

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

Norwich Outreach Center soon to be a reality



Demolition of the damaged offices.



The cleared lot.



Front elevation of the new facility.

Beyond our normal activities in Haiti, this is an eventful time for our ministry. There was an opportunity while the Board was in Haiti, to meet with the construction management firm for the new building. The result was that contracts were signed and demolition of the remnants of the old building started! The offices and education tutoring space were originally expected to be usable going forward, but a recent engineering study assessed severe structural

damage which rendered them unsafe. Staff was relocated. Rebuilding the clinic and mission house will now incorporate additional space for the offices and computer lab. This has significantly increased the cost of the project, but it is something we must do now. Demolition and debris removal was completed by Christmas. Final detailed plans for the new building will be completed by April, with the additional revised costs and construction timeline. Actual

construction will begin shortly thereafter. It has been through your generosity that we have been able to sustain the programs in Haiti and have raised the capital needed to start rebuilding. We are grateful to you for making all this possible. Outreach's commitment to Christ Roi neighborhood for 25 years remains steadfast. The new clinic, mission house, offices and computer lab will be the foundation of our efforts in Haiti for years to come.

Outreach Board meets in Haiti

The Diocese of Norwich Outreach to Haiti (OTH) Board held its December 2017 meeting in Haiti. The Board meets quarterly, and every other year a meeting is in Haiti. This allows

the Board to maintain face-to-face connections to Haitian staff (in addition to regular Skype and email), students, clinic patients, community members, schools and orphanages. Board members who attend pay their own way to Haiti, including on-site costs of

their visit, so that all donations meant to help Haitians are used for Haitians. The Board had a packed schedule meeting with staff and students, and visiting the many programs: the OTH clinic, two schools and two twinned parishes. This issue of *espwa* shines a light on the many facets of Outreach's mission in Haiti.



Board members Geri O'Hare, MaryAnn Boord and Sr. Ellen Flynn, RSM with Twinning Director Fr. Frank Rouleau and OTH Haitian staff Jean Marie, Charmant, Jean Jackie and student Sherley.

Immersion - Seeing Haiti

Along the main paved road leading out of Port-au-Prince to the north there sits a small sign reading Earthquake Memorial. The memorial is halfway up the hill to the east of the road on the site of the main mass grave where tens of thousands (about 300,000 died in the earthquake) of bodies were trucked and dumped into a huge pit after the earthquake. Most were not able to be identified.

The outer perimeter of the memorial wall is lined with marble panels, etched with inscriptions of many people who

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Education – *Creating future leaders*

Through the generosity of our education sponsors, generous grants from Cross Catholic, the Tom And Julie Wood Family Foundation, and other donors, Outreach annually gives scholarships to about 200 Haitian youth from kindergarten through university. There are only enough public schools for 15 percent of the country's children to go to school. The rest must pay for private schooling if they want to be educated. The Board visited two Christian schools in Port-au-Prince that Outreach sponsored students attend. One was a large school of several hundred primary and secondary students, with 17 Outreach

scholarship students. The school had new cement exterior walls, with wooden partitions separating classrooms. Rough-hewn wood boards were made into tables and benches. The classes were crowded, and students filled every seat available. At both schools there were fewer spots, than students who would like to go to school. Students who attend must maintain a passing grade for the school each year and pass the state administered tests at the end of 9th grade and Philo (13th grade) to stay in school. Outreach sets an even-higher grade point average as a minimum requirement to stay in the Outreach program. These students work very hard and are very proud of their achievements and stood for us to take their pictures. They said, "thank you" because of your generosity, they were able to go to school.

This year we committed to an additional 25 new students and we welcome your help to meet their needs.

The Board also met with some of the university students. This is also something done by many of the immersion trips to Haiti. It is inspiring to hear some of the stories of the students' lives, and what they hope to accomplish when they finish school.



Middle school girls are shy and wonder who the foreigners are and why have they come to visit?



Young school children sang a song to welcome Board members who visited this Christian school.



Sr. Ellen Flynn with Sherley, a university student studying to become a doctor.

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DIOCESE OF NORWICH
OUTREACH TO HAITI

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Bishop of the Diocese of Norwich
Dan O'Sullivan, Executive Director

James Michel, Board Chair

In Haiti:

Joel Jean-Louis, Operations Director

Fr. Frank Rouleau
Twining Director and Chaplain

An opportunity to start a business

Two board members introduced a group of 10 young women —students and graduates—to a product for their personal use, and a potential small business endeavor. They explained to the assembled group the product and the possibilities. They also offered to help supply materials (sewing accessories and fabric), the first treadle sewing machine, and the training. The mother of one of the board members has offered to travel to Haiti to work alongside those interested.

The product came in a self-contained bag and the group was intrigued as they pulled out the items. Outreach Board Chair, James Michel laughed as he said, "I was attempting to explain how to set up and use the reusable feminine products that were handmade in Georgia by our board member Karl's mother and her church group. It was quite comical; I'm not sure if they were embarrassed for me or for themselves having to listen to me explaining how to use it. They were very quick to acknowledge that they knew what I was saying so that I

could stop talking. They got a good laugh as did I!" James said several small group discussions followed and that a couple of people showed enthusiasm and interest in the project. The intent is to help young entrepreneurs start a business producing and selling this product. The goal is to create jobs, build businesses and become a sustainable model.



Outreach Board Chair James presented a product to start a new business to graduates.

