



November 20, 2018

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I am sitting down to write my annual letter to you, I have just passed my 72nd birthday. I am very grateful that I have achieved this milestone. Furthermore, I have survived a bout with breast cancer, and am feeling very well, thanks to modern medicine and God's and family's help. I thought I would share a little bit of personal news with you, which I rarely do, but I feel so very fortunate that I would like to share this with you, since you have been with me since the beginning of my Haitian adventure. This year I am celebrating my 20th year in Haiti, and have never regretted my decision to live and work in this country.

Also, while I am sitting here and composing this letter, the unrest continues in Port au Prince and other parts of the country. "*Nou bouke*" – "we are tired" -- is what the population is saying. Tired of living in poverty, of living without healthcare, of living with poor schools, or no schools, and without steady income. Just to provide a little bit of perspective, in November of 1988 the exchange rate was 7.50 Gourdes to 1 US Dollar, so 25,000 Gourdes were 3,333.33 US Dollars. In November of this year the exchange rate is 75 Gourdes to 1 US Dollar, so 25,000 Gourdes are now only worth 333.33 US Dollars. With the majority of goods being imported, you can imagine the impact this has on the population in general and the extremely poor in particular.

Do we lose hope? No, but according to Paul Farmer we need to be prepared for the "long defeat", an acceptance that we will lose, but we will do it anyway, if in the process we will relieve someone's suffering.

That is exactly what Haitian Connection has been doing for the past 20 years: in its own small way, it has relieved someone's suffering. It has relieved the suffering of women, those in extreme poverty, by providing them with a monthly stipend of 30.00 Dollars with no strings attached. Rather than wasting that money, as some had predicted, they have started small businesses on their own, and now feel a sense of agency and some control over their lives. This is our newest program, and it is a light in the darkness, because of these women who fight so valiantly to make life just a little better for themselves and their children. If you feel inclined to sponsor a woman for 30.00 Dollars a month, let us know.

We have also relieved the suffering of those without a home, by constructing 3 new houses for women whose houses were destroyed during hurricane Matthew. There is no greater gift than to provide women and their children with a safe place to live.

By providing women with the tools to keep themselves mentally healthy and deal with chronic stress in their lives, we have relieved someone's suffering by reaching out to a number of communities with our mental health program, and have reached so far over 3,000 people. These are tools that are portable and can be shared between members of the communities.

We have also relieved a whole community's suffering by launching a bakery in the community of Doudouch using breadfruit flour from Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery. In all we now have 7 employees, who, with their monthly income can relieve some of their own families' suffering.

Because of my own battle with cancer (imagine there is no radiation treatment available in all of Haiti), I have not been able to work as diligently as in the past on raising funds. So, I am asking you to be especially generous this year, so that we all can relieve someone's suffering.

Please mail your donations to:

Haitian Connection
5300 S South Shore Drive Apt 27
Chicago, IL 60615

or **send via PayPal** on our website at haitianconnection.org

With joy and gratefulness for all that is still good in this world, and best wishes for many Christmas blessings, and continued love and light for 2019,

Renate

P.S. Do check out our revamped website, thanks to Paula Schaffner, where you can read more about **all** of our programs. www.haitianconnection.org

