



Diocese of Norwich Outreach to Haiti
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OUTREACH TO HAITI

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H E L P I N G H A I T I A N S H E L P H A I T I A N S



Gloria Theodate and Gymy Leblanc check in children at meal time.

Connecticut Teen Reaches Out Beyond Her World

Since her trip to Haiti last fall, Robin Schreck never looks at a school cafeteria lunch quite the way she did before.

"When you see what people don't have in Haiti," said the 17-year-old, "then you realize how small the complaints of kids here are. When they're talking about the food at school, their complaints just don't really matter."

Robin, who is a junior at Westbrook High School near the shoreline of Connecticut, went to Haiti last

November. Along with her mother and father, she travelled with three others from her parish of St. Mark the Evangelist in Westbrook. St. Mark is twinned through Outreach to Haiti with the Catholic parish of Cité Militaire, a zone of Port-au-Prince.

It was Robin's first trip there, though she took a big step before leaving Connecticut to



Robin Schreck among the children at Madame Samson's house.

connect with a group of Haitian children. After talking with her mother in September, she decided to launch a small fundraising campaign for children at Madame Samson's house. For more than 15 years, the elderly woman has prepared mid-day meals for children from her small home in a crowded, hillside neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. Outreach is the sole supporter of the program, and parishioners of St. Mark also donate regularly for purchases of the food. For many children who eat there, it is their only food of the day.

Robin learned about Madame Samson from her sister Emily. Now a college freshman, Emily went to Haiti with her father and others in a St. Mark's group in 2011.

"Madame Samson's impacted her the most," Robin said. "She met a little girl. The little girl was so loving, but she couldn't even afford her own food. That really affected my sister."

Robin, with the help of her mother, Diann, wrote a letter describing Madame Samson's efforts.

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Beyond Poverty, Haitian Teenager Sees A Career Healing Others

Gloria Theodate loves the TV series *House*. Other favorites are *The Mentalist* and *Lie To Me*.

What might sound like an ordinary media obsession to Americans is something quite extraordinary, given that Gloria is a 16-year-old Haitian whose family lives in a Port-au-Prince slum.

Gloria is an inspired survivor – a high-achiever

with a remarkable sense of direction and goodwill.

"I know that I will become a doctor, a very good doctor," she explained during a meeting in January. She was at Madame Samson's meal program, where she helps to clear and clean the tables and organize and feed the children who come every weekday afternoon. Gloria is also one of the

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1,600 Miles Apart, Two Communities Renew Partnership

It's almost as though someone had been playing an odd version of 'Pin the Tail on the Donkey.' Instead of the image of a donkey, there is a map of the Western Hemisphere. And, instead of donkey tails, there are push-pins.

One pin rises out of the City of Groton, on the southeastern coast of Connecticut. Another pin sticks into a spot just above and to the right of Port-au-Prince. It's not far from the line dividing Haiti and the Dominican Republic on the island of Hispaniola.

These two pins represent, in the simplest way, a connection between two places.

They symbolize a parish twinning partnership between Sacred Heart in Connecticut and St. Pierre in Grand Bois, Haiti.

Although their partnership has existed for

well more than a dozen years, it is only in the last year or so that the relationship has moved from a dormant state to one that is quite awake.

"We had been sending down money regularly. But we knew no one was in touch with the parish of Grand Bois for years. We wanted to find out if the money was being put to good use," said George Gorton, who lives in Durham, CT, and attends both Sacred Heart and Notre Dame Church in his hometown.

George and Patrick White, a Mystic resident, were asked by Fr. Dariusz Dudzik of Sacred Heart to help lead his effort to reinvigorate the ties between his parish and St. Pierre. Both have schools. Sacred Heart School has 218 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The school for

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For the Love of a Child

Join us Saturday evening, April 20th at Saint Clements Castle in Portland, CT for our gala to benefit children in Haiti.

The party will begin at 6 p.m. with cocktails, conversation and the opportunity to select from a silent auction offering Haitian artwork.

