



The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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A Letter from Our Director

Dear Friends and Supporters of Haitian Connection

From March 21 to August 3, 2020, there are over 8,200 confirmed corona cases in Haiti. 193 Haitians have died. While the numbers continue to climb, the number of new infected cases seem to decrease. It remains to be seen what happens as school opens this month. It is possible that we could see an increase again. Just like in the US parents are anxious and hesitant to send their kids back to school. While people followed especially the instructions of handwashing and wearing face masks, some of that is winding down. But overall handwashing has become a habit now, which is a good thing. But here are some things to consider:

- Galloping inflation, which is around 25%, encourages hunger in corona times. The staple food is becoming increasingly unaffordable. There are also areas in the country that could not bring in crops due to drought at the beginning of 2020. As a result, life becomes extremely expensive, especially for imported staple foods. So, the people suffer from hunger. 80% of the population live in poverty - and the trend is rising! In addition, thousands of Haitians abroad have become unemployed and can hardly support their families in Haiti.
- Haitian Connection stands in solidarity with the Haitian people in general, and the people of the Grand'Anse and Jérémie in particular. We have made masks, distributed water buckets, soap and Clorox, food, and helped with surgery and medical expenses of several families, and increased our loans to the microcredit groups. We are planning a community store in Latibolye so people can buy what they need right in their home community instead of having to travel 2 hours to Jérémie. Two new houses for women and their children are almost completed. Our goal of 5 houses per year has been accomplished. Those are small things, but they do help, and the people know that we stand with them.

As you can see our work continues despite all the obstacles. We are grateful for all the monetary gifts received, and as schools are getting ready to open, we will need additional funds. If you are able please contribute.

Peace and Blessings to all of you,

Renate



Community Store Opens in Latibolye



Haitian Connection is very proud of Esther Jacques who proposed to have a community store in Latibolye, a community about 2 hours away from Jérémie. Latibolye does not have any stores, so people are forced to travel to Jérémie for their basic needs. This has become very costly, transportation has quadrupled. Haitian Connection is underwriting this entrepreneurial effort organized by a woman. Esther is selling a variety of rice, oil, flour, sugar, yeast for baking, and much more.

Partners in Parenting Haiti Offers Summer Enrichment Program



Partners in Parenting Haiti, a partner of Haitian Connection, has an educational summer program for kids of PIPH, since so much school was lost this year. Even though school might open August 17, it is questionable with so many coronavirus cases in Haiti. (Update: private schools did reopen on August 17, including Jean Wesley School in Jérémie. See item below.)



Lack of Tourism Affects Local Artist



Renate describes Moro Baruk as “one of the most creative people I know. He is an exceptional artist, using a variety of media.” Mr. Baruk is an Egyptian Jew of the Baha’i faith, and through him Renate has learned a lot about the Baha’i religion. While she is not a convert, she considers herself a friend of the Baha’i people. Moro and his wife Paule came to Haiti almost 40 years ago as missionaries, and they have lived most of that time in Jacmel, a city that is known as the artist capital. Renate visits them often when in Haiti, and it is always a delight.

With the unstable political situation and the coronavirus pandemic, life has become difficult for them, because visitors are no longer coming to Haiti. We are attaching the catalogue of Moro's current work. If you are interested in ordering a painting, Moro will ship it at a reasonable cost.



Haitian Connection Distributes Food Throughout Jérémie Region

The Jérémie region has suffered a severe drought, an increase in coronavirus cases, rising prices to where food is becoming unaffordable, an unstable political situation, and lack of medical care. Doctors' clinics are closing and the local hospital is no longer accepting patients, due to lack of protective equipment. In the meantime, people are experiencing hunger. We working with our partners in Latibolye with strong women's leadership to provide food supplies to women and their families, and would like to do more. If you feel would like to donate you can do so on the Haitian Connection website.



Haitian Connection is conducting their second food distribution in the community of Jean Bellune along with our partners from St. Bernard de Clairvaux parish. It is a community with a lot of poverty and very few resources, and we are blessed to be able to do this. The photos below were taken during a couple of different events.



