



## WINTER 2013 UPDATES

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Dear Friends,

Following a mention of HELP in Nicolas Kristof's [column](#) on alternative holiday gifts in *The New York Times* this month, we have received over 150 first-time donations from as far north as Anchorage, Alaska, as far south as Key West, Florida, as far east as the U.S. Virgin Islands, and as far west as Honolulu, Hawaii, not to mention gifts from Columbia and Switzerland.

These donations now total close to \$20,000 and, fortuitously, they come in the midst of a matching grant challenge, which means that they will generate almost \$40,000 for HELP. Even more impressive than the numbers is the generosity of strangers who trust us to create opportunity for others with their hard-earned money.

The success of HELP and our students has been possible only because of the continued generosity of friends and strangers alike. In this season of giving, and of giving thanks, I am touched by this outpouring of support and grateful to every one of our donors, from first-time to longtime. Together we have created opportunity for hundreds of deserving young people where before there was none.

From all of us at HELP, Happy Holidays and best wishes for a 2014 filled with opportunity, both for ourselves and others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name "Conor", written in a cursive style.

Conor

## Working with Western Union & WKKF



W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION™ FOUNDATION



This fall, HELP celebrated a very exciting landmark. We received the two largest single-year grant disbursements in our history, thanks to the generous partnership of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) and the Western Union Foundation. Both WKKF and Western Union have a longstanding focus on education, and together they are sponsoring nearly 20% of the HELP student body for the 2013-2014 school year. WKKF's support for HELP is part of their recently launched 15-year commitment to Haiti, while Western Union's engagement comes via their three-year "Education for Better" global campaign.

A HELP partner since 2011, WKKF's most recent grant will support 20 HELP students over four years. In addition to completing their degree programs in health care, education, agronomy, and finance, the HELP-WKKF Scholars will also work with community-based organizations in WKKF's target areas in the Southwest and Central Plateau.

"We know the rewards of education reach far beyond any one individual. HELP's focus on providing college scholarships and leadership training to disadvantaged youth is not only creating a new generation of leaders in Haiti, but is also building secure families and strong communities for generations to come," said Alix Cantave, WKKF program officer for Haiti. In October, Sterling K. Speirn, President and CEO of WKKF, visited HELP along with Mr. Cantave, and spoke with students and alumni. "These young adults are the country's future parents, educators, and leaders," said Mr. Speirn. "And through the support they receive from HELP to fulfill their dream of education and training, they will strengthen Haiti's families and communities."

The Western Union Foundation is supporting HELP's entire graduating class of 18 students for 2013-2014 as well as the development of our new student database. "Educating young people is critical to the economic



### We're almost there!

This holiday season, all gifts will be **matched at 100%** up to a total of **\$50,000!** We are close to \$40,000 and counting!

[Please help us reach our goal for 2013!](#)

### An Award for Anne-Martine



On November 21, the YWCA of Haiti honored three exceptional Haitian women, including HELP's own Anne-Martine Augustin (engineering '14), who was recognized in the Young Female Leader category.

Anne-Martine is a co-founder of the organization ACTIVE, which places university students in internships with educational organizations across Haiti. She is

and social future of any country,” said Patrick Gaston, President of the Western Union Foundation. “Western Union is dedicated to supporting education as a pathway to economic opportunity. As part of Education for Better, Western Union’s three-year commitment to global education, we are proud to support HELP’s work to provide financial resources to educate Haiti’s deserving students at the country’s major universities so that they can contribute to the future of their country.”

Most Haitian universities require all undergraduate students to submit and defend a thesis in order to receive their bachelor’s degree. This requirement contributes significantly to Haiti’s low university completion rate (less than 50%) so HELP’s support for our finishing students includes a dedicated thesis advisor, resume and job search training, and access to HELP’s network of local employers.

In addition to sponsoring seniors, the grant from Western Union enables HELP to develop a state-of-the-art student database. Over the past several years we have researched and tried countless off-the-shelf student database products, eventually concluding that the growing quantity and complexity of the information HELP is managing required the development of our own system. This new database will be launched in the coming days and will greatly strengthen our ability to track students’ progress at HELP and beyond.