Dinner, entertainment and a live auction will round out a special evening at a delightful place.

Tickets are \$150 (with \$75 tax deductible). For reservations, contact us by April 11: at: 860.848.2237 x206 ; or: info@outreachtohaiti.org

Our Live Auction to feature opportunities for vacation and other fun

Six days on a South African safari—for 2
Broadway tickets to Phantom of the Opera
Week on Gulf of Mexico coast at family house—for 10
Boston Red Sox tickets for great seats—for 4

Week at home near Hilton Head for golf & beach—for 4
Gourmet Haitian dinner in Connecticut—for up to 20
Week at Island Seas resort on Grand Bahama—for 4
More details on our website: www.outreachtohaiti.org

Special sponsors of our 6th Annual 'For the Love of a Child' benefit gala

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Teen Finds New Friends, Discovers New Meanings

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The two of them and Jim Schreck, Robin's father, came up with a mailing list comprised mostly of people who attend St. Mark. "We thought it was going to be small," Robin said. "So we were really surprised."

The letter brought in about \$3,500. "It was amazing how generous people were," she said.

During their five days in Haiti, the St. Mark group visited their twin parish and the children at Madame Samson's house. The children had been told of the arrival of a young guest, someone from the United States who had heard about them and had raised money for their nutritional care.

"They seemed so grateful," Robin said. "I was so happy to see the kids. I think Madame Samson is wonderful for what she does. She's not healthy either, but she keeps doing so much."

In turn, people in the United States have recognized the work that Robin undertook on behalf of Haitian children. State Senator Arthur Linares, whose district includes Westbrook and who attends St. Mark, issued an official proclamation commending Robin's efforts.

Robin said she wants to go back to Haiti. She is the second youngest of five children, and she hopes that this coming November, she and Emily and their parents will be visiting Port-au-Prince.

The effect of her first trip to Haiti shows up in many ways, but all seem connected to realizations about the world and different ways people survive and thrive.

"At first, before I went to Haiti, I was afraid. When I first saw a street, I was afraid. Then, when we got out, talked to people, it all changed. You just say 'hi' and they give you a great smile. Everyone was nice, so unexpectedly nice."

ON PARTNERSHIPS

September Conference To Feature CRS-Haiti Specialist

A daylong conference on Parish Twinning in Haiti will be held on Saturday, Sept. 14 at St. John the Evangelist Church in Uncasville, CT.

Kim Lamberty, Senior Program Advisor at Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Haiti Partnership Unit in Baltimore, MD will lead the conference.

The day will begin with a review of parish-based partnerships and efforts to establish social and economic justice. Also, discussions on project-specific work will allow for exchange of information, ideas, and best practices.

This conference will offer great opportunities for all groups involved in, or considering connections to Haiti. Also, it will provide a chance to network with others.

Admission will be open to the public, but we ask everyone to contact Outreach to Haiti well in advance to get listed. An attendance fee will be charged to cover costs for morning coffee, breakfast pastries, and lunch.

Before joining CRS, Kim Lamberty worked in parish ministry for nearly eight years and was responsible for developing and managing parish-based justice and service ministries. She holds a master's in International Affairs from Columbia University and a Doctor of Ministry degree in cross-cultural ministry from Catholic Theological Union, where she also taught a course on social and economic justice ministry. She is a founder and principal officer of Just Haiti, a fair-trade coffee program that works with rural, coffee-producing communities in Haiti to improve the quality and quantity of the crop and market the coffee in the United States.

More information will be available as September 14 approaches. To sign-up for attendance, please email us at: info@outreachtohaiti.org, or call our office at 860.848.2237 ext. 206.

She Holds Fast To Her Dream

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60 to 70 children and teens who eat there. She has been enrolled in the program, which is funded by Outreach to Haiti, since she was about 3 years old. She and the youngest of her two sisters have a meal at Madame Samson's after her school day. It's just a short distance from their home, wedged among the other tiny, cinderblock dwellings of the neighborhood.

