



H E L P

HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

HELP Winter 2010 Newsletter
A Noble Service

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Dear Friends,

As you know Haiti suffered an *Annus Horribilis* in 2010. Between the January earthquake, the cholera epidemic, the deadly Hurricane Tomas and the recent civil unrest caused by the announcement of preliminary results of the November presidential election, one could not be blamed for thinking that Haitians had been tasked with updating the Bible's Book of Job.

HELP's greatest loss this year was the death of Marc-Erline Dezulma and Evenson Jean who perished in the earthquake. Pastor Rick Barger put it best when he said, "Those of you who remember meeting this gracious and talented young lady will know that we all have suffered a big loss. It is hard to put into words what it means for someone with so much promise and who had worked so hard, overcoming all kinds of obstacles, to be crushed in this disaster." Of course the same can be said for Evenson. We are grateful for the outpouring of support we received in the days and weeks following the earthquake; hundreds of you donated, held events, raised money, spread the word and expressed your sympathy, concern and encouragement. I regret that I wasn't able to thank you individually and trust you know how appreciative I am nonetheless.

Many people ask if the earthquake changed HELP's focus. In fact, it has only

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strengthened our conviction that we are addressing one of Haiti's most fundamental problems. With 84% of university-educated Haitians living abroad and a university enrollment rate of only 1%, educating Haiti's very best students and showing them the opportunities they have to build productive lives in Haiti is the most effective thing an organization of our size can do. This was brought home by the incredible impact of HELP students and alumni in the relief and recovery efforts, one that the American Red Cross estimated reached hundreds of thousands of people! And this is why we worked hard to bring in our largest freshman class ever, just nine months after the earthquake.

Finding more of Haiti's very best students and giving them the tools to transform themselves and their country is only possible with the support of our volunteers and donors so I hope you will contribute to our success with a year-end gift.

Conor

HELP & HTF: Creating a Future of Hope, Sustainability & Dignity For Haiti



When asked why the Haitian Timoun Foundation (HTF) sponsors 25 HELP students, the founder, Reverend Dr. Rick Barger, said, "We consider HELP to be among the most promising initiatives for bringing hope, sustainability, and dignity to the youth and country of Haiti." Pastor Rick first came to Haiti in 1996 to visit his son who was a Peace Corps volunteer. He soon got his flock at Abiding Hope Lutheran in Colorado working for Haiti and spread the

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The Freshman 54



In the last newsletter, we shared the wonderful news about HELP's freshman class of 2010. At 54 students, this is HELP's largest freshman class to date; in fact it's 80% larger than last year's freshman class! These young men and women come to us as the result of our largest recruiting effort ever. Organized by 5th year education student Marie-Michele Montout, HELP students visited over 230 schools across Haiti, speaking to more than 130,000 high school students in all grades. In addition, current HELP students also recommended

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word to other Lutheran congregations. Today, HTF counts over 16 member congregations from California to Florida. HTF started working with HELP in 2005, and the partnership has grown steadily over time. Today HTF is HELP's largest scholarship donor, thanks to the generosity of their participating congregations and additional support from businesses like Hammersmith and Associates and Linklaters LLC. HTF's impact goes well beyond dollars and sponsorships. They make quarterly trips to Haiti, use HELP students as guides and provide internships for medical and dental students. HTF integrated several students into their emergency field hospital after the earthquake. HTF's commitment was also evident when Pastor Rick gracefully co-celebrated the memorial service for the two HELP students who perished in the earthquake, one of whom was sponsored by HTF.

In November, HELP Student Stanley Clermont traveled to Pastor Rick's current congregation, Epiphany Lutheran in Suwanee, Georgia. Stanley's father died when he was two and his mother sold penny candy to get by.



Stanley spoke about the opportunities afforded by HTF and HELP:

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particularly talented students from their hometowns. For example, two current students who graduated from the public high school in the southern town of Torbeck encouraged a graduating senior from Torbeck High to apply and even paid for his bus fare to get back and forth to Port-au-Prince for the interview. Their investment paid off, and James-Lee Chery is now a HELP freshman!

James-Lee and his classmates come from eight of Haiti's 10 departments (regions), and over 40% are young women, the largest percentage in the last five years. One of these young women is Yvenelle Charlot, who is studying Agronomy:



Yvenelle is from Milot, in northern Haiti. Her mother is unemployed and her father, a teacher, is the sole breadwinner of the family of eight. Naturally, education was always valued at home, and Yvenelle never wavered from her position at the top of her class. Passionate about the land and land conservation, Yvenelle already talks knowledgeably about the various phases of erosion and its devastating effects on agriculture and animal life and offers several solutions: reforesting watersheds

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“People with backgrounds like mine could never dream to reach this far. HELP & HTF are building a more just society by offering opportunities to young Haitians with talent and ambition but no financial support. People often ask me if there is a future for an electrical engineer in a country where 80% of us have no electricity. But where others see darkness, I see light. My dream is to be part of a group of investors and engineers who will bring electricity to Haiti using wind and solar, instead of the diesel that now fuels our electric plants. This will create jobs and grow the economy. My other goal is to be a HELP sponsor, to offer opportunities for other students; to do for others what you did for me.”

