

The Twinning News

Most Holy Trinity Parish, Huntingdon, PA & St. Joseph Parish, Lalomas, Haiti
Autumn 2007

Education

by Penny Nester

There are three levels of elementary education in Haiti: **enfantin** which is comparable to kindergarten; **primary** education which leads to a primary graduation certificate (certificat d'études primaire), and **secondary** education completed with a secondary certificate. Primary education was compulsory in the late 1980's but drop-out rates were very high. The drop-out rate in rural areas was estimated at 80%. At any time, about one half of school-aged Haitian children attend schools.

We have seen many obstacles to education.

- School buildings are often "stick and roof" structures.
- School supplies and teaching resources are minimal to non-existent.
- Teachers are unlikely to have specialized training. Many have not graduated from the secondary school.

Fr. Antoine is working hard to improve educational opportunities and standards for approximately 1700 children in his parish. He has sought funding for new buildings and is working to hire qualified teachers.

New School Building



MHTCC's Twinning Project is helping with education in Lalomas with two forms of assistance:

- **School supplies**—each spring a container shipment is organized. The shipments contain boxes of school supplies donated by parishioners and local businesses.
- **Teacher's salary**—a certified teacher is paid about \$2000.00 per year in Haiti. At present MHTCC has agreed to fund one teacher's salary for the 2007 and 2008 school year. If anyone is interested in giving to this effort so that we can fund more than one teacher's salary please talk with Fr. David or another Social Concerns Committee member.

Fonkoze Bank

by Sr. Sue Feeley

Several parishioners have asked how money is sent to Lalomas and the safety of money transmissions. Money from Most Holy Trinity Church is transferred electronically to the St. Joseph Parish bank account with Fonkoze Bank in Haiti. Fonkoze was founded in 1994 to provide financial services to the poor, especially the poor in rural areas. The word "Fonkoze" means "shoulder-to-shoulder." The bank works closely with the poor to strengthen democracy. Fonkoze provides many services including savings, microfinancing/microcrediting, and money transfers.

For the twinning project, a check is drawn on a Huntingdon bank and forwarded to the City Bank of Newark, NJ which transmits the money to Haiti. Fr. Antoine can access the money at the Fonkoze Bank in St. Michel. You can learn more about Fonkoze Bank at its website, www.Fonkoze.org.

Microfinancing

by Kevin Nester

Recently the twinning project initiated a new venture with support for microfinancing. Microfinancing is a world-wide movement to help poor people, especially the rural poor, lift themselves out of poverty. It began as an anti-poverty strategy in the 1970s. Many of us became aware of microfinancing when one of its founders was recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize. Muhammad Yunus, the Bangladeshi economist and the Grameen Bank he founded in 1976 were awarded the prize in 2006.

Microcredits are small business loans given by microfinancing institutions. Loans are given to people who would have no other access to affordable credit. They would not qualify for traditional bank loans. As the term "micro" suggests, most loans are small, as little as \$50 (U.S.) and usually less than \$100. People borrow loans to build a new small business or expand an on-going venture. One of the remarkable things about microcredit loans is that well over 90% are repaid on time.

Fonkoze is the largest microfinancing institution in Haiti. That is not surprising given its mission of strengthening democracy by strengthening Haiti's economic foundation. We are working with the Fonkoze Bank to fund microcrediting projects in Lalomas.

In future twinning newsletters, we will provide information about people who are receiving MHTCC's microfinancing assistance.

Fund Raising by Helen Wright

Parishioners gave generously of their time, talent and treasures to the three autumn fundraisers, Healthy Harvest Festival, hoagie sales and ongoing sales of H2O water. So many people contributed in so many ways. Our thanks go to:

- the **bakers**, the **makers** (soups, chili, kielbasa-k-Bobs and hoagies),
- the **cooks**, the **cleaners**, (with special thanks to all who cleaned attics, basements and garages to provide “quality” goods for the Haitian market sales),
- **team Pierogi** and **teams of salespersons**,
- the **diners** and **donors**,
- the **thirsty** who continue to buy H₂O water, (we encourage everyone to take an empty bottle and fill it with loose change),
- **Tim Boylan**, Director of Marketing for **Berks Packing Company**, Reading PA for the donation of kielbasa and frankfurters.
- and anyone we have overlooked, thank you all for your generosity.

Healthy Harvest Festival

Through all the efforts, we raised about \$1,885.00 on a lovely October Saturday. The money will be split between the Twinning Project, the Sisters of St. Joseph’s Children’s Mission in Peru, and the Senior Center in Huntingdon.



Hoagie Sales

Nan Rodgers is the crew chief for hoagie production and sales. Sr. Kate is the assistant sales manager rallying the Faith Formation Program teams. Special thanks go to all the children who placed orders and to Joey Huntsman, grade 9, who helped prepare hoagies. We raised \$960.00 in the November project. This money will be used to help pay a teacher’s salary for the 2007/2008 school year.



Food Drying by Helen Wright

On his last trip to Lomas, Kevin Nester was asked to get more information about plans for mango drying. He received information about plans for a Solar Chimney Dehydrator from the Little Colorado River Plateau Resource, Conservation and Development Area, Inc. Jeff Zeiler, Boalsburg PA, is building a dehydrator for us. The dehydrator could be used for fruits, including mangos, and vegetables during the summer months in Lomas.

Next Trip to Haiti

Father David, Larry Powell, and Carolyn and Matt Wright will be traveling to Lomas from January 4 to 11. The trip will include:

- evaluating health needs
- meeting teachers & students
- reviewing status of rectory construction
- meeting microcredit clients