

# OUTREACH TO HAITI

## *espwa, our newsletter of hope*



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

## Outreach agents deliver health services to Christ Roi

by Dennis Petruzzi

Five Americans followed two Haitians along a winding, narrow, concrete lined corridor in the Christ Roi neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. Descending the path from the main road we bypassed people's homes and curious onlookers until we reach our destination. It is a smallish home. There is no door. Only a curtain affords privacy to those inside. Telemaque Fequiere and Sheila Merzil, Outreach to Haiti health agents, announce their presence and ask if they may enter the home. A young girl, maybe 8 years old, peaks out and covers her mouth in surprise upon seeing that some white people had come to visit.

Two of the residents of the home have benefited from Outreach's nutrition program. One, a 19-year-old new mother was in the expectant mother's program and had now given birth to a healthy child. Her sister's daughter had been in the children's program. Both were malnourished. Both were brought back to health. Outreach's health agents had come to follow up on health

and sanitation issues in their home.

The new mom was proudly holding her 3-month-old infant but soon passed her to an admiring young American in our group. She explained that her sister and her baby were not there at the time. The health agents would need to come back another time to check on her niece. They would.

As they viewed the 10-foot-by-10-foot home the Americans saw only one bed. They learned that 14 people lived in the home. The outside temperature was 90. It was much hotter inside. There were three school-age children who were there at the time. None of them attended school.

What was clear to us Americans was that Outreach cared about this family and that the Outreach nutrition program and the follow up visits of health agents were working to change and save lives.

But it was also clear that there is much more to do. While Outreach serves 10 expectant moms and 100 children each year in the



Telemaque Fequiere and Sheila Merzil, Outreach to Haiti health agents.

nutrition program, there are many more malnourished expectant moms and children in the neighborhood that are not reached. While Outreach educates 200 children there are 300 more on the waiting list including the three we met on our visit.

Outreach is a small agency whose staff longs to do more. People should not live like the family in this 10-foot-by-10-foot home. But they do. Outreach's goal is to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others like them in Christ Roi. They need your help.

### Outreach Clinic

### *Third Health Agent Extends Reach!*

Outreach to Haiti has been providing health care in Christ Roi for 25 years. The recent addition of a third health agent to the clinic has already had a significant impact on our reach within the community.

Comparing the first 11 months of the current fiscal year with the additional health agent, to the same period last year, 34 percent more households were visited, 23 percent more vaccines administered, 21 percent more people received health education, and 19 percent more lab tests were performed.

These health care professionals walk the Christ Roi neighborhoods to follow up on clinic visits, give vaccinations, educate health and safety best practices, screen for malnutrition and make referrals to the clinic when indicated.

The health agents' in-home visits indicate there are severe challenges in environmental conditions contributing to diseases. Unsafe latrines, drinking, and household water are the main culprits.

The continued expansion of the number of people who are educated in healthy living practices will equate to a healthier community: healthier moms, children and families.

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Health agent Beatrice Avril measures a baby.

# Founder of Paula's Home for Girls dies

by Fr. Frank Rouleau

**M**adame Paula Benoit Thybulle, who founded Le Foyer des Filles de Dieu or Paula Thybulle's Home for Girls, died in March. She was 81 years old.

In 1987, seeing young girls abandoned and living on the street amidst misery and poverty moved Madame Paula's heart to find a place to shelter these young girls. She was able, with the help of the Diocese of Norwich Outreach to Haiti and many generous donors, to provide not only food and shelter, but also an education

for these children. Some were able to go to university. There have been as many as 70 girls living at the orphanage at any one time, ranging in age from 2 to 20 years old; currently 45 girls are in residence. Her granddaughter intends to carry on her legacy and run the home.

