



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I write, the number of COVID-19 cases in Haiti approaches 3000. These numbers are estimated to be much higher, because testing is very limited. Friends in Haiti are reporting to me that a number of people are dying with high fevers and difficulty breathing, but they are not officially diagnosed with COVID-19.

Haiti's medical system which was already fragile to begin with, is feeling the pressure, and will soon run out of beds. The whole country only has about 100 ventilators. The government did receive a shipment of PPEs from Taiwan, which is now waiting to be distributed. The distrust against the government is strong, therefore whatever the government is saying people do not believe it and therefore are not following many of the directives issued by the government.

Stigmatization of people infected with the virus is also prevalent, from hospital units burned down because they house or will house COVID patients, to individuals going into hiding, because they have the virus. The lead physician, Dr. Pape, tells of a case where another physician who shows all the signs of COVID-19 is refusing to get tested. He does not want to be labeled with the stigma.

On top of the virus, the new hurricane season which starts June 1, is projected to have a large number of storms, inflation is rampant, now 102 to 104 gouds for one dollar when it was about 70 gouds a year ago. And in all this chaos the government is planning an election in October. Sometimes it feels as if Haiti is the country of Job.

But Job survived and so will Haiti. Haitian Connection is as committed as ever to stand in solidarity with the Haitian people, in particular with the people in the community of Jérémie and environs which we serve. We have fully engaged in community education, prevention and protections. With our partners and collaborators in Jérémie we have been able to

- distribute 1000 masks in the communities of Jean Bellune, Latibolye, Doudouch, and Jérémie
- distribute 300 water buckets with spout and soap for handwashing
- have conducted 5 community outreach educational programs regarding COVID-19
- built 3 new houses for women and their children
- constructed an enclosure for the parish of Jean Bellune, so the construction of their new church can get started
- provided 3 microcredit grants
- organize distribution of 4000 konparets a month to poor communities with grants from Trees that Feed Foundation and with Jérémie Breadfruit Flour and Nursery
- establish a WhatsApp group with kids from our afterschool program in English

We could not do this alone, men *anpil, chay pa lou*, translation Many hands make the load light. Many thanks, and stay safe!

Renate

P.S. We would like to distribute food kits, because people are going hungry. Jérémie has not seen rain in over 60 days. You can always contribute on the Haitian Connection website via the PayPal button.

COVID-19 Effects on Scholarship Students



Hello, my name is **Tibert Frantzia**. I live in Fondwa and I am studying veterinary medicine. Today, I would like sadly sharing my thought about the pandemic of COVID-19 and its impact in my personal life and my study.

Coronavirus is a worldwide pandemic, a highly transmitted disease. It is transmitted from person to person as long as there is a group of people living in the same space. Whenever there is someone infected by the virus, it is easy to transmit it to everyone living in the same community. For this reason, I do not want to rub with others to prevent me from getting this disease. Coronavirus is disruptive, it puts me in a really

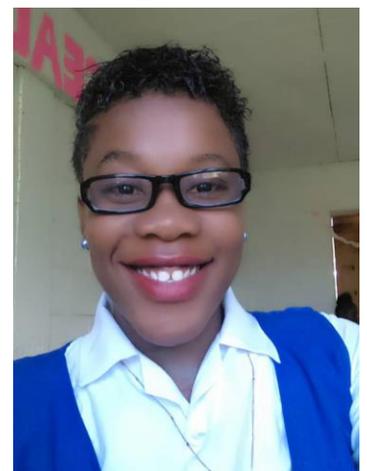
difficult and negative position. I cannot go to university, church, and all other social activities I used to go. It makes me think a lot about if I get it what I will do. I do not see any good strategies take by the government whether to prevent the propagation nor to cure infected people. Recently, I went to the local market, surprisingly, I found that all the product of the first necessity raised. This complicated life because most of the people of the community live day by day with low income. This situation significantly reduces the purchasing power of them. Personally, this situation has affected my life deeply. I have just started my college with a lot of enthusiasts and hope to transform my personal life and my community. Three months after, I get back to home without activities. This raised a lot of bad thinking in my mind and stress. Every day, I follow the news to hear if they find a vaccine, unfortunately, it is not already there. I pray to God to protect us and help us crossing this desert with courage. May God bless all of us.

Hello, I am **Thomas Christella**. I live in Fondwa and I am in the first year of veterinary medicine at the University of Fondwa. Today, I will share my thought about the pandemic of COVID-19 and its impact in my personal life, particularly my study.

Before going through my situation, let me talk about the Coronavirus a little bit. It is a new virus labelled on COVID-19. It is very contagious, and it transmits from people to people. It attacks more aged people and it has several symptoms such as cold, fever, headache, and dry cough. So, it becomes very stressing when someone has one of these symptoms.

For Me, this virus has a significant impact on my life. it prohibits all activities gathering a crowd like church, school, university and so on.