Twinning – Expanding our impact

Part of our ministry's mission is to twin U.S. parishes, schools or organizations with parishes in the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. Outreach has 15 relationships between those organizations in the U.S., and Haitian parishes, orphanages, and schools. U.S. twins most often support Haitian schools by paying teachers' salaries, and sometimes helping to build the school. Some also provide health care support, and employment training. The twinning provides financial support for the Haitians, but also develops a strong relationship between the two communities which provides for mutual spiritual growth, fostering a strong camaraderie.

The Board visited the parish of Ste. Anne de Saintard, a fishing community an hour outside Port-au-Prince along the shoreline. This parish is twinned with St. Elizabeth Seton in Rocky Hill, Conn. In the fall of 2016, Hurricane Matthew destroyed

60 boats of their fishing fleet. Because of the lack of electricity in most of the community, and poor communications, they were unprepared for the hurricane and the massive storm surge accompanying it. St. Elizabeth Seton raised money to help rebuild the fleet, and many donors gave money directly to Outreach for hurricane relief, a portion of which went to help replace the fleet. While the money provided was critical, it was just as important that the community felt the love and support of St. Elizabeth Seton and Outreach — to know they were not alone in recovering from the hurricane.

Fr. Johnson, the Ste. Anne parish priest, showed the Board some of the new boats built with the hurricane relief money. Donations to this parish from Outreach and St. Elizabeth Seton totaled \$13,000 and bought 17 hulls. Owners must still provide rigging of sails, oars



Fishermen back at work with the catch of the day. They are pictured with Director of Twinning Fr. Frank Rouleau, Executive Director Dan O'Sullivan and Ste. Anne parish priest Fr. Johnson.

and nets. When these new boat owners go back to work, a portion of their proceeds will repay the community loan program, and the next boats can be made. This community understands that everyone must be made whole again. "Without these boats they cannot make a living and

they cannot send their children to school. Building boats also gives work to local carpenters," Fr. Johnson explained. The fishermen were proud to show their catch of the day. They told how relieved they were to get back on the water and back to work.

Immersion continued from page 1

were killed, and the many dignitaries dedicating the memorial when it was opened. There are quotes exhorting their hopes and dreams for Haiti — included were those of the Archbishop of Port-au-Prince Serge Miot. He and his Vicar General, members of the choir and religious sisters of the convent, all perished when the Cathedral collapsed that day. There is a headstone with a promise from Former President Michele Martelly — "January 12, 2010 - We will never forget." It is not just a promise to remember the people who died and suffered from the earthquake, but a promise to do better in the future, to build a better and stronger Haiti.

This massive loss of life and reminder of all the personal and material loss, this beautiful tribute to those who died going about their daily lives — it was all very sobering. As we drove around and saw the progress from the earthquake devastation we were reminded of the resiliency of the Haitian people and their potential.



The Earthquake Memorial Angels represent approximately 300,000 Haitians who perished.



A headstone reads, "we will never forget."

Sunday Mass

Sunday morning came, and board members attended Mass in Citi Militaire at Notre Dames de Lourdes, a parish twinned with St. Mark's in Westbrook, Conn. This is a highlight of many immersion trips. It is a large parish, and so many come to Mass, that when people cannot squeeze into the pews in the large church, they fill the outside patios. It was a rush of emotions to be surrounded by hundreds of Haitians singing their hearts out in praise to God. Though we could not understand exactly the words of the Mass (as they sang and prayed in Haitian Creole) we recognized the universality of what was being said and asked for from God.

While the time in Haiti for the Board was important to stay connected with staff, to see our programs first-hand, and to stay connected with Haiti generally, it was equally important to reground us spiritually and emotionally, for our mission is to serve the people of Haiti in the spirit and values of the Gospel.



Church-goers fill the outside patios at Notre Dame de Lourdes when the pews inside are taken.



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Sr. Ann Weller Clinic – *New grants fund third health agent*

Outreach to Haiti has been providing health care for 25 years to the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Christ Roi. Our clinic is staffed by Haitian doctors who see about 6,000 patients a year. The clinic offers pharmacy and laboratory services as well as vaccinations. Health agents walk the neighborhood to follow up with home visits, malnutrition screening, health and safety best practices, and to make referrals to the clinic when indicated.

This year Outreach received grants from the Catholic Foundation and the Sisters of Mercy Northeast to fund a third health agent.



Outreach's clinic welcomes its third health agent. Agents walk the neighborhood of Christ Roi in Port-au-Prince helping those in need.

Outreach doctors reported a 20 percent increase in penetration to the immediate community of 15,000. Correspondingly there was an increase in need of medical supplies for the clinic and our supplemental nutrition program. The Board visited the clinic and witnessed a crowded waiting room of mothers and babies.

Outreach pediatrician Dr. Jacquet came out to describe the daily clinic operations to

the Board and meet the members she had not yet met. Rose-Laure, who is in charge of the Infant and Children and the Pregnant Mother Nutrition programs, also gave the Board a brief overview of those programs.

Dr. Jacquet will be coming to the U.S. as our guest speaker for the upcoming annual Gala. Come and join us April 28 and hear in person her story and those of her patients at the Outreach Sr. Ann Weller Clinic.

Diocese of Norwich, Outreach to Haiti
invites you to the

11TH ANNUAL GALA

benefiting children in Haiti

Saturday, April 28, 2018

A VILLA LOUISA • 60 VILLA LOUISA RD. • BOLTON, CONN.

Cocktails at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner

Outreach to Haiti welcomes guest speaker

DR. NADINE JACQUET

Director of Outreach to Haiti Clinic
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

\$100 per person (\$50 tax-deductible)

Cocktail attire. RSVP 860-800-3601 by April 16.