



Ohio Haiti Wisconsin Spring 2018

# Connections

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## Ask and you shall receive

by LoAnn Steward

"We asked God to help us, and he sent us you!" This was a sentiment we heard from many involved in the Hearts and Hands with Haiti Goat Program during our visit in January.

We met with members of each of the four chapels we are involved with – Noyau, Coupe Gorge, Feja, and Desvarieux. We asked them to talk about the HHH goat program, things that were going right, things we needed to work on, and how the program has changed them.

It has taken three years to grow our Goat Program to 335 goats, touching the lives of 84 families. We began with education, which was the missing key, and then added co-ops and the idea of working together. Everyone in the program gives goats back to the program so that additional villagers can participate.

Monthly meetings where successes and failures are discussed, provide new and helpful information that makes the goats of participants the healthiest ones at market.

One family in Noyau is doing so well that they were able to sell three goats and purchase a cow for their family. They can now pay for school and medical expenses and feed their family because of their success in the HHH goat program.

A new community, Boyer, is being added to the program. After con-



ducting educational meetings, testing and home visits, a few villagers will be chosen to receive goats.

Brevil, our veterinarian technician and Jean Maurisset, our program director, have been a critical part of our program's success. Having Haitians working with Haitians on a day-to-day basis has truly been a blessing for us and them.

### **Dreams of a school about to come true**

by John Gracyalny & LoAnn Steward

Five years ago, Fr. Leveque Bien Aime began an elementary school in Noyau with one classroom located in the parish church. Since those early beginnings, the school has grown to six classes totaling 180 children ages five to ten years old. These six different classes are still in the same one room!

Ever since the school began, Father

Some communities are doing better than others and the most obvious issue is that of working together and trusting each other. Over and over, the Haitians thanked us for bringing the program to them. They worried that they had nothing to repay us with. We said their stories of success were the best gifts we could receive!

has dreamt of having a school building dedicated to educating the children in his parish. Now that dream is about to come true! Through many fundraising efforts in Wisconsin and Ohio, Hands and Hearts with Haiti has raised the necessary funds to build this school! Because 100% of the funds donated to HHH goes directly into their projects in Haiti, there is no overhead to eat up funds!

# Amazing!

## Simply amazing!

by Hilarie Rath

My second trip to Haiti was grounded in the hope of developing cross-cultural understanding, especially among children. The first part of my preparation began with the children in my homeroom at Aldo Leopold Community School in Green Bay.

We met with the author, Baptiste Paul, who wrote a poem for us in both Creole and English. Then he came to teach us how to speak the poem entitled "Unity." My students performed this poem with drumming and dance so we could send a video to the children of Haiti. These students also made friendship bracelets for the Haitian children.

Our seventh grade students wrote letters to 60 students at Monsignor Remy Augustin School. The students in Haiti also sent letters, bracelets and pictures back to the students at Aldo Leopold. The students now have the opportunity to continue a letter writing relationship.

Once in Haiti, we were able to visit with teachers and school children in Noyau. The children were captivated by the video my students had made. This was despite the fact that they had to watch it on a small computer screen. I can only imagine how the teachers in the school must be longing for classrooms of their own, where everyone can see and hear.

The children also sang a song of welcome for us in English and Creole. Then, with vibrant drumming, we all enjoyed their playful round of musical chairs.

It's not possible to adequately describe what I felt in crossing challenges of language and culture. These were holy, graced moments sharing the delight of learning and being together.



**Construction site for the new elementary school in Noyau. See the article on page 1.**

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## Reflections of first timers in Haiti

by Kathy Yoakum

On the porch at Fr. Leveque's rectory, sitting and watching the world go by...bikes, motorcycles, trucks stuffed to the max, tap taps (which are colorful busses), noise and more noise. Everyone trying to sell something to make some money, just to get by, just to eat. People seem to work all day and night just to survive. A family — a husband, wife, twin two-year old girls, and a baby just showed up on Father's door step for help. I witnessed him helping every one of them. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in" (Matthew 25).

To sum up, my first time in Haiti was sad, frustrating, emotional, hard, educational, rewarding, a true blessing, and incredibly humbling. I was most inspired by the children who literally lit up from within. Their smiles energized me. I cannot wait to see them again. I will be back!

by Noah Steward

When I found that I would get the opportunity to go to Haiti, I was overwhelmed with emotions: excitement, joy, skepticism, angst. And honestly, the feelings did not go away until I saw the smiling, welcoming faces of Jean Maurisset and Fr. Leveque at the airport. I immediately began to observe — the people, how they dress, how they interact, the landscape the cities and towns, everything. It made me realize how beautiful everyone and everything is. Having seen the same people and things over and over again in Green Bay, it was a culture shock. It made me realize that I don't need the newest "things" to be happy. In America, we are so overwhelmed with stuff that we overlook the really important things — strong relationships, happiness and a connection with God.

The hard work and dedication that has gone into the projects in Haiti is a huge motivation to me that I hope has been observed and reciprocated to my peers.

# Move forward young people

**Haitian Carnival** is a celebration held over several Sunday afternoons. The activities lead up to Mardi Gras which is French for "fat Tuesday."

The carnival is celebrated with music, bands and parades. The parades have floats, sometimes with children participating in the celebrations. The floats typically have sound systems set up on trucks to play music to the crowds.

Seven years ago, the diocese of Hinche started to organize a camp for youth during carnival season. This year, it was in Cerca Carvajal where 400 young people from 45 parishes went to learn and interact with others. They participated in a carnival song composition contest with the camp theme and have fun. The theme of the camp this year was, *"Move forward young people, do not lose hope. With Jesus, we will win the fight."*

In the camp, the youth learned how to make mayonnaise and hair moisturizer. There was a conference about self-esteem and it was also a time for the youth to confess and to have one and one time with some sisters.

The group that had the best carnival composition had the privilege to lead the truck in the streets in Cerca Carvajal. The groups were comprised from people from different parishes to work together to either clean the room, do dishes, make assignments or do cultural presentations. But the best part was getting to know one another.

It was a great time and the youth are looking forward to the National Congress in Nippes, Haiti in July 2018, and to the World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019.



## Womens Group Members care for one another

Casimir Marie Andre is a strong woman that lives in Noyau, a community 30 minutes distant from Mirebalais. She has been part of the micro loan program with the Saint Louis Parish in partnership with Hands and Hearts with Haiti since July 2015. She started with a loan of \$50.

Because of her steadfastness in repaying this loan, she became eligible for a loan of \$70 which she also repaid. At the present time, she has a loan of \$100.

In October, Casimir lost her only son in a car accident. To show solidarity, the women's group in Noyau went to visit her and her family.

The women decided to collect money to help her in any way they could with the funeral. They managed to collect \$25 USD and then agreed to take \$25 USD from the group savings in order to be able to give her \$50 USD to reduce her worries in her time of grief.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Our partners in Haiti (and those of us working with them) need your prayers. Your monetary support of our efforts would also be appreciated. If you would like to help, donations can be sent to:

Hands and Hearts with Haiti  
9183 Broadview Rd.  
Broadview Hts., OH 44147  
or to

Hands and Hearts with Haiti  
130 St. Matthew Street  
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54301