Now I stop going to the two most exciting places I used to. I love to go to church and I am a chorale organizer, I like to animate the rehearsals of my chorale, now I no longer have that to do. I love my university because it guides me to become a useful woman for the others, now I have no more courses to follow, homework to do, presentations to present. I feel like my life is on hold and this virus is putting me behind in achieving my dreams. I am stressed and it reduces the ability to think about the future. I hope God helps scientists find an adequate solution as soon as possible as we return to real life



Haitian Connection Responds to COVID-19



Haitian Connection has distributed 150 water buckets with spouts to the community of Jean Bellune via St. Bernard de Clairvaux parish. Jean Bellune is in a remote rural area. Not much help is getting there. We are proud of our collaboration with the parish, a valued partner of ours. We bought the spouts and put them in the buckets ourselves, thus keeping the cost down. A water filter was added to each bucket which allows recipients to have safe drinking water, and soap was provided so people can wash their hands. A number of thank you messages have reached us. "Mesi anpil, mwen resevwa bokit la. Nou te bezwen anpil, anpil." "Mesi, bondye va beni ou." Thank you, Fr. Jean-Rony, pastor of St. Bernard de Clairvaux, for your great effort and collaboration.



We are continuing to pay our employees and looking for further support and opportunities to provide jobs in the community.



Haitian Connection, in collaboration with Fondase, has formed a mask making cooperative in Fondwa, the community where my love for Haiti first blossomed. This allows the workers to earn a small salary, and the masks are distributed for free.



We are also pushing this effort in the rural community of Jean Bellune. Local people are employed to sew the masks which, puts money back into

the community. So far, we have made over 200 hundred masks.

Construction in Jean Bellune Provides Jobs



The parish of St. Bernard de Clairvaux needs a new church. Haitian Connection is sponsoring the enclosure of the church yard, so that eventually a new church building can be built. This project not only helps the church, but by providing employment for local workers, puts money back into the community.



COVID-19 Trainings



Haitian Connection has conducted three trainings on COVID-19 in rural community of Latibolye, to prepare the people for proper handwashing and wearing masks. We passed out educational material as well as soap and some buckets, we demonstrated proper hand washing



and gave the participants a chance to ask questions so they can be better informed about the virus. The masks you see in the photos have been paid for by Haitian Connection, and they are made by a young tailor in the community of Latibolye.



A Song and Prayer for These Times

From Fr. Rick Frechette who runs one of the main COVID-19 centers in Port au Prince at St. Luke's Hospital: This is our prayer as COVID 19 increases in Haiti over these weeks. We are in direct care of the COVID patients at St Luke Hospital, so many more coming to us every day. This is a prayer to the Holy Spirit for Haiti and for you, and for the whole world. It is composed of two blended hymns one spanning 11 centuries of plagues, pandemics and wars, and the second, a modern supplication in Haitian Creole.

Kowona

Coronavirus

Deja frape di

Already hits us hard

Kraze pou detwi

crushes and destroys

Tout pitit ou yo

your dear children

Souple ban nou tout sajes

Please give us the wisdom

Ban nou tout tandres

and give us the tenderness

Anve malad yo

that we need to care for the sick

Tanpri klere je nou yo

Please give us the clear vision

Pou nou ka konprann

and the good understanding

Kijan pou nou jwenn laviktwa

that we need to find salvation

Lord, we pray

For friends across the sea

In Spain and Italy

France and USA

We pray for friends in Germany

Friends we never see

May they all be healed

We pray bless them night and day

Bring them a new day

Of life and harmony.

Just as our Haitian friends express their solidarity with all those that suffer from COVID-19, Haitian Connection is declares its solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and all those who work for a just society. No justice, no peace.

Jérémie Breadfruit Flour Feeds Orphans

A wonderful example of collaboration for kids in need. Jérémie Breadfruit Flour is producing 4000 konparets (a Haitian sweet role) monthly for several orphanages and very poor rural communities. With Haiti facing severe food shortages and skyrocketing prices this is a significant effort. This effort is underwritten by Trees That Feed Foundation, and the recipients are organized by Haitian Connection. Haiti is facing severe food shortages; this is a great effort to mitigate a possible famine. These photos show the Tozia orphanage in Jean Bellune, a remote rural area in the Grand'Anse.



House Building Continues to Offer New Opportunities to Women

Haitian Connection is proud and pleased that despite all the problems in Haiti we have been able to continue our house construction thanks to the amazing collaboration of our Haitian partners. Women will have a safe place to live, that is their house and nobody can take it away from them. A dream come true for women who have never had their own place.



Luviette Laguerre is 34 years old. She has 3 children ages 14, 10, 5. They all go to school. There are 5 people living in the house. The father of the children is not involved. Luviette does small commerce.



The proud new owner of this house is **Carline Metayer**. She is 35 years old. She has 5 kids ages 18, 16, 14, 12 and 8. All the kids go to school, and she does small commerce to have some money.



This new homeowner is **Virginie Deruisseau**. She is 48 years old. She has 4 children ages 30, 28, 26, 23. One of her kids is still in school. Her husband left her many years ago. She engages in small commerce.



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**

