

HFC Kids Participate in Missions Work

It has long been a goal of HFC to have our children participate in outreach programs or servant events to assist those in need in the local community. A team from Grace Chapel of Lexington, MA and Hope Christian Church of Winchester, MA recently visited the orphanage and provided such an opportunity for our kids. Several of the HFC kids (Argentine, Stephanie, Jeanine, Jette, Es-



perance, Bernadin and Mathurin) served as student leaders, helping to oversee, communicate, translate, and generally set a good example for the other children.

The US team, the HFC student leaders, and approximately 10 to 12 kids from the orphanage (rotating daily) worked on

a project for each of four days. They visited two orphanages, one in Petionville and the other in Croix de Bouquet. They did a lot

of painting, repaired a roof, provided new mattresses and shoes, interacted with the children at the other orphanages, and participated in daily devotionals. One day was set aside for a beach day, as all of the kids and staff (200 in all!) went to the beach and had a wonderful time.

This is something that we encourage all teams to consider when they visit HFC, as we want the children to realize the importance of volunteering and giving back. Read the comments of **Argentine Guillaume** and **Bernadin Guy Junior**, two of the student leaders, regarding their experience.

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In Their Own Words...

Argentine

Last week I visited some orphanages in Haiti. I enjoyed visiting orphanages, painting and cleaning everything. The reason why I enjoyed it is because it was the first time that I had an opportunity to go out and serve other people. American teams come to Haiti and work for us for 12 years and now I had the opportunity to serve others like the American teams have done for us. I was very, very excited. Serving other people was one of my dream and now I can say this dream has come true.



When we went to Mrs. Fernandez's orphanage and we prayed for the children that were sick, I prayed and I felt the presence of God. I know He was there and it was my favorite part of the service project.

When we went to Mrs. Gladly's orphanage, where the handicapped children were, we couldn't go by car so we went on foot and our feet were all dirty and we went out for ice cream with dirty feet!

I would like to keep doing these service projects. I'd like to keep

visiting other orphanages, schools, hospitals and other places.

I was happy to spend last week with the Americans and the children in Thomasin [location of Bethel Guest House, where many mission teams stay]. Daniel made me laugh every day. I thank God for his blessings and he made one of my dreams come true. Thank you so much for choosing me to be a leader and for taking us to the beach. I participated every night in devotions and I really enjoyed devotions.

Bernadin

Last week I did a lot of work with the team. I painted walls of another orphanage, I helped to repair the ceiling at one orphanage and we went to the beach with the team, the children and the workers and some of their families.

I enjoyed the week because I was happy to help the other orphans and I was happy to leave the pension for awhile and spend my vacation helping people that have no one to help them. I have helped Americans when they do work in our orphanage, but this is the first time I have helped other orphanages and I really enjoyed it.

I would like to keep doing these service projects in Haiti because there are so many people that need our help. I have always wanted to help people in Haiti and

this is a way I can help. I cannot give money because I don't have money, but I can work for them. At

Mrs. Fernandez's orphanage, I knew they did not have a lot of money. I don't think we have a lot of money, but our orphanage is better than that orphanage and I would like to help with orphanages



that do not have as much money as we do.

I got to pray with handicapped children, I got to work with the children of our pension and I got to stay in Thomasin with the American team. I am happy that I got to see different places in Haiti and I am happy that I was able to help people.

Haiti '08: A First Timer's Perspective By Jim O'Connell

So how was Haiti? If you're receiving this newsletter, you've asked, been asked or thought about asking that same question out of a desire

to contribute or just curiosity. Did you see the pictures? You know, the ones online at the U.S. State Department, NY Times, HFC website or the really good ones that your family or friends took with one of those cheap disposable cameras. A great start, but simply inadequate. I'd like to turn the old adage around and use a thousand words to paint you a picture. But first the disclaimer: I haven't been asked to write a "What I did for my summer vacation" essay in twenty five years. But since Frommer probably hasn't yet published their *Travel Haiti* guide book, my lack of writing experience will hopefully be trumped by my lack of competition.

Because even a wide angle lens is too narrow to capture the panoramic of Port au Prince, I'd like to provide some observations to fill in what the camera missed. The aroma of charcoal, burning trash and diesel lingers the way humidity should. The equatorial sun is no match for the whisper of a breeze on the roof of the orphanage. Never underestimate the civilizing force of a cold 1/2 liter of coke in the old style glass bottle at dinner with friends. The ever present layer of trash is interrupted only by piles of trash. If you feel overwhelmed by all the need, give a smile and a "bon jour" to a Haitian child and you will feel the full grace of this people.

Intern Report by Bryn Boorman

I'm upstairs at Dr. Bernard's right now watching Daniel and Jefthe fight about what to watch on television. We're all tired and sore, but it's been a wonderful two days.

The kids are getting a whole new experience this week and I am so excited to see them grow in this new opportunity. We have a team of 7 people here right now. Seven kids were chosen to come up and spend the entire week at Dr. Bernard's house - essentially becoming 7 new members of the team. Instead of working at HFC, this team is traveling each day to a different orphanage in Port-au-Prince to minister to the needs of those less fortunate than our kids and also to expose our kids to service projects.

