



Community Development
One Village at a Time

Bonjour!

The Haiti Community Support Bi-Annual Newsletter
www.haitisupport.org

Bonjou! Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2008 - Published May 2008

Letter From Mathilde:

For each of my 41 years on this earth, my country, Haiti, has been a place of terrible suffering and despair. I've wondered all my life how this holocaust could be allowed to continue, year after year, with no meaningful intervention from the developed world.

Recent press stories about mud cookies and deforestation, food rotting in the ports, and

hunger riots in the cities are shocking and discouraging. But Haiti has been this way on and off since my earliest memories. I'm worried if that's all people hear they'll just completely give up on us.

Sensational stories hide the greater truth: ***That Haiti's survivors are eager to rebuild their ravaged country – if given even minimal help.*** Deep in the mountains, in the poorest and most forgotten of villages, our school kids and their parents are today making great progress; planting a community garden, running the school lunch program, and learning new skills. Men and women who have survived the odds already just by staying alive, defy the odds again, to build a school and a medical clinic.

Making progress in Haiti is difficult and exciting work. You've been a part of our success. *We're a young organization, and early supporters like you are especially important to our future.* My husband and I have been working in Haiti for the love and exhilaration of success. Keeping us going has been your support and encouragements, and especially the hard work and dedication of our village leaders in Haiti. I hope you enjoy reading some good news out of Haiti. Feel proud! It's news you are helping to make happen! Thank you!



Mathilde Aurelien-Wilson
Director, HCS

March 08: A Jet Trip to the Mountains with Volunteers!



Normally it takes two days to reach Haiti's capital Port au Prince. (two more to get to Au Centre/Beaumont). Thanks to a fine aviator and supporter, on March 3rd 2008 a working group flew directly to Haiti's capital aboard a sleek corporate jet; taking almost two days off of the normal trip..

On the trip: a pediatrician, a journalist, a women's organizer, and HCS co-directors. In a week we accomplished a lot!



On arrival Au Centre was a hive of activity. One group of villagers was transporting materials to the site of the new schoolhouse. A mason team was laying block for walls. Another working on improving the collection and sanitation of the existing town spring, The Renaissance Elementary School was in full swing, 125 kids taking classes and getting a hot lunch. And with fields next to the new school being planted with food crops.

In a coffee warehouse nearby a boisterous women's meeting; singing and dancing changes to quiet concentration as two new treadle sewing machines, are installed by HCS founding supporter *Ulla Neuburger*.

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March 2008 Work Trip to Au Centre, Haiti

Establishing the Women's Learning Center:



"We set up 2 new treadle sewing machines in the coffee warehouse. By 8 o'clock AM more than 20 women of all ages had arrived, excited and ready to start. Myrlene, a born community leader, starting chanting blessings, intentions and wonderful inspirations in the most powerful voice,

clapping hands and stomping feet. All women joined in, creating energy strong enough to lift the roof.

They worked with amazing concentration! It was a very moving sight; so smart and determined a group working toward the same goal with each other's support.

The sense of an opportunity to become more independent and self-sufficient showed in the women's shining eyes. Tita and Myrlene will continue the group sessions and will add art-and-craft instruction. I miss them and I can't wait to hear a report about their progress."

--Ulla Neuburger, Supporter

A Journalist's View:

"The phrase that keeps coming to mind when I think of Haiti, and look at pictures of our trip, is "What if?" What if each of those eager-faced and beautiful children, and each of those welcoming and dignified adults, had the basic necessities we all take for granted -- running water, enough food, a knowledge of the written word and of the world outside their small village -- what could they accomplish? Why are they any less deserving than you or me? And doesn't the world deserve the gifts they could bring? It was so heartening to see what **Haiti Community Support** is doing there, and so heartbreaking to think about what more could be done -- not by some outside agency, but people giving to people, one on one, as Bruce and Mathilde are doing."



--Kathie Ragsdale, Journalist

Wildogfarm@AOL.com

Medical Situation- What a Doctor Sees:

"A visit to the remote Haitian village of Au Centre is a dizzying descent from the First World into the most impoverished Third. I witnessed illnesses and conditions I'd not thought about since medical school: parasites, malnutrition, anemia, insect infestation. The village has no pure water and no sanitation.



And yet there are bright children attending school there, with a big new facility under construction. A new water source has been located and is awaiting a pipe. The school kids are not only learning the basics, but have been introduced to tooth brushes and are getting a free meal each day, often their only one. A doctor has been induced to visit regularly, medicines are becoming available. Thanks to the programs now running, the Au Centre students look noticeably brighter and more eager than children in neighboring villages who have dull expressions and reddish hair typical of severe malnutrition and anemia.

To improve medical care, nutrition and education by 10% in a First World setting costs many millions.

To improve conditions 50% in Au Centre costs a few hundred. I have seen it."

--Dr. Bill Scott with Dr. Lajeau and patient



Our 4th Annual Fund Raiser Most Successful Ever

Dateline: Jan 6, 2008 Mt. Victory Camp, St. Croix US Virgin Is.

"Every year it gets better and better!"



How does HCS raise the operating budget of the school and hot lunch program? It starts with a great outdoor venue: **Mount Victory Camp** again hosted over 250 people for a day of music, food, and lively fun!

