



# Haiti Outreach Newsletter

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## La Victoire School Is Open!

With prayers, speeches by government and school officials, and over 70 people in attendance, the La Victoire Public Secondary School was inaugurated on Monday, October 11, 2010. The event lasted three hours, and the turning over of the keys to the school was quite a ritual. The keys were passed from one group to another, starting in the hands of Haiti Outreach Community Development Manager



Roge Michel and Project Manager Isaac Desloches to eventually end up in the hand of the school administrator. Part of the ritual was “blessing” the keys by dousing them in champagne.

Veroline Dacane (second from left) likes the school because it is so much closer to her home and her family only pays 1000 gourdes (\$25 US) for the entire year.

Officials present and speaking included the Ministry of Education Director of the Northern Department, three School Inspectors, the Senator of the North Department, the Deputy of Pignon, Rankit, La Viktwa, the mayor of La Victoire, and others. Also in attendance were two Caribbean Radio staff who apparently were doing a live radio broadcast of the event.

Each speaker discussed the activities behind the realization of the school: the time involved, the formation and development of the community committee, the property issue, and the actual school construction. They then officially announced the day the school will start to be put into use: Monday, October 18. There was also a meal served following the event. It was a great celebration for this community. They now have their own public secondary school building so that over 400 teenage children will have the opportunity to continue their education. Without this school, either the children would not be able to complete their education, or they would have to travel long distances to live in a different community, with their parents having to pay for that significant extra expense that very few could afford.

We are very grateful to our many supporters who made donations to make this school possible, and particularly to many Rotary Clubs and the Rotary Partnership for Haiti Committee that worked for two years to raise the money to make this school a reality! Mesi – thank you all!

We are now beginning to collect donations and raise funds for our next public school, in the town of Rankit. They also do not have a public secondary school. By raising the money and building the Rankit school, the two closest towns to Pignon that do not have a public secondary school will have them. This will be a remarkable achievement for this area, raising the education level of all the children who live there. If you would like to support the building of this school please designate your tax-deductible donation for the Rankit school.

## New Partnerships Mean More Clean Water for Haitians

Haiti Outreach has entered into three new project partnerships that will support our community development work and bring clean water to thousands of people in Haiti over the next few years. They include building a new water system in the town of Pignon, rehabilitating 40 broken wells and drilling 20 new wells in the Pignon and San Raphael areas, and rehabilitating 30 broken wells on the island of La Gonave. Even more important for the sustainability of these water systems, we are working with these communities to create a water management committee for each one, in keeping with our community development model of having the people in the communities be responsible for their

maintenance and repairs. All of these projects are now underway, which will help bring clean water to these communities to counteract the outbreak of cholera in Haiti that has become an increasing problem.

The Pignon water system is a joint collaboration with the Illinois Institute of Technology students, who designed much of the system, the Community Coalition for Haiti, Haiti Outreach, the town government of Pignon, and the Haitian ministry for potable water and sanitation: DINEPA. This is a very large project and will take at least two years to complete. It will eventually allow hundreds, possibly thousands of people to have potable water brought into their homes, if they chose to pay for it.

Water.org is a non-profit organization that supports clean water projects in 8 countries in the world. Haiti Outreach is their certified partner in Haiti. This project takes place in the Pignon and San Raphael areas and will last for two years. When completed, it should provide clean water for at least 30,000 people.

The InterAmerican Development Bank is providing financial support to the Haitian government ministry DINEPA for the rehabilitation of 30 wells on La Gonave. Haiti Outreach and the Chicago engineering firm V3 were awarded the joint venture contract to conduct geological studies, repair these wells, and create the water management committees that will sustain the wells once they are fixed. This project will last for one year and provide clean water for about 15,000 people.

We are extremely pleased to achieve this new level of community development work with our clean water initiatives. We are very grateful to our donors and partners who have supported our life-changing work in Haiti. Thousands and thousands of people benefit every day in Haiti because of your generosity. Now, more than ever, the people of Haiti need us to continue this work.

