



Participants at “A Taste of Haiti” included the following people, pictured left to right: (front row) Terry Gilbert, Deirdre Gilbert, Allison Keeton, Fr. Frixner Jean Francois, Fr. Michael Jones, OFM, Jane Gallagher, Roberta Horton, Rodger Swanson; and (second row) Tom Cuthbertson, Billy Prenetta, Fran D'Amico, Judy Secord, Tom Sliney.

## ‘A Taste of Haiti’ 4th Annual Event Unites Parishes

BY FRAN D'AMICO  
St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church in Hartford held its fourth annual Taste of Haiti fundraiser on June 7.

Through Haitian Ministries, the church has been twinned with St. Genevieve Church in Zoranje, Haiti, since 2004. Fr. Frixner Jean Francois, the pastor there, came to visit and was accompanied by Colleen Larkin, assistant director of the Norwich Mission House, who served as his translator.

The celebration of Mass included Haitian music with drums and a liturgical dance to deliver the offertory gifts. Fr. Frixner preached, sharing the thanks of the Zoranje community.

Afterward, over 200 people went to the church's Franciscan Center for the festivities, which featured Haitian music and a variety of Haitian dishes for dinner. Haiti's Back Porch, a non-profit shop in Middletown that sells crafts and artwork, opened a boutique in the hall.

Fr. Frixner said that he was happy to be back with friends in the Hartford community, noting, “Everyone is so kind.” He said he would tell his parishioners that “so many people were working very hard, all for the people of Zoranje. It is clear that everyone here loves the people of Haiti. I want to thank everyone, and I want you all to know that everyone in St. Genevieve keeps you in their prayers.”

Colleen added, “It is nice to see first-hand the time, energy and heart that goes into the relationship with the people of Zoranje.”

The money raised will go to support the school and the 400 students in the lunch program at St. Genevieve School.

## BRIEFLY NOTED

*From the desk of the Norwich Mission House Director*

The major news since our last newsletter was the “hunger riots” that began on April 3rd. The cost of living became too burdensome for too many, and the people took to the streets to express their deep discontent.

As a result of the riots, Prime Minister Alexis was forced to resign. Since his resignation there has been peace, albeit a fragile one. Although a new prime minister was approved in August, government remains unsettled and with many political factions.

Throughout this time, the Norwich Mission House has continued to support all of its twinned parishes and partnered organizations without interruption. Unfortunately, the violence last spring led us to cancel some immersion trips, but since this summer we have been welcoming visitors as usual and will have a full house for months to come. We are ever hopeful that the struggles our Haitian brothers and sisters face every day will be eased.

\*\*\*\*\*

A diamond in the rough has been the continued growth of our Tierney-Tobin Memorial Scholarship program, which is administered directly from the Norwich Mission House. Over the last school year, we were able to send 100 children and young adults from our neighborhood to various schools. Those students range from 6-year-olds in the first grade to 22-year-olds in university.

Many generous contributions were made to this program in the last year, which will allow us to send 150 Haitians to school this fall.

- Nick Kocmich

## THE HAITIAN TIMES

Office of Haitian Ministries  
Diocese of Norwich  
Bishop Flanagan Ministry Center  
1595 Norwich-New London Turnpike  
Uncasville, CT 06382-1319

## Do You Have Time, Talent or Treasures to Share?

*Haitian Ministries welcomes contributions  
of many kinds. Our special needs include:*

### Time and Talent:

■ A work crew of carpenters, plumbers and electricians to travel to Port-au-Prince for about a week to do repairs at the Norwich Mission House. The volunteers would have free room and board at the house, but round-trip airfare on American Airlines would not be included.

■ Volunteer salespersons at our non-profit shop, Haiti's Back Porch in Middletown, where we sell Haitian-made goods to benefit artists and craftspeople. We also would appreciate having volunteers to assist with one-day craft sales at various locations in eastern Connecticut throughout the year.

### Treasures:

■ New, still-packaged sheets for twin beds and new towels.

■ First-class stamps.

