



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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Gratitude!!

Dear Friends of Haitian Connection,

To everyone who gave during our year-end appeal, we give humble thanks! Your generosity is allowing the work of Haitian Connection to continue in the midst of a non-functioning government, economic crisis, and general upheaval. Thanks to you, Haitian Connection continues to touch hundreds of lives in Jérémie and beyond, and we are so grateful!

Renate

Scholarship Program Expands

It is with a great deal of excitement that Haitian Connection is announcing its expanded scholarship program for 2020. Given the protracted turmoil and unrest in Haiti in 2020, we feel strongly that education needs to play a pivotal role in bringing about lasting change in Haiti. We will strengthen our collaboration with the community of Jean Bellune in one of the poorest sections in the Grand'Anse. Eleven children will benefit from our first-time scholarship in that community. Scholarship recipients were selected by academic and character strength, as well as need. We present eight of them here, but will write more about all of the recipients in future newsletters as we accompany them throughout the school year.



Patricia 3rd grade



Neika 3rd grade



Pierreline 4th grade



Kelitha 4th grade



Anne-Jose 6th grade



Taliann 8th grade



Ricardo 8th grade



Fegens 8th grade



Microcredit Program Continues to Grow

Despite the chaotic situation in Jérémie we were able to incorporate 7 new women members into our microcredit program. There is hope that the current situation has to end some time, and then the small businesses can operate again.

Partners In Parenting Haiti Christmas Party



Despite all the problems in Haiti our kids in the PIPH foster care program in collaboration with Haitian Connection had a wonderful Christmas Party. It was enjoyed by kids and staff alike. Thank you for the hardworking staff, who along with the older kids had a wonderful evening prepared. There was food, presents, skits, dancing and singing. It was heartwarming.



New honors for Pierre-Moise Louis



Greetings,
Congratulations! The U.S. Department of State and IREX are pleased to notify you that you have been selected for the **2020 Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLA) Professional Fellows Program**. You were selected from among more than 2,200 applicants from 37 countries! This prestigious fellowship program brings together 280 of the best and brightest emerging entrepreneurs and business leaders from across the Western Hemisphere for an intensive six-week entrepreneurial leadership development program.

The YLAI Professional Fellows Program will begin on June 7, 2020 and will end July 17, 2020.

Another amazing honor for Haitian Connection's collaborator Pierre-Moise Louis: **He has won one of 13 scholarships to study for a Master's degree in Brazil**. There were thousands of applicants, so the competition was tough. Congratulations Pierre-Moise, we are proud of you. And we will keep all of you abreast as to how Pierre-Moise is doing.

Pierre-Moise is a 2014 graduate of the University of the Nouvelle Grand'Anse and was the valedictorian of his graduating class. He is the founder and CEO of Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery and has been trained in Divergent Thinking Methodology.



Alternative School for Foster Children

In the three months that schools were closed in Haiti, Haitian Connection decided to begin an alternative school for the children in the PIPH foster care program. We started in November, taking advantage of the relative calm in Haiti. The children were happy and excited to have a place to go. Schools are projected to reopen on January 7.





Kids in Foster Care Share Experiences and Hopes

In October, the monthly Partners In Parenting Haiti (PIPH) meeting for children in foster care had to be changed from Saturday to Thursday morning because of the demonstrations called for on Saturday. The kids shared with each other what it is like to live under the current conditions in Haiti. They all want to return to school because they value education. They even pointed out that the children of the political elite are able to go to school overseas, they are not suffering, and it points to one of the reasons for the ongoing demonstrations, the huge economic gap between the 1% of the Haitian elite and everybody else.



Haitian Connection and GAHDA Team Up to Advocate for Breast Health



Despite all the bad news coming out of Haiti, good things are also happening, expressing our solidarity with the Haitian people. Renate, along with 25 doctors and nurses, participated in a training for trainers on how to teach women to do breast self-examinations. These 25 people will go out to churches and each teach 4 women what they have learned with the goal to reach 500 women.