Through Outreach to Haiti the orphanage has been twinned with Mercy High School in Middletown, Conn., for more than 15 years. The school's president, Sr. Mary McCarthy, shared her recollections. "When I first visited Foyer des Filles de Dieu in 2000 and met Paula, I felt at home and wanted to

become part of this wonderful place. When I returned to Mercy High I asked the Mercy girls if they would like to be involved in any way. They immediately e m b r a c e d

the idea, so we started a twinning relationship that continues to this day. Paula was an inspiration to me and when she visited our school a few times over the years, she captured the hearts of Mercy students who were touched by her commitment and her love of the girls at the orphanage. She encouraged them to continue supporting their sister school and to visit, if possible. Her picture hangs on Mercy's Haiti wall and

she will remain in the thoughts and prayers of this Mercy Community that is grateful for the witness to Mercy she was in her life."

May her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace!



Madame Paula Thybulle and Fr. Frank Rouleau in 2016.



Bishop Cote visited Paula's Home for Girls in 2017.

## Outreach board members share memories of Madame Paula:

*Paula was such a mentor for me in those early years when I lived in Haiti. I would walk down daily to teach the girls. I have many happy memories of working with her. Paula was a woman of faith, love and service. She was a trusted friend who taught me so much! She was a valiant woman who was always there for me. May she rest in peace!*

—Sr. Ellen Flynn

*Paula was a blessing to both Pat and me while living in Haiti. —With gratitude for Paula in our lives, Maryann Boord*

*She was an amazing human being! —Ralph Stewart*

## Health agents *continued from p. 1*

Télémaque Fequière has been a health agent with Outreach for four years, but prior he spent some time volunteering. He is a very passionate communicator and enjoys his role as advisor for children and pregnant women. He says, "I'm very fond of my job because it helps both me and the community."

Béatrice Avril is a nurse. She started at Outreach clinic as a community health agent in 2010 just after the earthquake, and has also learned through helping when needed, how to run the pharmacy.

Sheila Merzil is also a nurse. She started in 2011 at the clinic as a student, and interned again in 2012-13. During 2014-15 she volunteered. Then, in 2016 she received health agent training and was ultimately

hired as the third community health agent. She says she was very determined to learn everything she needed so she could work for Outreach!

Outreach to Haiti is grateful for the on-going grant from the Diocese of Norwich Cradle

Fund to support the clinic, as well as the grants from the Northeast Mercy Ministry Fund and the Catholic Foundation of Norwich which support the third health agent and the additional clinic activity generated.



Health agent, nurse Sheila administers a vaccination to a patient at the clinic.

**espwa**

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# Outreach student enters prestigious Hult Competition

A university student sponsored by Outreach to Haiti participated in a global competition that challenges young people to change the world through business. Josue Eliassaint was part of a team of four agronomy students from Universite Quisqueya (UNIQ) who submitted a BioGaz cooking project to their campus Hult prize competition. Out of the 11 entries, his team placed first, qualifying them for the regional finals in Mexico City in March.

Josue tells of his experience: "I learned a lot from the com-



Josue Eliassaint

petition. It's helped me grow in life socially and intellectually (entrepreneurship, grant writing, business, and networking).

As a student of agronomy, in terms of the project, it's helped me to understand how we can protect the environment, use trash and biodegradable objects to produce energy, make money, and then get ideas to write projects and grants.

I hope our biofuel project will touch Haitian people, because it will benefit the environment, and

will power food production."

Josue attended the Regional finals at Mexico City to present the project. This was only possible due to the generosity of his long-time education sponsors who went above and beyond their yearly commitment, covering Josue's hotel and assisting in the acquisition of the necessary visa. His sister paid for his travel.

Although their project didn't win at the Regionals, the experience was valuable to Josue. "I enjoyed visiting places like the Haitian Embassy in Mexico City, a commercial building an entrepreneur built, ITAM University, Castillo de Chapultepec, places where people sell Mexican food, and an agronomy market. I had the pleasure to interact with other cultures and people from Japan, America, Mexico, Peru, Denmark, Canada, China and African countries."

Josue started and ended his reflection by saying, "I would like to say thank you to God, Outreach to Haiti (my sponsors have changed my life), my family and friends for everything they help me achieve in my life. My teachers and students who provided direction for the project at the University. I am blessed!"