■ Frequent flyer miles on American Airlines, to be used only by staff and volunteers traveling to and from Haiti for work purposes. Today, a round-trip ticket on American Airlines requires 35,000 miles, but that number will go up to at least 70,000 miles on Oct. 1. (For more information on the method of transferring points and/or miles to Haitian Ministries, please contact Kyn Tolson or Emily Smack at our office: 860.848.2237 ext. 206)

OUR MISSION: Helping Haitians Help Haitians



# THE HAITIAN TIMES



*After the end of a school day, girls clamor to greet Connecticut visitors.*

## Learning about Haiti's People, Culture Immersion Trips Open Doors of Understanding

BY COLLEEN LARKIN, NORWICH MISSION HOUSE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

When first-time guests come to Norwich Mission House for an immersion visit to Haiti, most are overwhelmed by what they see—the city of Port-au-Prince swarming with people everywhere they turn. Lining the roads are cement homes and small businesses built one on top of the other, going far up into the mountains. Garbage is scattered over the streets, even though refuse services started up this year.

Driving out into the countryside, they see another kind of poverty—eroded topsoil, the dry earth, and only the occasional tree. Here woman hawk peanut candy on the side of the road, desperate to sell something to Americans passing by. Children might run alongside the road, naked and shoeless, often parentless, and fending for themselves.

The sights are in stark contrast to the United States with clean, paved streets and highways with their streetlights and signs. Haiti is a place where basic necessities, such as running water, are considered luxuries and where most of the day-to-day activities are about survival. Haiti is a country

*continued on page 2*

## AN AWAKENING, A PROFOUND CHANGE

### *Traveler Finds Purpose in the Embrace of a Child*

BY KIMBERLY YOUNG

*Kimberly is a South Windsor resident who works in the immunology department of the University of Connecticut Health Center. A member of St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church in Hartford, she traveled to Port-au-Prince last winter and later spoke to the congregation about her experience.*

I have been asleep for a very long time, and my trip to Haiti awakened something inside of me.

In February of this year I joined Fr. Mike Jones and parishioners on an immersion trip to Haiti, where we visited the many projects supported by Haitian Ministries and visited our sister parish, St. Genevieve, in Zoranje.

I never gave a thought to visiting Haiti until this opportunity. I read an insert in the bulletin about the trip and heard a small, but persistent voice inside of me say, “You should go.” I ignored the voice for a week but finally listened and signed up. I gave little or no thought to my mission or purpose for going.

When we arrived in Port-au-Prince and piled into a truck that careened through the crowded streets, I found myself wondering, “What am I doing here?”

That question was answered as the trip unfolded. I was there to witness the harsh realities and beauty of Haiti and its people.

■ I visited our sister parish in Zoranje and hiked up the mountain to meet a family affected by the flood last year and view their rebuilt home—a new home made possible through the generosity of people here at St. Patrick-St. Anthony.

*continued on page 2*





## THE HAITIAN TIMES

A publication of the  
Office of Haitian Ministries  
Diocese of Norwich  
Bishop Flanagan Ministry Center  
1595 Norwich-New London Turnpike  
Uncasville, CT 06382-1319

(860) 848-2237 ext. 206  
haiti.ministry@snet.net  
www.haitianministries.org

**Bishop Michael R. Cote**  
Bishop, Diocese of Norwich

**Nicholas Kocmich**  
Director  
Norwich Mission House

**Colleen Larkin**  
Assistant Director  
Norwich Mission House

**Emily M. Smack**  
Executive Director  
Office of Haitian Ministries

**Kyn Tolson**  
Director of Development  
Office of Haitian Ministries

**Peter C. Loden**  
Chairperson, Executive Board  
Office of Haitian Ministries

### WE'RE JUST A CLICK AWAY

*You can learn more about the work of the Haitian Ministries and how your support is helping Haitians. You can also make online donations to the ministry. Please visit us at [www.haitianministries.org](http://www.haitianministries.org).*

## An Awakening

*continued from page 1*

■ I learned about soil preservation and recycling from the mountaintop oasis that is Jane Wynne's farm.

■ I swam in the Caribbean.

■ I visited Madam Samson's meal program. She opens her home to the children of her neighborhood, most of whom would go all day without eating if not for her efforts.