Clearly Stanley embodies HTF’s guiding principle to “invest in initiatives that have a clear plan for Haitian leadership.” HELP is honored to be one of HTF’s flagship partners, and is grateful for the strong relationship HTF has built with our staff and students. It remains a source of strength, encouragement and support to us all.

Creative Gift-Giving For the Holidays and Beyond

Judi and Frederick Echeverria of New Jersey recently made a thoughtful gift to HELP accompanied by the following explanation:

“My husband and I have started a tradition of making a donation to a non-profit every year in honor of our daughter and her friends, on her birthday. We print a card with information about the organization and the fact that we made the donation and add it to the party favor bag we give to the kids. Our aim is to also raise awareness about non-profits with our friends and family.”

What a wonderful way to show that holidays
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and protecting hillsides, maintaining the riverbeds, limiting construction in sensitive areas and managing waste. However, Yvenelle knows there is much more to be learned. When asked what a HELP scholarship meant to her, she replied: “This scholarship is not only important for me, it’s absolutely necessary. Last year, I was scared I wouldn’t be able to go to university because of my family’s financial situation. When HELP called me to let me know that I was chosen, I was so grateful.”

Thanks to your support, now all 53 of Yvenelle’s classmates have the opportunity to become part of Haiti’s educated class and bring positive and lasting change to their families, their hometowns and their country. We look forward to keeping you updated on the progress of the freshman class of 2010.

Volunteers Take the ESL Lead

For the first time, HELP welcomes two volunteers to Haiti to teach English, thanks to a grant from the U.S. Embassy in Haiti’s Office of Public Diplomacy.



HELP Volunteers Michael Racine and Micol Issa

Michael Racine, a Michigan native and certified ESL teacher, comes to us after two years of teaching at a middle school in China. He contacted us after reading about HELP in his alma mater’s (Brown

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are as much about giving as getting. Please consider a gift to HELP this holiday season in memory or honor of a family member, friend, a hard-working student or favorite teacher. And we hope you will consider making HELP a designated charity for birthdays, weddings, graduations, and anniversaries in 2011. Whether you can make a gift of \$10, \$100, \$1,000 or more, every dollar brings us closer to our important goal of securing sponsorships for all 149 HELP students this year.

For more information about incorporating HELP into your events, you can contact the Development Office at (212) 419-0381.

THANK YOU!

Special Recognition Correction

In our fall newsletter, we inadvertently misspelled the name of a photographer who donated his time and expertise to HELP. We would like to thank Ray Tollinson for giving so generously of his talents and apologize for the mistake!

University) newspaper this past February. Michael is assisted by Micol Issa, a California native and Oberlin College alum ('09). Prior to arriving in Haiti in October, Micol was an organic gardener in California. In addition to teaching, she is organizing composting and recycling programs at HELP. Michael and Micol live in student housing, a few blocks from the HELP Center. Here is what they have to say about their experience so far:

English class is not only for learning English. Cultural lessons also play a vital role in preparing students for professional life and, of course, as the teachers, we are learning a lot as well. HELP students are bright and eager to improve their hometowns and their country. Sometimes a combination of their youth, their sheltered experiences, and a lack of role models means we also need to teach them how to be proactive, responsible, and professional. Haiti's long tradition of political and economic patronage and the enormous gap between haves and have-nots, between the government and the citizens, were designed to make people feel powerless. So a big part of our mission is teaching students to ask themselves, "What can I do?" and "How can we change this?"

Students in our upper-level classes have been seeing examples of leadership as we study the PBS series "Eyes on the Prize" about the American civil rights movement. This series makes real the fact that change is hard, but possible, with organization and determination.

It's nice for us to live with the students: they show us around and teach us about their culture. And it's great for the students to have a native English speaker in the house. In a matter of weeks, we could already see improvements in the students' spoken English.

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Speaking English is a practical skill that gives HELP students a distinct advantage in the local job market. This was evident in the earthquake recovery efforts where students' English skills were invaluable to foreign aid workers and their fellow Haitians in the hospitals, clinics and camps. Thanks to the U.S. Embassy, Micol and Michael, the HELP students are sure to be even better prepared for their careers and lives ahead.

One enduring memory from 2010 is the note we received from Marc-Erline's family after the death of her and her sister. I was struck by their eloquence and generosity in the midst of unimaginable grief and despair. They wrote, "We thank you for this noble service that you have offered our family, which, sadly, through this natural catastrophe, ended before its proper conclusion."

We at HELP thank all of *you* for the noble service that you offer all of our students. While there will always be setbacks, we are as committed as ever to continue to work together to reach our goal: a more just and prosperous Haiti.

Happy Holidays,

Conor

Please Consider Donating Today!