Outreach to Haiti would also like to thank Cross Catholic and Tom and Julie Woods Foundation for grants that aid education sponsorships, in addition to our many individual sponsors who make it possible to send 200 Haitian children to school.



Josue with two of his teammates at the Mexico City regionals.

There are many more waiting for sponsors – can you help?

## My first visit to Haiti

By Ainsley MacLachlan

Sixteen-year-old Ainsley MacLachlan recently traveled to Haiti with an immersion group for the first time, and writes about meeting with students from the Outreach to Haiti Education Sponsorship Program, as one of many powerful impressions she took away from her visit.

My first impression of the six young Haitians I met—8th- and 12th-grade sisters and university/vocational students—was how welcoming they were! Meeting with us is not something they were simply asked to do, they were genuinely excited to talk to us. Each person I met was incredibly intelligent and earnest. I first spoke with Winold, an automotive mechanic student. Winold spoke English extremely well, and when I asked him how he learned English, he explained, from reading, to watching videos, to listening to American music. He said that it is his dream to teach English, and he takes every opportunity he can, to bring him closer to his objective.

In our group discussion, I became more and more impressed with these amazing people. Wenguerdy, a medical student told us not only is he in medical school, but he also teaches a nursing class, and is



Ainsley MacLachlan with a student.

running his own promotional business. He doesn't make any money but he does it to better himself. Wenguerdy too is truly willing to do whatever it takes to achieve his goals.

Neima is the 15-year-old daughter of Emil, Outreach's Education Director. Neima claimed that she did not know much English, so her father said that he would translate for her, but she said that she wanted to give it a try. For the next five minutes, Neima told us all about her ambitions as a violinist, and her plans to go to medical school to become a pediatrician someday, all in perfect English! Neima may have been shy at first, but by the end she had everyone in absolute awe with her ability to speak English and her overall enthusiasm.

Josue, a college agronomy student, has designed a biofuel project that he plans on using to

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## About the Hult Prize



The Hult Prize is a prestigious global competition that challenges young people to solve the world's toughest issues by empowering them to make money, do good and make life better for millions of people through the creation of for-good, for-profit businesses.

The Hult Prize Foundation has been called the "Nobel Prize for Students" and has been featured in a *TIME Magazine* cover story highlighting the "Top 5 Ideas Changing the World."

The 2018 Hult Competition theme is Harnessing the Power of Energy to Transform the Lives of 10 Million People by 2025. Energy is the lifeblood of human society. By creatively harnessing energy we can transform it into clean water, food, jobs, and connectivity. The world has enough latent capacity for energy innovation to shift the trajectory of global development. The 2018 Hult Prize was an invitation to student teams around the world to find and develop energy innovations that can be scaled to improve the lives of millions.



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### *First visit* continued from p. 3

improve Haiti's environment. He entered this project in a contest, and advanced to the regionals (*see previous page*). Paul Edson, an engineer, was excited to show us one of his projects that he was very proud of. Paul has applied to be one of the engineers working on the construction of Outreach's new building. Hearing these young people are working hard every single day to make the most

of their education, so that they can one day pursue their dreams, and to help improve their country – they were so inspiring! They are truly going somewhere. They are Haiti's future. They are the ones who will make a difference.

These are just some of the students part of Outreach to Haiti's Education Sponsorship program that you are helping to make a difference in their lives.



*Ainsley MacLachlan with many of the students she met.*



## *Annual bike ride raises funds for mission in Haiti*

Once more, a small team from Outreach to Haiti will start a five-day, 337-mile bike ride on Oct. 8, touching five of the six New England states to raise awareness and funds to support the mission in Haiti.

The bike ride has been planned as a "virtual trip" across Haiti: the distance chosen for the trip is the distance from Jeremie on the West coast of Haiti, through the

capital city of Port-au-Prince, where Outreach is based, to Cap-Haitien on the North coast.

This is the fourth annual bike ride and upon completion, the total distance ridden is nearly 1,500 miles! In the first three years, the ride raised close to \$55,000.

For more information on the ride, visit the website at: [www.outreachtohaiti.org](http://www.outreachtohaiti.org)