But for me, the most rewarding time—the time when I “woke up”—occurred the morning we went to Mother Theresa's orphanage. This is a place where children are suffering from malnourishment and other serious illnesses.

I was confronted directly and immediately by the effects of economic and social injustice in the faces of these children—some of whom are left in the orphanage by their parents who feel they have a better chance in the orphanage than on the streets with them. When we arrived, visiting hours had just ended and many children were crying as their mothers were leaving. That led the other children to cry as well.

## Immersion Visits

*continued from page 1*

where most people live on less than \$2 a day.

When foreigners see such lack of basic necessities it can be overwhelming. Often, the immediate reaction is to want to help. After all, Americans like to see progress and results. We want to help build schools and clinics. We want children to be able to go to school. We want to see our fellow brothers and sisters have better lives. We are guided by the adage: “Where there's a will, there's a way.”

Many of the visitors here want to help bring value and sustainability to the country. Yet when we give blindly and without guidance, we can create expectations and dependency. We can end up robbing people of their dignity. But when we join hands and work together in a relationship based on understanding and collaboration, new ideas are born and we can help one another. Reaching this realization is one of the goals we have for all travelers in an immersion trip.

The immersion trip is often is an introduction to a relationship with the people, the culture and the country. It is encouraged for individuals interested in learning more about Haiti and/or interested in becoming involved in Haiti on any level, because working in, or with a country without an understanding of the people and the culture can do more harm than good. One of the things we often hear from foreigners coming to Haiti for the first time is: “What can we bring?”. During the current food crisis, we have had many requests from people wanting to ship food. We suggested, instead, that they give money so that food could be purchased here in Haiti. That way, farmers and merchants would also be helped. (At one time, Haiti produced enough rice to feed the entire country. Over the years, the United States and other countries have exported rice to Haiti and undercut the local market prices, putting native farmers out of business.)

Because there is so much to see and learn about Haiti, we often have return visitors. We have many visitors who have been coming for years; some have become group leaders. In a country where things are not always what they seem, there is always more to be learned. Return visits are encouraged.

As a group, we visit:

**The Neighborhood Feeding Program.** Madame Samson runs the program out of her home, cooking and feeding about 60 children from the neighborhood. Through the support of Haitian Ministries, which allows her to buy the food, this program runs five days a week. Some of the children get their only meals here.

**L'Arc-en-Ciel orphanage.** It is one of two orphan-

ages that Haitian Ministries supports and was one of the first in Haiti to specifically take in children with HIV or AIDS. Here we learn about the program and the projects the children work on to develop certain skills. The groups also visit L'Arc-en-Ciel's outreach center, which provides AIDS education and addresses the stigma of AIDS in Haiti.

**Foyer des Filles de Dieu orphanage.** We meet with Paula Thybulle, who began this home for girls in 1987. It shelters and educates 65 girls who have lost their parents or can no longer be supported by their families. Without Paula's help, these children would likely be left on the streets of Port-au-Prince.

Also, Paula founded the Notre Dame de Lourdes Neighborhood Medical Clinic, which is adjacent to the orphanage. In Haiti, where there is only one doctor for every 10,000 people, this clinic provides quality health care to the poor.

**Wynne Farm in Kenscoff.** Groups have the opportunity to discuss the environmental problems plaguing Haiti and to learn about possible solutions. We visit with environmentalist Jane Wynne and hike up to her farm.

Together we explore the rich history and culture of Haiti for a deeper perspective of the country and its people. We visit the **National Museum** and learn about the enslavement of the people of Haiti, their fight for freedom, and the declaration of Haiti as the first independent black republic on January 1, 1804.

**Haitian speakers come to the Norwich Mission House** to talk on topics ranging from history, politics, the environment and globalization to their own experiences in Haiti and the relationships between foreigners and Haitians.

To learn a bit about the arts, which are a significant aspect of the culture here, we visit **Croix des Bouquets**. This small village is the heart of Haitian metal art. We also invite local artisans to the house to display their craft work.

Groups visit **Mother Theresa's Home for the Dying**. Here visitors can give massages; some prefer to play card games with the patients.

