university in general. The GGBC mentoring model, based on the three pillars of gratitude, goals, and giving back, goes one step further, linking students with a professional mentor in the broader community, thereby creating a relationship that can outlast a student's time in school. Nemdia Daceny (economics, class of 2014), one of the HELP student team members, was impressed with the program: "The give-back concept is very important for a long-lasting program and for creating effective change in the Haitian community," she says. "Working with GGBC enhanced my current mentorship with several HELP freshmen, and has also inspired me to continue to mentor other Haitian students in the future."

The group worked for several days to adapt GGBC's professional mentoring model to meet the needs of HELP students. They created a structure and action plan, and presented the project to the Voila Foundation (one of Haiti's leading telecom companies and a long-standing HELP supporter) as the first step in gaining private sector mentors to participate in the program. Indieu Jules (computer science, class of 2012) says "GGBC helped me discover my public speaking skills and how much I can convince people with a presentation. And with them I learned that education can create a more equal society, especially when successful people mentor students and when students are committed to giving back to their society."

To culminate the visit, HELP organized a field trip for GGBC and HELP students to the mountain town of Kenscoff, nearby waterfalls, a historic sugar cane factory, and a beach day. GGBC students Mary and Damaris particularly enjoyed getting to know the country: "You taught us a lot about your culture," they said of the HELP team. "And quickly we fell in love with Haiti and HELP and your lively staff and students!"

At the end of the 10-day visit, all participants were pleased with the exchange between Haitian and Kenyan scholars and the GGBC and HELP staff. "We know that you will continue to have a successful and inspiring mentoring and recruitment program and wish you all the best of luck," said GGBC team leader Lizzie. "We look forward to staying in touch and hearing all about the mentoring journeys to come." "It was such a great opportunity to meet the GGBC members," says Jamesly Pierre (finance, class of 2014). "I learned a lot from them about the importance of a mentor in a student's life. I was so delighted to work with them and I want to thank HELP and GGBC for this initiative."

**Featured HELP Student:  
Daphning Pierre**



Field of study: Engineering  
Class of: 2016  
Hometown: Gonaives

Growing up, Daphning enjoyed singing, reading, and taking part in many extracurricular activities. But above all, she was an excellent student committed to giving her all academically. [Read More](#)

**HELP Salutes our Partners**

HELP is honored to continue our collaboration with our long-standing partner organizations:



[U.S. State Department Office of Public Diplomacy](#) • [Mennonite Central Committee](#) • [Reginald F. Lewis Foundation](#) • [Cross International](#) • [EKTA Foundation](#) • [FOKAL](#)

# Waste Management at HELP

## STUDENTS TAKE THE LEAD IN RECYCLING AND COMPOST



One of the first things many people notice when they arrive in Port-au-Prince is the garbage. Garbage piles up on the streets, eventually making its way to abandoned lots and dumpsters where it is burned, or to streams and ravines which wash it out to the port, especially during heavy rains. But Dieugrand Louis, a HELP student in agro-environment (class of 2013), emphasizes the benefits of a better managed system: “Properly disposing of waste helps to prevent the spread of disease as well as improves the state of the environment. And a cleaner environment will even help us to grow the tourist industry in Haiti.” Although the municipal solid waste department (SMCRS) does what it can, it does not have the capacity to meet the city’s needs. Ultimately, the responsibility to deal with waste falls to individual residents. As a member of the urban community of Port-au-Prince – and home to over 120 students, many pursuing degrees in environmental science – HELP recognizes the importance of effective waste management. This year, Dieugrand and several of his fellow HELP students have taken a lead role and made tremendous progress in addressing this issue at the HELP Student Center and dormitories.

Composting is one method that HELP has used to ease the waste management burden. The Student Center has implemented a compost system for all organic waste produced there. “Composting ensures that the natural nutrient cycle is completed and actually breaks down waste, which allows for better management of space,” says Ronel Lefranc (agro-environment, class of 2012), another student spearheading the initiative. Compost bins have also been installed at two of the student houses and are coming to the other two. Recycling is another method being used. Though there is no city-wide recycling system, several businesses have recently opened independent recycling centers, and offer to pay for certain types of plastics that are dropped off there. This has created an opportunity for city residents to generate income by picking up plastics from the streets. At the HELP dorms, students and resident advisors are making use of this plastics-for-

We’re also very pleased to welcome some new friends to HELP’s community of donors:

[The W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) sponsors four students from the Aquin-Les Cayes region, one of Kellogg’s community development focus areas in Haiti.

[E-Power](#) sponsors three students from Cité Soleil, the site of their recently opened power plant which will provide up to 40% of the capital’s electric energy.