"I am very proud of my family," Gloria said, pointing out that, while she might have less than many of her classmates, she has dignity derived from love and knowing her family supports her dreams. Along with two sisters and her parents, Gloria lives with Carlos, an 11-year-old who was orphaned by the earthquake. "He didn't have anyone. He was on the streets. Now he's my brother. He's in our family."

Gloria's father, a mason, gets work when he can find it, but that's infrequently. She's been able to go to school not only because her older sister provides money from earnings at a job with the French Red Cross, but also because her school principal appreciates Gloria's intelligence and ambition. From time to time, he has reduced her tuition payments.

After the earthquake, Gloria decided to learn English. The principal again managed to get her a break. One of his colleagues runs the Caribbean English School, where Gloria soon enrolled at half the cost for a late-afternoon program that began after her secondary-school classes were over for the day. Gloria became proficient quickly and even led the lessons for a week when the instructor was away.

Today Gloria sharpens her English by watching television when she has the chance. She focuses on medical shows and likes the sharp humor and characters of *House*. "They are so good," she said. "House is brilliant



Gloria Theodate and Dr. Wilkens Gilbert.

and quick," she said of the lead character, Dr. Gregory House, a misanthrope genius who leads a hospital team of diagnosticians. "And Dr. Cameron is a real optimist. Dr. Chase is so handsome."

"Yes, I understand what they talk about," Gloria said. "I use 'medicine words' in my house, with my family. ... Since I was a little girl, I tell my parents that I will become a dedicated doctor. When they say, 'We don't have the money.' I tell them, 'Don't worry, I'll pray.'"

Gloria's confidence is matched by a warm personality and good cheer. The children at Madame Samson's follow her instructions. Dr. Wilkens Gilbert, in his 30s and Madame Samson's youngest child, admires her. He was the first medical student in Outreach to Haiti's Education Program, which provides money for school tuitions.

"She is very smart," he said. "You will see."

Gloria acknowledges that her ambition might seem a bit outsized to some people, given her circumstances. "I have always liked to study," she said. "I have my nose in the books. They call me 'Tête-en-l'Aire' (Head in the Air). ... When girls tell me I am too poor, I will never be a doctor, and they laugh. I smile. I say, 'Don't worry. When you or your family are sick, I promise I will treat you for free.'"

MARK THE CALENDAR

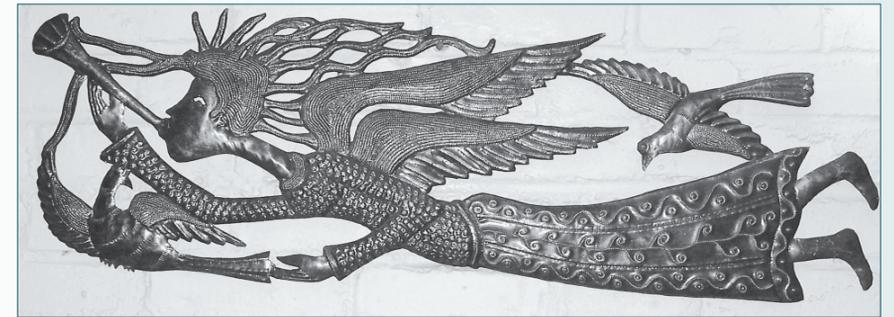
Special May Sales At Haiti's Back Porch

Two spectacular shop sales in May at *Haiti's Back Porch* in Middletown will mark a new phase for our non-profit program.

Although the shop will close on May 31, *Haiti's Back Porch* will continue under the same name at crafts sales throughout the state, on eBay, and on our website: www.outreachtohaiti.org. Also, we will provide other shopping opportunities by request.

The program will continue to support artisans in Haiti and to promote the efforts of Outreach to Haiti in providing food, shelter, medical care, and education to Haitians in Port-au-Prince and surrounding communities.