The immersion experience is offered in the Christian context of what it means to love thy neighbor as thyself. Throughout the week, we hold morning prayer sessions, and we attend a local Kreyol mass on Sunday. In the evenings there is group reflection.

As Saint Francis said: “It is better to understand, than be understood.” The immersion trip is the opportunity to start to understand Haiti and its people. Only when we start from this point can we really begin to help Haitians and, at the same time, help ourselves.

I wanted to run and hide.

I couldn't “fix” anything and felt helpless and hopeless. There was no song I could sing. So I went into the closest room and sat in a chair. To say I was overwhelmed is an understatement.

But then I found my purpose. I watched a little boy from across the room walk toward me. He was crying and sucking his thumb. He stood next to me for a while and then climbed in my lap. I held him

close to my heart, and he fell asleep. Another little boy climbed in my lap and fell asleep, too. In their sleep they wiggled to be close to my heartbeat. I looked down to see two heads and a tangle of arms before me. I held them both in my arms for over an hour. To my dying day I will never forget that moment. In that moment, I experienced what St. Francis wrote in his prayer that we recite each week: “*Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as*

*to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love.*”

I am humbled by my experience in Haiti. My mission is to take what I experienced and witnessed in Haiti and bring that awareness to assist others locally and globally.

Let me close by saying I listened to that small voice inside of me telling me to visit Haiti. As a result, I am changed forever. I am awake.

## ‘For the Love of a Child’ Gala Brings in Strong Support for Haitians

For its second year, the “*For the Love of a Child*” gala in April was a resounding success, with over 230 people attending and more than \$115,000 raised to benefit children in Haiti.

The outpouring of support — particularly by people who chose to sponsor children in need for a year — highlighted an evening of fine food, fellowship and lively entertainment. Held at the Crocker House ballroom in New London, the event featured Haitian visitor Robert Penette Jr., who spoke about the orphanage for children with AIDS and HIV that his family started and runs in Port-au-Prince.

As with last year's fund-raiser, the gala offered guests the opportunity to sponsor children. This spring's event marked the introduction of the Collins-Greenberg Child Sponsorship, in which donors can support orphaned and other poor children at levels of \$250, \$500 and \$750 annually. Today, there are 66 sponsors. (In Port-au-Prince and surrounding communities, almost 6,000 children benefit from the various projects that Haitian Ministries

financially supports, including two orphanages, a meal program, schools, and medical clinics.) The sponsorship is named in tribute to Anthony Collins and Alva Greenberg, both major catalysts in the annual gala.

This year's live auction, led by Anthony Collins, included vacations at homes in Bermuda, Tortola and Morocco. The after-dinner performance by the Motown band “N” Tune from New York City provided a lively note for dancing.

Haitian Ministries is grateful to all who attended the 2008 gala, particularly those who have made the fundraiser an annual must-attend event. We extend our appreciation to this year's sponsors: Brook & Whittle Ltd; Delta Building Corp.; Harding Development Group; Simone Macca & Larrow; St. Elizabeth Seton of Rocky Hill; and St. Patrick-St Anthony of Hartford.

Next year's dinner is scheduled for Saturday, April 18, and will again be held at the Crocker House ballroom in New London.



*At the gala, Barbara Charland of Coventry and Robert Penette Jr., who visited from Haiti, renew their acquaintance.*



*Kylie Bouley and her mother, Catherine, of Tolland, sponsored a child at the gala.*

## Agronomy Graduate Thankful for Scholarship

By NICK KOCMICH  
NORWICH MISSION HOUSE DIRECTOR

On a warm Friday in early June, Jacob Eliezer Jonas II Jean Francois was prepared for a special day.

After five years as a student in the Tierney-Tobin Memorial Scholarship program, Jacob was headed for his graduation from the University of Quisqueya, where he had earned a degree in agronomy.

I was honored to be invited to attend, along with his mother and sister, Anani, who is currently a medical school student in our scholarship program.

The graduation took place on the central lawn of the university, just a short distance from downtown Port-au-Prince. Afterward, Jacob, Anani and their mother came to the Norwich Mission House with me to celebrate with cake and ice cream.