HELP is truly grateful to all of our supporters for their contribution to increasing access to higher education for Haiti’s brightest and most deserving young people! Un grand merci à tous!

cash program by giving plastics to neighborhood residents who take them to a local depot where they are paid, creating an incentive to keep the streets clean.

Ronel, Dieugrand, and several other students have taken charge not just of setting up the compost and recycling systems, but have also developed a training presentation to teach the HELP community about their importance, how to use and maintain them, and about similar initiatives undertaken by other organizations in Haiti. The waste management team is constantly searching for ways to expand the scope of the program, and is researching options for paper and metal recycling. Even though waste management is a challenge in Haiti, at HELP it is also an opportunity for students to put two of HELP's core principles - respect and service - into practice as they work to maintain a healthy environment for themselves and their neighbors.

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## Inspired by Helping HELP

### AN INTERN'S JOURNEY



*Guest writer Sandra Macías del Villar shares the story of how her work with HELP and with Haiti have grown from a summer of interning to an enduring passion.*

Sitting in the office of the HELP Student Center, an oasis in the midst of a crowded and chaotic Port-au-Prince, I can't help but feel inspired and extremely proud. Students are dutifully reading their textbooks, others are taking classes in the computer lab, and still others sit on the patio sharing ideas and talking, in English, about the latest news, practicing what they have learned in their ESL classes. There is no doubt in my mind that HELP is providing Haiti with a cadre of incredibly talented individuals who are becoming key actors in the development of their country's future. But HELP has not only changed the lives of the hundreds of students enrolled in its program - it has also changed the lives of the staff who work tirelessly for the success of its mission.

In the summer of 2008, shortly after I finished my graduate studies at the University of Oregon, I was lucky enough to serve as a summer intern with HELP. I travelled to Haiti to interview members of Haiti's academic, private, and non-governmental institutions to evaluate HELP's role in higher education and get better insight into the impact of its work. Little did I know this would be the first step in almost four years of nonstop engagement with the country and its people on their long journey towards a more just and brighter future.

One of the findings during my internship project was that, at the time, HELP was missing the “L” portion of its acronym: leadership. Consequently, HELP invited me back to work as a consultant, creating its first leadership curriculum. Today, the expanded leadership program, intensive English courses, and extracurricular activities are among the additional tools HELP provides to enable its students to build critical skills to become successful. This is how HELP is helping Haiti’s brightest students succeed while becoming a development hub for talented leaders and professionals around the country.

Prior to coming to HELP, I knew from personal experience what the chance to obtain a higher education means for those with limited economic resources. Being a scholarship recipient myself, I wanted others to have those same opportunities. Working with HELP provided a way for me to be a part of this process, and my conviction in the importance of creating access to education for everyone became stronger the minute I started interacting with HELP students on a daily basis. I felt so empowered that, once my work with HELP came to an end, I assisted in the creation of Konbit Pou Edikasyon, a scholarship program for younger students across Haiti to obtain their primary and secondary education. To date, we have helped to provide education to 30 children from underprivileged households through full scholarships that cover tuition and fees, uniforms, school materials, and food stipends.

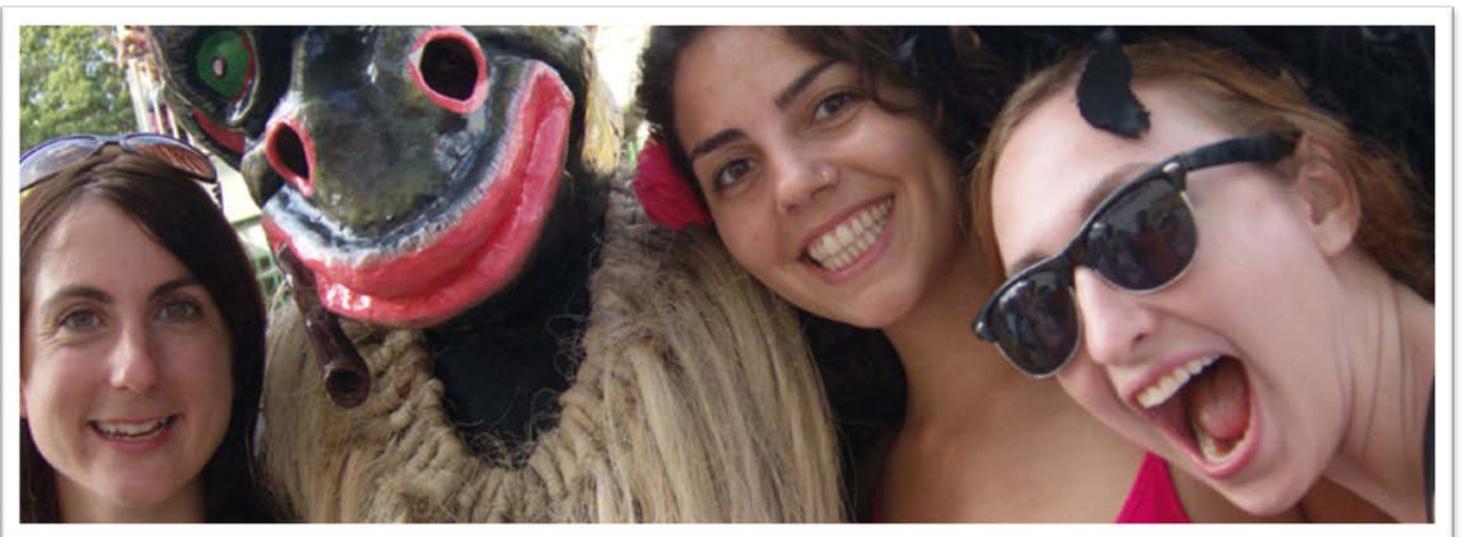
Thanks to my experience with HELP and the opportunity to live in Haiti, I have since had the honor of working with many other Haitians. For instance, I assisted the International Rescue Committee in treating one of the largest cases of Haitian human trafficking survivors in the United States. In my current role as the Associate Program Officer for Brazil and the Caribbean at The Global Fund for Children, I have also been able to work alongside grassroots Haitian organizations in their efforts to support vulnerable children and youth throughout the country.