Patronal Feast Day Celebrated at St. Bernard de Clairvaux



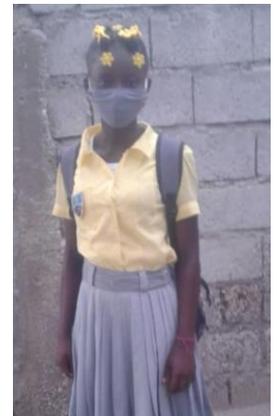
This congregation in the community of Jean Bellune, with pastor Fr. Jean-Rony, is one of our partners. The Mass took place outdoors, because the church building was destroyed during hurricane Matthew. While the funds for rebuilding are available through a contractor in Port au Prince, due to insecurity, the coronavirus, and many

bureaucratic hoops, reconstruction has not begun. The beautiful decorations were put up by the parish. The masks you see were provided by Haitian Connection. Jean Bellune is one of the poorest communities in the Grand'Anse; still, they spared no effort for a beautiful celebration.



School is Back in Session

Jean Wesley School in Jérémie resumed classes on August 17. The first day went smoothly, with hand washing stations set up and most students wearing masks. It is difficult for the kids to keep their masks on in the classroom, because the weather is very hot. State schools have not reopened yet, because the teachers have not been paid. From August 17 to mid-October the schools are making up for the time missed because of the Coronavirus. Then there will be a brief break, and the new school year will begin in November. This task is further complicated by the fact that schools in Jérémie were also closed in October, November and December 2019 because of political unrest. It will be a challenge for the students to make up all that lost learning time, but the kids are happy to be back in school.



Jérémie Street Kids Receive Assistance During Coronavirus



Congratulations to Love Kendy and his team for their effort of helping street kids in Jérémie. JDPH (in English: Young People for Human Rights) provided 50 children with sanitary kits and food items as well as some training on how to prevent coronavirus. Haitian Connection was a sponsor for this event which was completely and totally planned by the young people involved. The purpose of JDPH is to help street children. The group is composed of middle and high school students, and their motto is Street Children: let's not forget them.

Update from Fr. Frechette in Port au Prince

Dear family & friends,

Since Coronavirus has been lethal primarily for adults, we remember clearly the day of our first known case at St Luke Hospital (Port au Prince, Haiti) on March 16, 2020. Since then, we have welcomed 1,068 proven or highly suspect cases. Of these, 703 were seriously ill and needed admission our 100 bed Coronavirus unit. Of these 703 admitted, 173 did not survive the tough battle raging in their lungs, and 98 of these were dead on arrival. This is the passing of our time, marked in statistics. There is also the human measure of these days. Think of emotions and anguish of the sick people, who were ashamed of the “Corona” label, who were ostracized and threatened by a panicked population, and were scared of both dying and living. Think of the emotions and anguish for all of us care givers, with so many of our patients being either employees or friends, neighbors from past and present, and infected members of our own team, whose very service to the Covid 19 patients made them ill. And how this multiplied the fear and anxiety in all of us, with every new cough or slight fever. We constantly offered calm, reassuring words not to give up, to be patient, to be courageous and hopeful. We fought alongside those with falling oxygen levels, as we leveraged all available treatments to help them, as well as keeping them on their sides or stomachs, making teas for them, praying with them and for them, blessing them with the holy oils, - even as we looked at each other through masks and fogged goggles with deep worry.

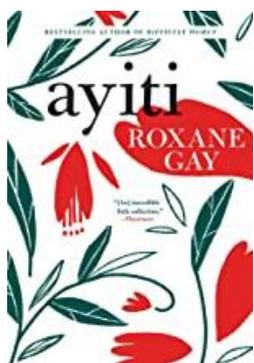
These are tough times for all of us, hands down. Yet we stand a chance to grow in wisdom, in grace and in the discovery of surprising solutions to many problems, solutions which will guarantee well-being for the whole human family and the earth itself. We need to seek truth together, freely and in good will.

Sincerely,

Fr Rick Frechette CP DO

August 11, 2020

Book Corner



Aiyiti by Roxane Gay; Grove Press, 2018

Clever and haunting by turns, *Aiyiti* explores the Haitian diaspora experience. A married couple seeking boat passage to America prepares to leave their homeland. A mother takes a foreign soldier into her home as a boarder, and into her bed. And a woman conceives a daughter on the bank of a river while fleeing a horrific massacre, a daughter who later moves to America for a new life but is perpetually haunted by the mysterious scent of blood. Wise, fanciful, and daring, *Aiyiti* is the book that put Roxane Gay on the map and now, with two previously uncollected stories, confirms her singular vision.

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**