Jacob wanted to make sure that I expressed his thanks to everyone at Haitian Ministries who helped him along the way. Most importantly, he said, he thanks Pam and Mike McKinnon, the Madison, Conn., residents who sponsored his college studies over the years. Without their commitment, his education would not have been possible.

Today, “Agrinom Jacob,” as we now call him, is hard at work to find a job. His search began the day after his graduation when he headed to the countryside for an interview.

Agronomy is of the utmost importance for Haiti's future. In response to the recent food crisis, the Haitian government has committed itself to the growth of the agricultural sector so that Haiti might one day



*Jacob Eliezer Jonas II Jean Francois with his sister, Anani, after his college graduation this June.*

be able to feed itself again instead of remaining dependent on the import of basic commodities, including rice.

From all of us at Haitian Ministries, I thank all the people in the United States who are education sponsors in our Tierney-Tobin Memorial Scholarship program. Your support helps in building a better future for Haiti and its children.

## ‘Hoof It for Haiti’ 5-K Run & Walk-A-Thon

The 1st Annual “*Hoof It for Haiti*” 5-K Run & Walk-A-Thon will begin at 9:30 a.m., Sept. 27 — rain or shine — at St. Elizabeth Seton Church in Rocky Hill.

The event — a fundraiser for Haiti — is USA Track & Field certified and is open to the public. On-site registration will go from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Participants are encouraged to seek sponsors.

The event will include a craft sale and children's activities.

Funds raised will support St. Elizabeth Seton's twin parish in Haiti and various outreach programs supported by the Haitian Ministries. These programs give medical, educational, food and housing assistance to the needy. The ministry also operates the twining program, which St. Elizabeth Seton has been involved in since 2000.

For more information go to: [www.stese-tonchurch.org](http://www.stese-tonchurch.org). Pre-registration on or before Sept. 20 is \$10 per person; at the door: \$15 per person; for children 10 and younger: \$5; for a family of three or more: \$25.

Registration fee is waived for individuals and families with a minimum of \$100 in pledges or sponsors.

Anyone interested in sponsoring and/or participating in the event should contact St. Elizabeth Seton Church, 280 Brook St., Rocky Hill, CT 06067; 860.529.3222 or 860.231.7093. Also, you can contact Jeff Canton at: [jeffct563@aol.com](mailto:jeffct563@aol.com).

## Health Initiative in Haiti Presented at Conference

At Twinning Conference in Hartford this spring featured a speaker from a health project that aims to eradicate elephantiasis in Haiti.

The annual conference, organized and sponsored by Haitian Ministries, is targeted to the churches and other organizations in Connecticut and elsewhere in the United States that are twinned with parishes in the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. The twinning program is administered by Haitian Ministries.

About 50 people—representing eight of the 12 twins in the U.S.—attended this year's event, held at St. Peter Claver Church. The church plays a key role in the medical missions that Haitian Ministries oversees.

Nick McCann, the keynote speaker from Notre Dame's Center for Global Health & Infectious Diseases, talked extensively about a public health initiative to fight lymphatic filariasis (LF), or elephantiasis, which affects people in 83 countries around the world. Working with grants from the Gates and Asante foundations, Notre Dame hopes to connect with agencies such as Haitian Ministries that already have partnerships with communities in Haiti. These connections, said McCann, will enable the initiative to more readily reach people in areas of the country where LF still affects the populace; the goal is to eliminate the parasite-borne infectious disease in Haiti by the year 2012. The health initiative works through education and distribution of de-worming medicines.

During the daylong conference, participants shared information about their work and projects in Haiti and their special interests and concerns. The conference ended with a Mass and dinner.

## Matched Gifts Double the Power of Giving

If your employer matches charitable gifts, please alert Haitian Ministries so that we can register with those businesses and corporations if we have not done so already.

Currently, corporations who give us matching gifts include: Pfizer Inc.; General Electric; Aetna; Bristol-Meyers Squibb; Bank of America; Dominion; ING; The Prudential; Wachovia; United Health Group; and The Chubb Corporation.