Our sincere thanks go out to Sterling Speirn and Alix Cantave at WKKF and to Patrick Gaston and Joey Ham at Western Union for their support for HELP and our students.

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## **Alternative Classrooms**

AN EVENTFUL AUTUMN AND STUDENT REFLECTIONS

During the fall semester, students found time to organize and participate in a wide range of extracurricular events. From hiking in the mountains to hosting lectures and concerts to organizing clinics, here is a sample of what we have been learning outside the classroom.

also a WISE Learner's Voice scholar and a Resolution Project Fellow.

In a [video](#) for the YWCA, Anne-Martine talks about her struggles and accomplishments, as well as her vision for the future of Haiti. Congratulations to Anne-Martine from the whole HELP family!

## **Senior Success**

In November, Augustin-Sendy Salomon successfully defended his thesis in environmental studies at the State University of Haiti. His final project examined technical and socio-economic impacts of measures to prevent erosion in the Morne l’Hôpital watershed in Martissant.



Sendy earned a very impressive final score of 80 from the jury. He is the fourth HELP student to defend their thesis this school year.

## Hiking Haiti

The leadership program organized the third annual HELP hike over two days in October. Sixteen students and 11 staff hiked from Furcy through the La Selle Mountains and La Visite National Park, spending the night with a family in Seguin, before descending the mountain to Marigot and ending at the beach in Jacmel. It was a challenging and rewarding experience that required teamwork and determination, giving participants the chance to see a new part of Haiti, get to know their fellow staff and students, and practice the pillars of HELP - respect, rigor, courage, sacrifice and service.



Second-year student Djimy Saintil (agro-economics '17) was delighted to visit a part of the country he had only seen on video, and was prompted to think about how his studies are pertinent to what he saw: *Last semester, I saw a documentary about La Visite, one of the most important preserved spaces left in Haiti. So it was very moving to find myself at the center of the park, among the pines and the waterfalls. At the same time, I was surprised to see that, despite the numerous efforts to protect the trees, people still have not stopped cutting them down!*

*I was also reminded of the will of the Haitian people to work hard despite their difficult circumstances. I saw men, women, and children carrying on their back the carrots and leeks they had grown on the smallest pieces of land. To me, this implies that if our farmers had*

## Goodbye Greg!

At the end of November, HELP said a fond farewell to **Greg Anderson**, who served as a volunteer English & Leadership Instructor for the past two years.



In addition to his contributions to the English and leadership programs, Greg also moonlighted as HELP's photographer, capturing everything from student portraits to special events. Greg returns to his native Canada to pursue graduate studies. We wish him the very best of luck!!

*access to more arable land, we would no longer need to import so much food from neighboring countries.*

*So the hike was a great experience on many levels - recreational, athletic, and educational. It was an opportunity to relax and have fun while also working towards a collective goal. I returned reinvigorated and better able to work and study!*



Fellow second-year student Marion Mackenson (environmental management '17) was struck by the abundance of nature and the scarcity of infrastructure: *As we started to gain altitude, the clouds became closer, the air became cooler, the noise of the city became quieter, and the green of the landscape became clearer. But contrasted with the natural beauty we saw were the difficulties faced by the area's inhabitants, who live without access to hospitals, schools, or even passable roads to transport their harvest. It was striking to see the delicate and disparate balance of the land's riches and the people's lack of resources.*

### Creole à la Mode



Dr. Yves Dejean, Haiti's most prominent linguist and a founder of the movement to promote Creole language in the Haitian education system, spoke at HELP in mid-October. Dr. Dejean is the author of numerous books and articles addressing the importance of Creole as a means of improving education. When he started teaching at the State University of Haiti in the late 1970s, he was the only professor lecturing in Creole. At HELP, he spoke about Haiti's complicated linguistic politics and their detrimental effects on the quality of

education. He also discussed the feelings of “identity shame” that speaking Creole still evokes for some Haitians, and urged students to look at the language’s strengths and rich history.

