

Haiti Outreach Newsletter

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Spring Fundraiser Set for May 15th - Focuses on Need for Well Parts

Haiti Outreach will have a “free” informational and fundraising luncheon May 15th. The goal of the luncheon is for supporters, their friends, relatives and co-workers to come learn about the work we are doing in Haiti. While the lunch itself is free for guests, monies raised at the luncheon will go towards the cost of shipping a container of well parts from India to Haiti. The luncheon is Tuesday, May 15th, at The Marsh Fitness Center, 15000 Minnetonka Blvd, in Minnetonka, MN. To respect the time guests are taking out of their work day, it will start promptly at 12 noon and end promptly at 1:00 pm.

The need for well parts is immediate and crucial now that our new well drilling rig nearly doubles our well

drilling capacity. The Haitian government identified the Mark II pump that is manufactured in India as the one to be universally used throughout the country. In support of this standardization, Haiti Outreach uses this pump and has purchased a container of 75 Mark II pumps with additional pump parts to be shipped directly from India.

An invitation and response envelope for the May 15th event are included with this newsletter. If you are unable to come to our spring fundraiser, please consider making a donation to help us pay for these pump parts and cover additional operational expenses that enable us to expand our community development work in Haiti. Thank you!

Ground Broken for School Addition in Pignon

On Tuesday morning, March 27, a large crowd gathered in the schoolyard of the Lycee Nationale, the public secondary school in Pignon. They were there to break ground for the addition of 7 new rooms: 5 classrooms, a library and a computer lab. The “L” shaped addition will face the existing “L” shaped school with a large courtyard in the middle. These classrooms will house 350 additional students who will be able to attend public secondary school for the first time. This will bring the total school population to over 1000 students.

At the groundbreaking event, speeches were given by Deputy Hinson Nelson, the elected representative to the Haitian national parliament for the Pignon area, Haiti Outreach Country Director Neil Van Dine, Assistant School Director David Marcellus, and Minnesota Rotarian Tom Thorfinnson. The speakers, along with others, then ceremonially used picks and shovels to overturn the soil where the school addition will be built. The Haitian owner of the construction company that has been hired to build the building was also present, as were his workers who immediately began the work of digging the foundation for the new building.

Haiti Outreach helped the Pignon community build the original school building four years ago. As more students requested admission, it became clear that a new addition was needed for students who could not afford a private school education. The new classrooms should be completed in time for the start of the new school year in September, 2007.

We are very grateful to our many donors who made this school addition possible. We are now looking for donations of solar voltaic equipment, newer Apple MacIntosh computers and books written in French, so that this public school will have its first library and possibly a connection to the world of the Internet. Recently the people of the two neighboring towns of Ranquitte and La Victoire approached us to help them build a public secondary school. Neither community has one now. Haiti Outreach will consider these projects in the near future.



Trenches are being dug for the foundation of the Lycee Nationale school addition, the public secondary school in Pignon.

“New” Well Rig Arrives in Pignon!

As of April 4, 2007, our “new” rotary well drilling rig has arrived at our headquarters building in Pignon, Haiti! Actually, it is a used rig, but is new to Haiti Outreach. For the next two weeks we will be putting it to the test to make sure everything is working well. Bob Thein, owner of Thein Well Company of Spicer, MN, along with his brother-in-law Paul Lendobeja of Brainerd, MN, are in Haiti as we go to press, showing our employees how to operate the rig.

This well drilling rig had been purchased from Thein Well Co. in December and shipped to Haiti in January. It had been sitting in customs until March when all of the governmental paperwork was processed. We are so happy to finally have the rig in our possession. Once everything has been tested and operators trained to work, the drilling of additional community wells will begin. Because it is larger, more modern and efficient, it should nearly double our capacity to drill wells and provide many more communities with clean potable water. A special thanks goes to Bob Thein and his company for helping us make this dream come true!

Walter James – Haiti Outreach Intern

Last year Haiti Outreach decided to begin an internship program. A college student or recent graduate would work with us in Haiti, for six months to a year. The intern would get a variety of experiences and assist our organization by working with our staff there (currently we have a staff in Haiti of eighteen Haitian employees, led by our Country Director, Neil Van Dine). The intern would also live with a Haitian family to become immersed in the culture and language.

We were very pleased to have hired in January our first intern, Walter James of Richfield, MN. Walter was a December, 2006 graduate of the University of Minnesota with a double major in French and biology. Walter had previously served as an intern in the west African country of Senegal in the spring of 2006, so his experience in a third world country that was also a former French colony was very relevant and has proven useful. We have been very pleased with the work he has done, and Walter is already talking about the possibility of joining us for another internship after he has some time off to prepare and take the entrance exams for graduate school. Walter's internship has proven so helpful to us that we hope to have two interns in our service later this year.



Haiti Outreach Intern Walter James digs out a lime soil mixture used to build a house.

Chicago Students Partner with Haiti Outreach

One year ago, Minnesota and Chicago Rotary groups introduced Haiti Outreach to the Engineers Without Borders (EWB) student group at Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago. These students expressed interest in collaborating with Haiti Outreach on engineering projects. Executive Director Dale Snyder went to Chicago in March of 2006 to introduce students and faculty to our community development concept and projects.

The result is a partnership that has now been formalized between our two organizations. A Haiti Outreach student group has been formed at IIT (www.iit.edu/~haiti) and so far three groups of students, a faculty member and administrator have traveled to Haiti to see our projects and work with us. The group has developed plans for the Lycee Nationale secondary school addition in Pignon and gathered extensive census and topographical data in the town of Pignon. This information could potentially be used for a variety of projects for the community, such as improving the ailing water system or designing a sanitation or road system.

We are very pleased to have this partnership and are exploring the possibility of a similar relationship with the University of Minnesota, the University of Iowa, and the University of Notre Dame.



These two groups, including Rotarians and non-Rotarians, helped to build houses for needy families, including the one shown above.

Many Trips, Many Accomplishments

A record sixty-eight people have traveled to Haiti with Haiti Outreach over the last five months: three Rotary group trips to build houses for needy Haitian families, two trips by Illinois Institute of Technology students to do topographical studies of Pignon, a trip by a group from northern Minnesota to hold a basketball camp in Pignon, and a trip by the Haiti Outreach Board of Directors, who spent a week working on strategic planning.

All but one of these trips took place in 2007. We anticipate as many five additional trips this year. If there is enough interest, one could take place this summer to build school desks for the additional classrooms under construction now in Pignon at the Lycee Nationale secondary school. We also believe there is interest in additional trips in October and December, 2007.

Travelers often report their trip to Haiti as life-changing and one that they will never forget. If you would like to join one of these groups, or have a group of people that might be interested, please call Dale Snyder at Haiti Outreach, 612-929-1122 or email him at Dale@HaitiOutreach.org and let him know of your interest. The cost is generally \$1300 - \$1400 per person, excluding project costs.



IIT students Garret Forkan, Matt Ballog, Mark Rokia and Shawn Shoulders surround U of MN student Anthony James, brother of Intern Walter James, as they were gathering topographical data in Pignon. Taking the picture and not shown is IIT student Mark Taylor.