## 2nd Annual Deep Freeze January 15

The Maple Grove Rotary Club, in conjunction with the Rotary Partnership For Haiti, is sponsoring the second annual Deep Freeze Dunk on Saturday, January 15 at the Fish Lake Regional Park in Maple Grove. This event will raise funds for a new public secondary school in the town of Rankit, Haiti. This town does not have a public secondary school for its 400+ teenagers.

All courageous people are invited to join the fun, find sponsors that will support them to “jump in the lake”. Last year the Dunkers raised over \$20,000 - a remarkable achievement for the first year of this event. This year they hope to raise even more money, in commemoration of the first anniversary of the devastating Haitian earthquake of January 12, 2010.

The Rotary Partnership For Haiti, consisting of various Rotary Clubs in Minnesota and Wisconsin, along with other generous individuals, raised and donated around \$170,000 to build the new basic public secondary school in La Victoire. (See the story in this newsletter about the celebration and opening of the school). Rankit is about 10 miles from Pignon, where Haiti Outreach is based. The agreement we have with the Haitian Ministry of Education is that if we build the school, they will hire the teachers and staff to run the school, thus making it sustainable by the people of Haiti.

Dunkers can register online at [www.RotaryPartnershipForHaiti.org](http://www.RotaryPartnershipForHaiti.org) and donors can go to that web site, select their Dunker, and donate to their dunk. Bring your family, social club, fellow workers, church group – join the fun and help build a school for teenagers that have NO school to attend beyond 6<sup>th</sup> grade! If you or your company would like to donate money to underwrite the costs and sponsor this event, or would like more information, please contact the Haiti Outreach office at 612-929-1122. You will receive public recognition for your sponsorship on the web site, the brochure, and that day at the event.

## Cholera Hits Haiti

Cholera, a waterborne bacterial infection, has come to Haiti after being absent for over 50 years. Cases first were identified in the Artibonite Valley, 2 mountain ranges south and west of Haiti Outreach's headquarters in Pignon.

While no one knows exactly how cholera came to Haiti, one thought is that the South Asian strain was carried into Haiti by U.N. peacekeepers from Nepal that are stationed in Mirebalais, along the Riveire de l' Artibonite (Artibonite River). Their sanitation facilities are known to be less than ideal in that location. Others have disputed that that is possible, and are saying that the protests and blame about this are politically motivated to stir up trouble for the impending elections. The first cases of cholera were in people down river from Mirebalais –closer to St. Marc– near the mouth of the river.

A person can get cholera by drinking water or eating food contaminated with the cholera bacterium. It does not spread directly from one person to another, but rather through feces or vomit from an infected person. In most cases, rapid rehydration from drinking water containing salts and sugars can fight the disease. In severe cases, intravenous rehydration and antibiotics can shorten the attacks and reduce the spread of cholera.

At this time Haiti Outreach continues to plan trips to Pignon this winter, but we will watch the situation closely as trip dates near. The drinking water source at our Guest House is enclosed and monitored, so there is essentially no chance of contamination. We have been distributing and posting a couple thousand notices in the Pignon area on the importance of proper sanitation and hand washing with soap to avoid cholera. While a couple cases have been reported in the Pignon area, it should not hit this area hard, thanks to the multiple clean wells we have drilled over the years, which are hard to contaminate. We always tell our travelers to wash their hands well before eating or putting anything into their mouths, as this can truly prevent the problem.

Sources: Miami Herald; Neil Van Dine, Haiti Outreach Country Director

## Elections in Haiti Scheduled for Nov. 28

The Presidency and all Parliamentary seats are up for election on November 28<sup>th</sup>. The Haitian Parliament consists of a Senate and a House of Deputies, like our House of Representatives. The President of Haiti cannot serve more than one term in a row, according to the Haitian constitution. So he cannot run for re-election. Of the 19 presidential candidates on the ballot, 2 leaders have emerged. One, Jude Célestin of the INTE party is the hand-picked candidate of current President René Préval. Célestin was the former founder and executive director of the government's road-building outfit, the National Center of Equipment. The other top candidate is long time opposition leader Mirlande Manigat of the RDNP party. She is a professor and is a former first lady. Her husband Leslie Manigat was inaugurated as president on February 7, 1988, but was overthrown in a coup 4 months later.

