



HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

HELP Update Summer 2007

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Haiti where we have much good news to report. After the first semester of this year HELP students Celine Berlus and Angelie Orelie hold the top two spots in the third year at Notre Dame University medical school. HELP's Loudwidge Felizor is #1 in the second year. Celine's results are all the more impressive considering that her adjustment from high school to university was difficult and HELP placed her on academic probation after her first semester. It is a credit to Celine and to HELP's support system that she was able to survive and now excels.

At the state university school of engineering HELP students Suzie Pascale and Stanley Jean-Francois are respectively first and second in the sophomore class. In the computer science program at ESIH university Claudin Daniel is at the top of the senior class and Benoit Bernadel is #1 in the sophomore class. At Quisqueya University 4th year accounting student Ermine Civile is also #1. All this means that for the first semester over 10% of HELP students were #1 or #2 in their class and this list might be incomplete because some schools only provide class rank at the end of the year!



While encouraging our students to perform to the best of their abilities we also recognize their accomplishments. At plenary meetings we present our dean's list students with gift certificates to a local book store. This year we decided to further honor students who finished #1 in their class with a trip to the beach. Ironically Suzie Pascale declined the invitation, saying that she felt she should stay home and study in order to maintain her class rank!

Continued...

Below is a picture of the “Laureates” on a boat ride at the beach in April. For several students it was the first time they had ever been on a boat.

In December I mentioned Dimitry Dabady who had finished his classwork in electrical engineering at the state university. Dimitry won a scholarship to study at the University of Nice in France. Dimitry successfully defended his undergraduate thesis in April and was awarded his diploma making him HELP’s 10th graduate. In Nice Dimitry and a Haitian classmate teamed up with two French classmates to enter the Microsoft Imagine Cup, an international software competition. In April their entry of software for illiterate people using only images and sound was chosen as one of the seven finalists for France and the team was invited to Paris earlier this month for the French finals. Dimitry writes:

We presented our project at the Microsoft headquarters in Paris. Later that evening, at a magnificent ceremony on the first floor of the Eiffel Tower, the final results were announced by the Directors of Microsoft International and Microsoft France. The tension was terrible. Our team finished third in France, not too bad considering that we had worked on this while pursuing our MA degrees while most of the other teams had worked full time on their project. Over 12,000 students in France participated and hundreds of France’s top schools fielded teams. All in all it was a great experience.



Dimitry’s classmate Gergory Charlot also reported some exciting news. Gregory’s job with a software firm led him to be hired to run the computer network of a local bank branch at an annual salary of \$10,000. In other employment news Marie Poulard (HELP class of 2005) moved from the accounting office at Haiti’s international school in Port-au-Prince to the Haiti headquarters of the international microfinance organization FINCA (www.finca.org) in the southern city of Les Cayes. This is noteworthy not only for her new annual salary of \$12,000 but also because she is the first HELP graduate to move out of Port-au-Prince for work. Salaries like Gregory’s and Marie’s prompted us to run the numbers for all HELP graduates and what we found is very encouraging. The average annual salary of HELP graduates is over \$8,000, a whopping 18 times Haiti’s average annual income of \$450, proving not only that there are good jobs in Haiti for our graduates but also that your investment in these deserving young Haitians is one of the best you can make.

This brings to mind a series of articles in the June 10th edition of the New York Times Magazine on the “Income Gap” in the U.S. The Times reported Census Bureau figures showing that the median annual income of a high school dropout is \$13,000. That of a high school graduate is \$21,000. College grads earn \$40,000. Clearly the link between education and prosperity is not confined to Haiti.

Recruiting:

Thanks to the efforts of HELP Director Garry Delice, this year's recruiting has been the most thorough to date. Using an official database of secondary schools Garry expanded our search outside the provincial capitals into secondary cities, small towns and even some rural areas. From February to May HELP visited over 150 schools, held one regional conference and appeared on radio programs in St Marc, Jeremie, Les Cayes and Port-au-Prince. Also this year we tried to include at least one current HELP student on each recruiting trip to introduce HELP to high school students. Female HELP students studying accounting, chemistry, law and engineering brought a particular message for high school girls; that hard work in school would open doors for them to be whatever they wanted to be. We are confident that our efforts will result in more qualified applicants this year.



Angelie Orelie (with mic) on a recruiting visit to her alma mater in Gonaives with fellow HELP student Jean St. Juste.

Board Visit to Haiti:

HELP board member and University of Connecticut Professor Roger Celestin visited Haiti in January, visiting the HELP center for the first time, meeting with local university Deans and sitting in on classes. Roger also gave a talk to the HELP students based on his upcoming book "France 1851 to the Present: Universalism in Crisis." Roger planned a 20 minute presentation but the students were so interested that he was still answering questions an hour and a half later.

Fundraising & Outreach:

I take great pleasure in announcing Fiona and Stanley Druckenmiller's recent gift of \$125,000. The Druckenmiller's also contributed substantially last year and on behalf of the board and the students I want to thank them for their support and their confidence in our work. We will use this gift to increase the number of scholarships for the next school year.

Two delegations from the Colorado based Haitian Timoun Foundation (HTF) visited HELP in February; HTF is sponsoring 13 students this academic year. The Haitian cellular phone company Comcel, working with Wyclef Jean's Yele Haiti organization, also renewed their grant for 10 students for 2007/2008.

Continued...

As HELP's track record becomes better known in Haiti and abroad we are invited to more and more events. The Association of Francophone Universities (www.auf.org) invited HELP to participate in a conference on support for university students as part of their annual "Francophone Fortnight" activities in March. HELP was also present at a March conference on regional integration at Quisqueya University. Most recently, thanks to the Public Diplomacy office at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti, HELP has been invited to participate in the White House Conference on the Americas in Washington DC July 9th. The theme of this year's conference is "Advancing the Cause of Social Justice in the Americas"

In other fundraising news board member Yves Colon and his wife Melissa Moonves are hosting HELP's first ever fundraiser in Miami on September 8th. Details will follow soon.

HELP students like Celine Berlus, Dimitry Dabady, Marie Poulard and Gregory Charlot prove that your support removes the many barriers to success that these students have faced. Dimitry's performance in the Imagine Cup shows us that HELP students can compete and excel on an international scale. HELP's future is as bright as our students'. We are grateful to our ever expanding list of supporters – please remember that we are also entirely dependent on you as well. As always donations can be made on our website (www.haitianeducation.org) or mailed to us at 136 Madison Ave. 3rd fl, NY, NY 10016.

Thank you for your support,

Conor