



HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

HELP Update Winter 2006

Dear Friends,

Holiday greetings to all. As usual there is much good news to report both from Haiti and the U.S.

HELP welcomes largest incoming class ever:

In September HELP welcomed our largest incoming class to date. 18 young men and women were admitted bringing our total to another all-time high of 65. This year half of these new students are from outside the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area which is proof that our commitment to expand our reach throughout the country is beginning to bear fruit. Like many developing countries, the few existing opportunities are concentrated in the largest city which is home to 25% of the population. "Decentralization" is a common buzzword but is largely ignored in practice. Our efforts to maintain a diverse student body are also paying off as our new students are studying accounting, agronomy, computer science, education, engineering, medicine and statistics. This year's incoming class was also treated to a full day orientation which included a visit to a local farm and an introduction to environmental issues by farm owner Jane Wynne.

I sat on the admissions committee this year and couldn't help but be inspired by students we admitted. Stanley Jean-Francois, from the colonial capital of Cap-Haitian on Haiti's north coast, is studying civil engineering in hopes of being an architect. When asked why he was interested in architecture he explained that he had seen buildings on TV that were 1,000 years old and he wanted to learn how one built something that lasted for 1,000 years. Stanley also told us that it pained him to see people tearing down colonial buildings in Cap Haitian and replacing them with concrete blocks. "My hometown is losing its character," he said, displaying a sophistication rarely seen in someone so young and disadvantaged. Daphne Charles is a from the Port-au-Prince suburb of Petionville where her mother sells smoked fish in the local market, bringing in about \$50 a month.

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Not surprisingly Daphne's mother had difficulty meeting tuition at a Methodist high school but when she requested Daphne's transcript to transfer her to public school the headmistress said she would not let someone of Daphne's caliber leave and instead offered her a full scholarship. Daphne graduated at the top of her class and thanks to a HELP scholarship will study agronomy at Haiti's catholic university. Daphne so impressed us in her interview – intelligent, articulate, self-possessed, confident, comfortable and sincere, that afterwards the committee sat in silence, stunned at the dichotomy between her circumstances and her presence. It was clear affirmation that HELP is filling a vital need in Haiti.

Another student, Jerry Feverin is from the northwestern coastal city of Gonaives, totally devastated by Tropical Storm Jeanne in 2004. Jerry told us the dramatic story of water rushing into their house and how his family spent days on the second floor waiting for the water to subside. Afterwards the family split up, staying with relatives around the region. Jerry was recently elected to one of three posts on the new HELP student council.

HELP auction of Haitian Art:

On December 1st HELP hosted our first-ever benefit auction of Haitian art in New York City where over seventy paintings and sculptures from Haiti's most famous artists were displayed. The event raised over \$30,000 and also provided a great opportunity for HELP to introduce some of our supporters to the vibrant and beautiful world of Haitian art. Over 200 attended and a very good time was had by all; organizers and partygoers alike are already looking forward to next year. Our sincere thanks go to Reynald Lally of Galerie Bourbon Lally (www.bourbonlally.com), Gael Monnin of Galerie Monnin and Mario Benjamin for providing the beautiful artwork, to Aristeia Capital for donating their space, to Holly Swett for her contributions, to Kim Dilts for her organizational expertise and to Manze who volunteered her talents and whose rendition of traditional Haitian music got everyone out on the dance floor. And thanks to all of you who attended and who truly made HELP's first auction such a

Moving on and up:

HELP's true success comes when students leave school and move into the professional world, using their newfound skills to become active and productive members of a society that is desperate for their expertise. Several students have finished their coursework over the last several months. Dimitri Dabady graduated first in his class at the state university school of science and won a scholarship to pursue an MA in electrical engineering at a French university. He left for France in October. Dimitri's classmate Gregory Charlot found a job with the local software firm Turbonet and is working on his undergraduate thesis. Some of you may recall that Gregory's father, a taxi driver in Port-au-Prince, was shot dead in an assault several years ago. Gregory is now putting his education to work and is able to support his family which is no small consolation.

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Ernst Alceus successfully defended his sociology thesis at the state university in November and received his BA degree. Johnny Fequiere and Gerald Dagrín finished classes at the state university medical school and began their mandatory year of social service which leads to their MD degree. Johnny will be working in Gonaives.

Fundraising success

Over the past several months several institutional supporters have renewed and increased their grants. The Haitian cell phone company Comcel partnered with Haitian-American hip-hop star Wyclef Jean's foundation Yele Haiti (www.yele.org) to increase their support to HELP to \$30,000. Florida based Cross International also renewed their grant for the 06/07 school year, increasing their per-student grant and the Colorado based Haitian Timoun Foundation renewed their grant and found support for several additional students. The Haiti office of the CDC also increased their support from five to seven students for the current school year.

Extra-Curricular

In September HELP welcomed our latest board member Yves Colon as our latest guest speaker at the HELP center in Port-au-Prince. Yves was a longtime writer and editor for the Miami Herald and more recently directed a project assisting non-profit community radio stations throughout rural Haiti. Yves talk about the importance of communication in personal and professional life and shared his ideas about effective communication generating much interest and discussion among the students.

Thank You

I imagine that like me, you are inundated with requests to give at this time of year. Some requests are from organizations that I know, others I've never heard of. Some hit me with "reminders" week after week in the mail and others send me daily emails. It can be overwhelming and make us want to turn it all off and not consider a single solicitation. I hope that HELP can cut through the clutter as the successes in fundraising mentioned in this update do not mitigate our need for your support. In fact the IRS recently awarded HELP permanent non-profit status (we had been operating under a temporary ruling) because we were able to prove that we were a "publicly supported" organization with a broad base of donors. For this test the smaller donations were even more important than the bigger ones.

Additionally HELP students consistently prove themselves worthy of our support as they take full advantage of the opportunities we offer them. We invite you to share the pride of these children of poverty who, with your assistance, are becoming doctors and engineers, agronomists and teachers. Please visit our updated website (www.haitianeducation.org) which was recently introduced to rave reviews and please consider a donation as we close out 2006. Once again thank you for your support over this past year and best wishes for a peaceful and prosperous new year.

Conor Bohan