Our annual bash had a lot of things going on: Live auction of kayaks and outdoor gear, music by Monty Thompson's Drums of Africa, dance music by Quelbe' great Jamesie Brewster and his All Star Band. Silent auctions with lots of things donated by local businesses, a traditional pig roast with a huge spread of Caribbean dishes, land tortoises roaming the scene, a lively Jungle Bar, dance contests.

We raised the \$35,000 needed to continue our important education and food programs in the village. For another year 125 kids have a chance to learn. Dozens of new people signed up for the **Sponsor a Child Program**. New volunteers coming forward.

What You Can Do: You can help! This year we're starting early on organizing our Jan '09 fundraising season. We need volunteers. Phone Mandy at 340-773-2022

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Elsewhere **Dr. Bill Scott** sits in with our visiting doctor on a day's worth of examinations and treatments for school kids and some villagers. Now, with up-close knowledge of conditions, he's better able to spearhead efforts to establish a clinic.

Journalist, **Kathie Ragsdale**, taking a run with the porters to the sand mine, chatting up the market ladies at the cross roads, hanging out at the school, hearing and seeing the impossible challenges these peasant farmers face in their efforts to stay alive and provide for their families.

Most frequently commented on by all our group: how intent and effectively the village is working together to make things happen. About the palpable joy in the air as hope comes alive.

News from Haiti : Difficult Times

The headlines tell the sad story. With worldwide food prices rising, Haiti's poorest are placed in peril. After five years of promises from the developed nations, still almost no aid is reaching Haiti's poorest.

For our villagers, the rising food prices have less effect than on the city folks. Even in the best of times, little rice and other import food is purchased by Au Centre residents. Peasant farmers depend on their own skills as agriculturist...and on the luck of good weather.

Our hot lunch program at the Renaissance School does depend on rice, and we'll need to shoulder the big increases in cost for this staple. But we are planting our community garden; and we'll take more and more out of the ground as time goes on.

Its Official: Haiti Community Support Achieves full IRS non-Profit Status!

As the new year dawned Haiti Community Support achieved a new milestone. The letter from the IRS says it all: *"We are pleased to inform you...we have determined that you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501 (c) (3)... Contributions to you are deductible.....You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, ...or gifts...."* All donations given to HCS in the previous 3 years are tax deductible. We can now also receive grants from larger institutions, so we'll be applying for funding for a water system, and other major projects in the coming year.

Qualifying for our exemption involved many hours of competent and dedicated work. We are especially grateful to **Hillair Bell** who spearheaded the effort, backed up by our wonderful volunteer bookkeeper **Rita Walcott**, Accountant **Joseph Lennox**, and **Jamila Hammad**. Thanks team!

Impressions of a School Visit:



...of uniformed boys and girls, sitting shoulder to shoulder in the classrooms, calling "Bounjour, Madame!" One blackboard per classroom, friendly young teachers, no paper to write on, no power, but a lunch program of rice and beans five times a week! It seems like a miracle in this poor harsh environment."

--Ulla Neuburger

Thanks to **Elizabeth O'Tool** for helping us introduce art to the Renaissance School. Her donation of many art prints donated to our March trip brings beauty to the village.

In Loving Memory:

of my brother-friend

Jean Mari Romain

(August 1964- March 2008)



Young progressive Agronomist, he spent 10 years promoting rural development as a University teacher, as a technician training small farmers and as Supervisor of the National Park *La Viste* in Jacmel, Haiti. He died because he refused to stop improving the suffering of peasant farmers. It is a terrible personal loss. I'll miss him so much. Haiti's loss is even greater.

Jean Mari and his wife Helen Spraos, a native of Great Britain, have supported Haiti Community Support from its inception. Our family stays in their home when we conduct business in Port-au-Prince.

Au revoir JeanMa, Mathilde

Volunteer Profile:

HCS Web Masters: Bob Sifniades & Jamila Hammad



We owe our success to a core of dedicated volunteers. Some of these are a life blood to us: These two long-term supporters of HCS keep our web pages updated and functioning and are really great! Bob Sifniades has logged countless hours keeping our web pages updated and attractive. Partner Jamila Hammad has

ensured that our on-line donation system Click&Pledge, is functioning, upgraded, and used.

Said Bob, when asked what brought him to community development in the 3rd world: "*In the developed world, we have ready access to food, clean water, medical care, education, and much more. Helping the third world to achieve just the basics is simply the right thing to do.*"

Some of the Things We Need!

Toyota Land Cruiser (or similar) 4X4 SUV or Truck.

Desktop/Laptop Computer

Video Camcorder

Photo Voltaic Panels/Inverter.

School Furnishings: Do you have a good contact in the states for old school desks, chairs, library and science lab furniture? We have a whole school to outfit!

Frequent Flier Miles: We travel to the states for buying trips and to talk to donors, also to Haiti regularly. Travel is a big expense – got miles?

Condo or Apartment in New York/Miami/Boston? For buying and speaking trips to the states.

Corporate Jet Travel

Digital Projector

Call for Volunteers!

Helping Haiti Community Support is a great way to get more involved in doing something *directly* to alleviate pointless suffering. We are a young organization – we need smart hardworking confederates to join us in doing the impossible. **We need:**

Grant Writer, Public Relations Support, Event and Raffle Coordinators, Donor Response/Membership Secretary

Most work can be done from your own computer, in 2-6 hours per week. Call Mandy at (340) 773-2022.



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Haiti Community Support, Inc.

P.O. Box 696

Frederiksted, St Croix,

US Virgin Islands 00841