Even after all this time, on each visit to Haiti I am still taken aback by its wonderful hospitality, by the warmth of all Haitians, and by its beautiful culture. Looking back over the years, I am extremely thankful to HELP for enabling me to be part of its growth and to support its mission. I hope HELP continues to leave a strong mark, not only on its students but also on those of us that have the chance to be part of its journey, for many years to come.

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## “Haiti is Taking Off”

### HELP’S INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXPERIENCE CARNIVAL



*ESL Instructor Stephanie Rapp shares her impressions of her first time at Carnival, the vibrant celebration that takes place each year in Haiti and across the Caribbean.*

Haiti's 2012 Carnival celebrations had a singular theme: *Ayiti ap dekolé* – "Haiti is taking off." The whole month before the National Carnival, the country built momentum and excitement with *ra-ra* bands every Sunday in Port-au-Prince, and the signature parade (or *défilé*) in the town of Jacmel. HELP's international staff set off from the capital on February 12, ready for a long weekend. Thanks to the generosity and hospitality of our Haitian colleagues and students, we encountered a truly excited community that had put their daily activities on hold to be part of the celebrations. The energy was so intoxicating that, for the rest of month, I couldn't imagine that Haiti was doing anything but taking off.

For our weekend in Jacmel, we stayed within walking distance of the Carnival activity with a friend of HELP Country Director Garry Delice. After a trip to the beach came the *défilé* itself. Snaking through Jacmel for over three hours, the parade included folklore dancers, men on stilts, and a bevy of papier-mâché creatures. Some were from nature (crabs, snakes, and dinosaurs), some were pure advertisements (toilet paper rolls and Barbancourt bottles), and some only nodded in the direction of reality (dragons with snapping wings and stylized characters from the Voodoo pantheon). The crowd was remarkable: filling balconies, rooftops, and all the free space on the street, everyone was transfixed in joyful spectatorship.

This year, for the first time, Haiti's "official" national Carnival celebration was moved from the capital of Port-au-Prince to the smaller city of Les Cayes, in an effort at decentralization. Along with HELP student Stéphane Jozil (electrical engineering, class of 2012), we promptly joined the pilgrimage of Carnival-goers. We were welcomed by the hospitality of Stéphane's aunt and uncle in their home, also located near the center of Carnival. In the morning, we drove to the outskirts of the city to meet Stéphane's immediate family at their farm. We watched his family make bread, drank from coconuts on the grass, and took sips of fresh milk infused with cinnamon. "It was very interesting to host these amazing people, to have them at my family's house," says Stéphane. "My favorite part was to see them dancing so well at Carnival! It was such a great time!" It was a treat for us to see the home of one of our students, meet his family, and remind ourselves that not all of Haiti is filled with the congestion of Port-au-Prince.

In the afternoon, we drove back to Les Cayes to prepare for the night ahead – this time much more focused on following *chas*. Best described as "party trucks," *chas* are giant vehicles topped with popular musicians blasting their custom Carnival soundtrack. For at least an hour, we followed the *cha* of the *konpa* (traditional Haitian music) band Carimi, surrounded by over a hundred people, chanting and singing along to their signature Carnival song. The energy was momentous, seeming to include the whole city and to be accessible to everyone – directly in front of us was an elderly woman, helped along by a family member, raising her hands in the air to the music, and at one point, even President Martelly himself joined the crowd.

A great excuse to see the country and to meet the families of our students, Carnival demonstrated the complex harmony and balance of a nation at its best.