GAHDA, one of Haitian Connection's partners, is preparing mirrors for breast cancer education which will be provided to each of the parishes and chapels in the Diocese of Jérémie. The mirrors are used to help women to do breast self-exams after training by nurses who have themselves undergone this training. This important health screening tool is not taught in medical schools or nursing schools in Haiti.



Water Filters Continue to Provide Clean Water to Jean Bellune Community



Immediately after hurricane Matthew, Haitian Connection was able to distribute water filters to provide clean drinking water to various communities. One of those communities was Jean Bellune. When Renate stayed in Jean Bellune (Sept. 26 to October 8), she was thrilled to see these filters still in good shape and functioning. The kids at the Jean Bellune school really like them, because 4 children can get water at the same time. So many projects in Haiti do not last, so it is encouraging to see something that that continues to function.

New Feeding Program Initiated



Haitian Connection has starting a new program with a two-pronged objective. The primary goal is feeding children. Because of the unrest in Haiti, the Ministry of Education has abandoned all school feeding programs. Therefore, Haitian Connection is working to fill the void somewhat. We are very grateful that Trees That Feed Foundation has partnered with us to provide konparets (a Haitian sweet roll) once a week for 450 students in Jean Bellune, a small rural community outside of

Jérémie. That amounts to 1,800 konparets for the month. The students are very happy, especially since the feeding program provided by the state has ceased to function. But the important thing is that the kids really like the konparets. The secondary objective is helping Jérémie Breadfruit Flour, because JBFN is supplying the breadfruit flour and baking the konparets and Haitian Connection is paying them for it, which helps to keep the business afloat during these difficult times.

P.S. Note the pictures with the hand washing, those are the preschoolers. The school has students from preschool to juniors in high school.



Jérémie Breadfruit and Nursery: Weathering the Storm



To show the impact the current crisis in Haiti has on a small business which was just on the road to standing on its own feet, Pierre-Moise Louis, the owner and manager, writes: "The lock down situation (peyi lok) in Haiti, slows the sales of

Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery (JBFN). We cannot send flour and plants sold to Port Au Prince. Only through the support of TTF (Trees That Feed Foundation) which allows us to send flour and konparets to schools and orphanages, and helps JBFN reap a small benefit. Prior to that, gallons of gas were being sold at 225 gourdes a gallon, but today it is more than 750 gourdes. That makes the price of gas very high, and we need gas to work which elevates our cost. We have 6 staff members working in the nurseries, and the bakery and there are 4 other part-time employees. It is thanks to the small profits that the bakery is generating that we have been able to continue to pay our employees. But despite this, the demand for bread and groceries has decreased because people have no money to buy. Transporting products to Port au Prince is not easy at all. If the price of gas remains high so will the deficit, we will face at JBFN."



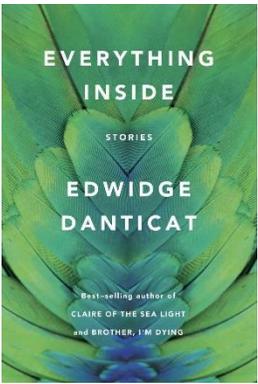
Scholarship Student Stamara: Life in Port au Prince



I am receiving almost daily calls from Stamara. I feel it is important that you know how a young person living in Port au Prince feels, especially one that worked so hard to get where she is. Yesterday it was unmistakable not to hear the desperation in Stamara's voice. To not be able to leave the house for 4 weeks, is too much for any person, and in addition the daily gunfire can make one fall in the abyss of desperation. Stamara was intending to come to Jérémie during her school break, school was supposed to start again in November, but until now they have not even received the grades from the previous session, because the school has been completely shuttered. She is even considering to quit, and look for a school in Santo Domingo. She did

tell me that she had an internship at one of the hospitals, and all they saw on a daily basis were gunshot victims to the point where the hospital had to refuse to accept any additional patients. While she learned a lot about gunshot wounds, she also became more desperate, because she saw how widespread the violence is. She mentioned several times that she cannot go on any longer. When it is possible to come to Jérémie she will come during her break. She also mentioned how difficult it is to find something to eat, and that water is getting rare (drinking water that is). She is losing weight because of that. There is very little comfort one can provide for her, because she is living a reality that a young person should not be living. And I did have to tell her that Jérémie is not much better. There is shooting in Jérémie on a nightly basis which can be heard all around the town.

