

ERITAJ CHRONICLE

A newsletter for the friends and supporters of Haiti

June/July 2005

Eritaj Foundation
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Editor's note: Several efforts are taking place to fight erosion in Haiti. We encourage all Haitians to support these efforts as much as possible. Eritaj donated three thousand fruit and forest trees to school age children in Gonaives. They will be planted in memory of the thousand of individuals who lost their lives in Hurricane Jeanne last year. During my recent trip to Haiti, I had the opportunity to help choose the trees with the help of Carine Savain and Miryam Charles Cius. According to Felix Bernard, the nursery owner, the list includes 17 variety of fruit and forest trees (see list in *Metrowest & Beyond: Eritaj Facilitates Trees Planting in Memory of Hurricane Jeanne Victims*). We are encouraging the labeling of each tree with the name of a lost individual.

Haitian Sustainable Development Foundation

For over a year now, co-founders Ryan McCrory and Michael Schapiro have continued to engage in Haiti after spending over two years volunteering with Peace Corps. HSDF has been working here in the United States to educate the public about Haiti and its struggles through a multimedia presentation that touches on issues of Haitian history including slavery, colonialism, culture, and voodoo.

The twenty minute long video then goes into the modern day issues that Haitians face like environmental degradation including deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification and water issues. The presentation leaves room for the observer to explore further questions of health and the injustices that may have brought about such a dire situation with such unbelievable living conditions.

The new organization, based out of California and Oregon, has been teaching

students in classrooms across America from 4th grade to post-graduate students at various Universities. While raising awareness of Haiti and its people's struggle, the group has been successfully raising funds that go towards sustainable development of Haitian communities. HSDF has decided to do their initial work with two groups in the town of La Madeleine, Petit Goave.

This year, enough funds will be available to build a tree nursery that will serve as a community educational center, teaching the local Haitians the importance of trees, nature, and the interconnectedness of the environment. The town of La Madeleine is semi-forested, although the mountainsides have been completely diminished.

The groups are already working hard to keep their town forested and healthy with the few resources they have to work

Continued on page four



**Youth
planting in
Petit Goave.**

MetroWest and Beyond

Haitian Leadership Summit

Haitian Leadership Summit brings awareness of current injustices Haitian asylum seekers face in the United States. New Jersey Immigration Policy Network (NJIPN/Network), Haitian Community Outreach Program
Saturday, June 25, 2005
Princeton University Community House, 86 Olden St. Princeton NJ 10A to 5P

INS exercises a no-release policy that automatically detains any Haitian person seeking asylum in some of the most horrific conditions. This policy is based solely on country of origin. The discriminatory act that primarily targets people of Haitian ancestry violates the basic tenet of human and civil rights laws and should not be tolerated. The Haitian community must mobilize just as it did when people of Haitian ancestry were accused of being carriers of the HIV virus. In response to this allegation, thousands of Haitians protested all over the United States and consequently that stereotype no longer exists. Contact organizers at (973) 621-0031 or njbaptiste@njipn.org

View of Gelee Beach



Teen Time, a Model of Community Project to Nurture our Youth

As a Community Services Coordinator, I have recently implemented a 32-hour program in Pahokee, located in the Western part of Palm Beach County. The program took place at the Pahokee Middle-Senior High School with 15 adolescents, ages 15 through 18. It incorporates key concepts of human development, relationships, personal and interpersonal skills, and sexual health, as outlined by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). A variety of developmentally appropriate curricula are used, with awareness of individual values and beliefs. At the end of the training, the teens received a certificate and a stipend of \$160.00. Teen Time was developed by the Planned Parenthood with a grant from the Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County to address Palm Beach County "hot spots" areas where per-capita teen pregnancy and STD rates are significantly higher than the rest of the county. This program is a multi-faceted system of sexual health education, designed to delay the onset of sexual activity, thereby reducing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Planned Parenthood of the Palm Beach and Treasure Coast Area, Inc. provides comprehensive sexual health

care through direct services and education; protect and respect the essential privacy rights, dignity and culture of each individual; advocate public policies which preserve those rights and ensures access to services. Our Community Educators provide medically accurate, non-judgmental information about abstinence, self-esteem, assertive communication, contraception, difference between sexuality and sex, gender role and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

'HAITI CHÉRIE': CREATING NEW PATHWAYS FOR TOMORROW

The 17th annual conference of the Haitian Studies Association at the University of Massachusetts Boston on October 13-15, 2005. As Haiti enters its third century, it has reached yet another crossroad at which it needs to reevaluate its past and set its course for the future. The conference of the Haitian Studies Association will foster dialogues about the abundant richness of Haiti's heritage, capture the creative spirit of its people, envision solutions to its present impasse, and trace new pathways for the future. The conference brings together people from throughout the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Latin and Central America, Africa and Europe. Creating new pathways for tomorrow is rooted in the conception of envisioned models that rely on fundamental choices between continuity with the past and change for the future. The presentations will examine economic and political possibilities that lay ahead, issues crossing multiple race/class/gender and population lines and covering topics from forced migration, life histories, immigration, environment, health, contemporary Haitian popular culture and arts. For additional information on the conference, please contact Cassandra Villari at hsa@umb.edu

Worcester Physician Reports on Trip to Haiti

By Dr Alix-Blonzalis

The Haitian Apostolate of the Worcester Diocese links parishes in our area with churches, orphanages and clinics in Haiti. Groups of interested parishioners have the opportunity to visit the Apostolate's Mission House in Les Cayes, on the south coast of Haiti, 5 or 6 times a year. My first (of what I hope will be many) trips was in January.