Freshman Jean Kensle Figaro (administration ’18) was inspired by Dr. Dejean’s message: *The presentation was exciting and powerful. He showed us that our native language is very well organized and even beautiful. I agree that it is important to teach Haitians in Creole, but there is a lot of work to be done. First, we have to value our language rather than being afraid or feeling degraded when we use it. We also need to continue to enrich and improve Creole, especially by adding scientific terms. Hearing Dr. Dejean encouraged me to care more about Creole and to fight to promote its use in Haiti.*

The connections between Dr. Dejean’s presentation and the concepts of HELP’s leadership classes were clear to fellow first-year student Leonardo Virgo Charles (administration ’18): *Though Creole is supposedly “the language of the illiterate,” Dr. Dejean explained many reasons why it is important to the country. Because both French and Creole are the official languages of Haiti, I agree that we should not promote one over the other in order to dominate and feel superior to others. Dr. Dejean showed me that, just as we cannot deny our origins, we cannot deny our native language.*

Fellow freshman Valencia Prisca Brutus (administration ’18) concluded: *Dr. Dejean is one of the rare Haitians who fights for our mother tongue. He understands that others will never appreciate Creole until we, its native speakers, do so.*

### A Vision for the Future



Also in mid-October, a team of volunteers from our longtime partner the Haitian Timoun Foundation (HTF) held an optometry clinic at the HELP Center. Seven students assisted Dr. Todd Pfeil and the HTF delegation, enabling a total of over 220 people, including neighborhood residents, to receive free eye exams and consultations, many of them for the first time ever. HTF put together a [video](#) of their time in Haiti, including footage of the clinic at HELP. Many thanks to Dr. Todd and everyone at HTF for making this event possible!

Fery Brunis and Eddyrio Estime, both third-year pharmacy students who volunteered at the clinic, talked about how important organizational skills were to its success: *Participating in the clinic was a great pleasure. It allowed us to work in our field while helping our fellow students and their families. For most of the students assisting with the clinic, it was our first time being responsible for putting on this kind of*

*activity and ensuring its success from start to finish. We were able to develop our skills by organizing a large-scale event and managing a group of diverse participants.*

### **From the White House to Our House**

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan visited HELP at the beginning of November, along with U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, Pamela A. White, and the Haitian Minister of Education, Vanneur Pierre. They toured the Center and met with staff and students to discuss the challenges that young Haitians face in accessing higher education. Secretary Duncan later [tweeted](#) that he had a great conversation with Haiti's "future leaders."



The visit made a big impression on Wilkins Jean-Gilles, a 2013 graduate who now works as an accountant at HELP: *Secretary Duncan is someone who has worked with, and learned from, the disadvantaged in his own community. And he now has the chance to fight to address some of the most important issues his country is facing. I think he is a great role model for young people, especially those being trained at HELP to be future leaders of Haiti.*

### **Inspiring Sounds**

Also in November, HELP welcomed the popular Haitian musician BÉLO who spoke to more than 80 staff and students about how his parents, who could not read or write, did everything they could to provide him with an education. BÉLO's career started to take off when he was still in high school but he postponed recording and touring in order to fulfill his promise to his parents to graduate from university. It was worth the wait, because since 2005 he has released three popular albums, toured internationally, and won numerous awards including the 2006 Radio France International Discoveries Prize.

His message to HELP was to never forget one's roots and to remain humble and focused in spite of success. "I am first and foremost in service of my country," BÉLO has said. "It is the source of my inspiration, and I hope to positively impact the economic, political, and social situation through my songs." BÉLO closed with a duet with HELP staff member John Roberge on violin (check out the video [here](#)).

Freshman Maureen Petit-Frere (law '18) talked about how BÉLO's performance could spur people to action: *His work is really important for Haiti because it helps the world to see our country in a different light. This in turn changes our own mentality and propels Haiti on the road to progress. We need artists like BÉLO who make a positive impact on young people and on society.*

Senior Nemdia Daceny (economics '13) was especially impressed with the down-to-earth attitude of this popular musician: *BéLO's visit was a true inspiration. He is one of the few artists who are not ashamed to talk about their personal story and share their humble past. He also had the courage to pursue his university education even when he was under pressure from producers to launch his music career. He shows that it's possible to do what you love while still prioritizing education. BéLO has taught me that no matter how famous you may be, your past is what makes you who you are and to deny it is to destroy a part of yourself.*