Book Corner



Everything Inside by Edwidge Danticat New York: Knopf, 2019

Named a Best Book of 2019 by NPR, Time, and BuzzFeed

From the internationally acclaimed, best-selling author of *Brother, I'm Dying*, a collection of vividly imagined stories about community, family, and love.

Rich with hard-won wisdom and humanity, set in locales from Miami and Port-au-Prince to a small unnamed country in the Caribbean and beyond, *Everything Inside* is at once wide in scope and intimate, as it explores the forces that pull us together, or drive us apart, sometimes in the same searing instant.

In these eight powerful, emotionally absorbing stories, a romance unexpectedly sparks between two wounded friends; a marriage ends for what seem like noble reasons, but with irreparable consequences; a young woman holds on to an impossible dream even as she fights for her survival; two lovers reunite after unimaginable tragedy, both for their country and in their lives; a baby's christening brings three generations of a family to a precarious dance between old and new; a man falls to his death in slow motion, reliving the defining moments of the life he is about to lose.

This is the indelible work of a keen observer of the human heart--a master at her best.

Haitian Connection

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) tax exempt organization founded in 2005, which focuses on the needs of women, children and young adults in the Jérémie region of southwest Haiti. A variety of projects have already touched thousands of lives: houses have been built for more than 97 women and their children; a small microcredit program is providing economic opportunity for women in 2 communities; a potable water initiative is giving healthy water to one thousand families; and local school teachers have received training in the Child-to-Child method. Haitian Connection's Divergent Thinking Institute is providing Divergent Thinking seminars all over Haiti.

As a response to the earthquake in January 2010, and its psychological aftermath, Haitian Connection has established a mental health program in Jérémie to provide counseling as people resettle, tally their losses and adjust to a new reality. 27 members of the community have been trained in psychological first aid. This served the greater Jérémie area well after Hurricane Matthew in October of 2016. Our mental health agents were able to hold community meetings to give people an opportunity to debrief and receive some training in stress reduction techniques.

Support Us

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation registered in Illinois and your gifts are tax deductible. Our projects depend on volunteers and the financial support of people who desire to help.

The cost of building a home for a woman and her family in Jérémie is \$2,000. The houses have three rooms and a latrine. You could contribute to a house, or even get your church/organization to sponsor a whole house. After Hurricane Matthew, this has become a priority for people in the region.

Scholarships for needy students from elementary to secondary schools.

Microcredit group: contributions accepted.

Mental Health Program: contributions to mental health center accepted (total cost for one year \$10,000)

Support for training programs in Divergent Thinking, mental health, Child-to-Child, and continuing education. For every program for 25 people we provide a meal for all participants and give the facilitators a stipend (about \$500 per training).

To support our projects financially, donate online by visiting our website at: www.HaitianConnection.org and clicking on the PayPal button.

If you would prefer to send your donation by mail, please address checks to: **Haitian Connection**
5300 South Shore Drive # 27
Chicago, IL 60615

When you order from Amazon.com, giving to Haitian Connection is easy! Simply go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> to get started!

Get Involved

We are looking for volunteers: English teachers, educators, specialists in various fields to give short conferences or seminars.

To volunteer, contact **Renate Schneider** at haitianconnection@gmail.com or by phone at **312/493-3719**; in Haiti: **011/509/3 463-7532**