Before moving from our Middletown shop, two



sales will offer discounts on various store items, all unique and all hand-crafted in Haiti. Merchandise includes metal art and decorations made from oil drums; wooden bowls and utensils; river-stone sculptures; cowhorn-and-bone tableware; jewelry; table linens and nightgowns; papier-mâché decor and bowls of various sizes; and much more.

Mark your calendars for these sales dates:

► Friday, May 3 & Saturday, May 4
(from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.)

► Friday, May 17 & Saturday, May 18
(from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.)

If you would like to shop at Haiti's Back Porch before these sales or at another time before the end of May, contact our Norwich office: 860.848.2237 ext. 206, or at: info@outreachtohaiti.org.

Haiti's Back Porch is located at:

100 Riverview Center, Suite 130 (on the walkway between the Middletown Police Station & Amici Italian Grill, at 280 Main Street.)

Parking is available on Main Street, or at the public lot, which has its entrance on Court Street, between the Middletown Superior Courthouse and the intersection of Court and Main streets.

Parishes Focus On School Connections

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St. Pierre enrolls about 100 students, from kindergartners through sixth grade.

In a first step, Sacred Heart Parish brought up Fr. Jean Reginald Jochim from Grand Bois. He visited Groton for five days last August. A Haitian couple and a native Frenchman who all attend Sacred Heart did much of the translating during his stay, and he was warmly welcomed by parishioners and schoolchildren.

Then, in January, after Sacred Heart had supplemented its monthly contributions to Grand Bois with funds to cover some teacher salaries in St. Pierre, a small group went down to Haiti. Fr. Dariusz was joined by George, Patrick and the pastor of St. John in Old Saybrook, Fr. Grzegorz (Greg) Brozonowicz.

"It was definitely a learning experience," said Fr. Dariusz. "Now I know what people mean when they say, 'I can't wait to go back.'"

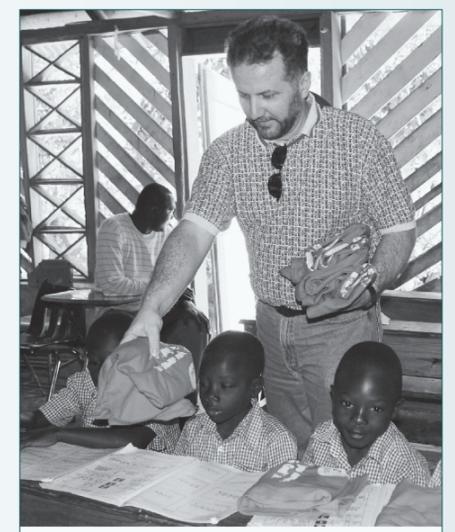
Grand Bois, which is less than 60 miles northeast of Haiti's capital, is a five-hour drive away. Most of the ride is a climb or a descent of mountains on a narrow rocky road. The parish itself is nestled in a lush-looking region, though people live in extreme poverty. The main source of meager incomes is the marketing of vegetables and fruits. The church of St. Pierre, with its white-washed spire and wooden door painted turquoise, is the largest landmark by far.

"One of the main things for me to realize," said George, "was about the poverty. It was there, but no one dwells on it. They focus on what they do have."

With a similar thought, Patrick said, "If you look at perseverance and individual strength, these people are willing to take care of themselves. I look at them and think, 'Could I do that?'"



St. Pierre students play soccer during class break



Fr. Dariusz gives t-shirts to students at St. Pierre in Grand Bois

PARTNER-TO-PARTNER, HAND-TO-HAND

The parishes of Sacred Heart and St. Pierre are one of 15 partnerships in the Twinning Program of the Diocese of Norwich Outreach to Haiti. Since the early 1990s, the program aims to bring together two worlds in covenants of caring, sharing and support. Today, 11 twinings are between parishes. Others include orphanages in Haiti. The Diocese of Norwich is twinned with the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince.

While each twinning carries a promise of mutual support in faith and a desire for cultural exchange, every partnership is unique. The program does not require exchanges of funds or materials; rather partners determine how their connections will be fostered.