Although Haiti is a very poor nation, the Haiti I experienced was rich and full of life. Its culture is rich in history, arts, music and dance. Children were everywhere, dressed and clean, in uniforms, walking to and from school. Adults worked hard, finding and carrying water, washing by hand, cooking over charcoal fires, buying and selling in the busy markets. Colorful, painted busses and trucks called taptaps drove through the streets absolutely jammed with people in the towns! Haiti's land is lush and tropical. Mangoes, grapefruit, lemons and limes, papaya, banana and plantain grow everywhere. Sugar cane, peanuts, coffee beans, cocoa beans and rice and pitimi are abundant. People everywhere own cattle, goats, chickens and pigs. It is an active, vibrant, friendly place. The hospitality and generosity of the people we visited was overwhelming! We, as obvious outsiders, were welcomed and greeted warmly by everyone we met during our stay. Most Haitians we met, or who saw us riding in the back of our pickup truck through town, assumed we were there to help and were kind and protective toward us.

In Haiti, I also experienced, first hand, the richness of the Haitian people's Faith in God. I witnessed faith being lived in a very real way

every day. People thanked God for what they had and seemed to be filled with hope, despite their poverty. They willingly, without question, put their lives in God's hands, realizing that by his Grace we live. One Kreyol expression I learned, which many people used when saying goodbye, "Demen, si Bondye vle" translates into something like: "I will see you tomorrow, if it is God's will."

I saw that our programs really are making a difference in Haiti! The

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financial and spiritual connections made between our Holy Angel's Parish in Upton and St Anne's parish in Sucerie Henri, Haiti are making a powerful impact. We were able to visit St Anne's during our trip. The church is beautiful and there is a clinic, school, and vocational training center there.

The needs in the village of Sucerie Henri, like in all of Haiti, are great. The people live in small, cement and thatch houses with no electricity, no access to clean drinking water, and the roads, where they exist, are nearly impassible. Disease and malnutrition are rampant, and the health care system is inaccessible and unaffordable for most rural Haitians. The church and rectory and school buildings have no electricity and the generators need to be repaired. The school rooms have no benches and there are very few books. Many parishioners walk miles to attend Mass on Sundays.

I know now how important it is that we keep the people of Haiti in our prayers and make a real effort to become aware of their needs. Financial support is important, but, the personal connections we make with people, through our visits, is a major reason that our support really works in Haiti!

My first trip to Haiti was, in many ways, an overwhelming experience for me. The people are severely impoverished, the country's infrastructure is collapsed, and we in the "First world" seem to have abandoned our brothers and sisters in Haiti. At first glance, the problems of Haiti seemed so big, and the things that I could do seemed so small. "Does it really make a difference if I go or if I care?"

I can now tell you with certainty that it does make a difference!

If you have been feeling, like I had, a gentle nagging pull to go and see and connect with the people of Haiti, by all means.....DO!

- ❖ You will be changed and enriched and humbled.
- ❖ If you can not go, you can still make a difference.
- ❖ You can provide financial support through many of the programs in our area.
- ❖ You can pray for the Haitian people every day.
- ❖ And as Americans, you have the amazing freedom to speak out and influence our government's policies on Haiti!

Haiti is a part of me now, and I know that I will go back. I have been reminded, in a very real way, of how incredibly blessed I am.

Dr Alix-Blonzalis can be contacted at drpamab@verizon.net and would love to answer any comments or questions.

January 2005, (read complete article at www.eritajfoundation.org)

Sustainable Development *Continued from page one*

with. This is why HSDF is excited with the progress this far, raising over 2,500 dollars, with a busy summer ahead of us. They will be having three fundraisers in Portland, Oregon, two in California, and one in Seattle before the year is up. These presentations will be able to raise enough funds to help these groups have

access to the recourses they need in order to successfully have environmental progress within their community.

Ryan McCrory, Co-Director
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Eritaj Facilitates Trees Planting in Memory of Hurricane Jeanne Victims

Trois milles plantules d'arbres forestiers et fruitiers vont etre distribuees a des ecoliers gonaiviens en souvenir des milliers de vies perdues a l'occasion du desastre ecologique que la ville a connue l'annee derniere.

Les arbustes ont ete choisis avec l'aide de Carine Savain et de Myriam Charles Cius au cours du recent voyage de Mirlande Butler en Haiti. Selon Mr. Felix Bernard, les varietes contiennent les: fruitiers- tamarin, citron, orange, cerise, papaye, mango, Quenepe et amandes; forestiers- cedre, chaine, saman, eucalyptus, acajou, lantana, casayena (pin), medisien, nime. Nous aimerions si possible que chaque plante prenne le nom d'un victime.

Support Eritaj Programs

Adopt a Child

\$120 full adoption; \$60 school tuition;
\$30 books & supplies

Femmes en lutttes

Helping Hands

Eritaj Chronicle

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