Some candidates have suggested that the elections be delayed due to the cholera outbreak, but at the time this article is written, the election date is still Sunday, November 28<sup>th</sup>. It will take a week or two to count all the ballots. If a candidate does not receive 50% of the votes cast, then there will be a run-off election. We expect that the Haitian election will be in the news at the time you receive this newsletter. We hope that this important transition of power will be conducted peacefully and fairly.

## Coming Events with Haiti Outreach

**January 15** – Noon – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Deep Freeze Dunk in Maple Grove – raising funds for Rankit Public Secondary School – updates on [www.RotaryPartnershipforHaiti.org](http://www.RotaryPartnershipforHaiti.org) and [www.HaitiOutreach.org](http://www.HaitiOutreach.org).

**February 20 – 28** – All-Women Group Trip to Haiti

**February 25** – Wine and Cheese Tasting Fundraiser – Minnehada Country Club – Minneapolis – sponsored by the Minneapolis Uptown Rotary Club – watch the web site for details

**March 17 – 25** – Open Trip to Haiti

**Late April/Early May** – Date TBD – Spring Luncheon – watch the web site for details

**September 17** – Annual Fall Gala

## Fall Gala Has Record Attendance

On Saturday, October 2, we held our annual Fall Gala, with a record 237 people in attendance. The evening began with rolling photos accompanied by Haitian music, a social hour with cocktails, many silent auction items on which to bid, and opportunities to sign up for the Golden Ticket Raffle and Great Gatherings. This was also a time for the opportunity to greet old friends and new. As the dinner began, people noticed that there was no water on their tables. This was on purpose, as Board Member Jim Gresham invited one person from each table to “come to the well” and get their pitcher of water, while Daphnee Pierre did a wonderful dance on stage to a Haitian song. Jim



Daphnee Pierre, born in Haiti, performs at the Gala.

noted how easily we take clean water for granted in the U.S. and pointed out the difficulty of doing this in Haiti. The importance of the evening hit home right away as he gave a toast to clean water in Haiti, a major commitment of Haiti Outreach.

The tasty dinner was served with wine donated by a few supporters. The Master of Ceremonies Pastor Brad Froslee then introduced the program of speakers, starting with Board Chair Peg Keenan, followed by Executive Director Dale Snyder and Country Director Neil Van Dine. Neil spoke a little about the earthquake experience and the response by Haiti Outreach. He then talked about the importance of sustainable wells – ones that do not break down for very long because they are rapidly fixed by the community themselves when they do. This is the strength of the Haiti Outreach model of community development, that we train a community well management committee to manage their well, teach the skills to fix them, and set up a savings account so that the money will be there when funds are needed for repairs. This allows each well to provide many more “water years” of use, multiplying the value derived from the initial expense of creating the well.

Following the program, it was time for a little fun. We first held the Golden Ticket Raffle drawing, which was won by Rod Fisher, who chose the St. Paul Hotel dinner and overnight stay as his prize. This was followed by the \$20 game – a heads or tails game where you pay \$20 to have the chance to win the prize, which was a Kindle – the electronic reader. Over 65 people participated, and the winner was college student Alex Hoiseth. The live auction was next, where bidding was exciting on the remaining 11 items, featuring everything from a Haitian Rum Basket to a week in a condo in Costa Rica.

Haiti Outreach supporter Karen Larson then gave a brief talk about our need for sturdy pick-up trucks, a vital transportation tool in our community development work in Haiti. We were hoping to raise \$60,000 in the Fund-A-Need portion of our evening, enough for 2 good quality used GMC or Chevy pick-up trucks. We almost made our goal, raising over \$50,000 to conclude the evening. But we were very pleased with that level of participation, which was added to our many other fundraising opportunities at the Gala.

We have so many people to thank for making this event a huge success. Many people donated silent auction items, others live auction items or Great Gatherings. We also had a large number of volunteers to thank and in particular our co-chairs Connie Branson and Nancy Fisher. We thank everyone for their outstanding participation as we look forward to our next Fall Gala on September 17, 2011. Mark your calendars now!

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR  
CURRENT INFORMATION ON ALL  
HAITI OUTREACH EVENTS –  
[www.HaitiOutreach.org](http://www.HaitiOutreach.org)