I'm in love with this idea! For 12 years our

Just like any major American city, safety is a legitimate concern. It would be negligent, never mind foolish, not to take the necessary precautions. Upon arrival at the airport, we were picked up in a modified box truck with the box fabricated from sheet metal, tubular steel and expanded metal (similar to trying to watch a baseball game from behind a chain link fence). As the orphanage protects absolutely the most vulnerable on the island, its perimeter is surrounded by a high wall and razor wire. With few exceptions, concrete walls and expanded metal sheltered our day to day activities. Occasionally, I felt unwelcome during our rush hour commute with glares from late teen/early twenty something boys, although I never felt threatened.

The same glares, the result of pride and need of self determination, can be a positive force on the road to Haiti's recovery. That same pride can be seen in how the orphanage teachers dress, in the upkeep of government buildings and the inspired decoration of the many tap-taps. All are superficial, but the desire behind it is unmistakable. Sure the outlook as a nation appears bleak, but there are circumstantial reasons for optimism. For the race between the two most ubiquitous items on the island, trash and cinder block, symbols of stagnation and progress, there is a clear winner. The trash constantly evaporates in smoke while I witnessed a man wearing a paper bag to protect his head from the sun work all day everyday that I went to the orphanage making cinder blocks by hand. Yeah, the progress is slow, but don't you just love "moving the chains". The steel rebar sticking through the roofs of nearly all Haitian buildings is a testament to their eternal optimism. Several boys at the orphanage speak three languages; without hope and optimism fertilized by ambition, that learning would have died on the vine.

I expected the devastating poverty of the ghettos located close to the bay and around the airport because I read about and heard the stories. But my source of empathy is that so many Americans are a just a few tough breaks or bad decisions away from destitution on a personal level (job loss, foreclosure, medical issue) or a catastrophe (Katrina or major black out) away from tremendous regional difficulties. Losing the power at Villa Ormiso (our accommodations in Haiti) at 10 pm each night and knowing that the orphanage generator was down for a month both served as reminders as to how delicate technology can be. The higher the technology, the harder the resulting fall can be. My first job out of college in downtown Boston required passing by a gauntlet of homeless people, one of whom was a woman very close to my age. But for the grace of God, I have great family and opportunity, but the sobering distance between me and that woman never left me.

So have you considered going to the orphanage for one week with your local group? I'd be lying if I said it wasn't a challenge. It is demanding, physically and emotionally. But the experience is recalibrating. Think of the most thought provoking book you've read in the past 10 years and now substitute yourself as the main character actually living it. If you're hesitant because you only swing a hammer when hanging pictures, and you have doubts about your ability to contribute, I can assure you that sharing of yourself with those children has every bit of the value of the window screens that I helped install. But that works for me since I'm better with screens than kids. But I can certainly recognize that there are so many opportunities to contribute—something for everyone. At first you may think that you are there strictly to give, but don't be surprised if the balance sheet shifts to your favor by the time you leave.



Jussaume/Soucy Team 2008,
Jim O'Connell, back row, far left



children have had teams come in and serve them, but they've never gotten to do the serving. Every day 1/4 of the remaining children meet the team at an orphanage for a day of work and play with the children. There are ups and downs throughout the day - some of the kids aren't motivated to work, some don't want to play with the

children at the new orphanage, fatigue hits us all and our kids aren't used to having to "work through the pain". But overall, I'm so impressed with what I see. Today I chased a group of the boys off the roof where they were hiding to avoid work. Within 10 minutes, they were down in the courtyard teaching the kids a new game that Daniel made up on the spot. I found Richecarde and Hermilus in with the little boys talking like

they were all old friends. Bernadin painted feverishly. Stephanie, Argentine, and Jeanine organized the girls into painting teams. Evens and Mathurin pulled down ceilings and helped install new ones.

At the end of the day, our kids gathered together at an ice-cream shop. The two groups that have had work days have had their eyes opened to how others live. Even though the conditions right outside our gate are shocking to most people, being with a group of orphans, many with physical deformities or mental handicaps, showed them just how lucky they are to be at HFC. When asked specifically what she thought was better about HFC than the Rose-Mina orphanage, Nelcia said "everything. Everything is better."

From Fearful to Faithful By Bev Cleveland

“For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand, and says to you, do not fear; I will help you.” - Isaiah 41:13

I had the opportunity to serve at the pension this past June with the Jus-saume/Soucy team. My husband, Hal, has been to Haiti several times, but this was my first trip. I had many misgivings about going and did a great deal of soul searching and praying prior to the trip. These trips have had a tremendous, life changing impact on Hal. I know he wanted me to experience Haiti for myself. In 2005, our trip was cancelled at the last minute due to political unrest and violence. I thought that validated my apprehensions about traveling to Haiti.

What I discovered upon entering the gates of the pension was God's love personified. The kids readily welcome you with open arms. The young men and women greeted us with beaming smiles, hugs and kisses. Their love was solid and tangible.

God's presence was felt more strongly there than any place I've ever been. They have only one demand of you, the need of the human touch. They delight in just sitting side by side and holding your hand. There are no expectations. You can relax and just "be."

I had the privilege of working with several of the kids on different projects. The girls were very patient and kind. Their intelligence is very apparent as they caught on very quickly, learning to sew quilts and design bracelets. The boys were polite and friendly. They worked very doggedly on an art project for HFC, determined to finish even though it took two days in extremely hot conditions.

On the last day of our visit, the children put on a program to show their love and appreciation for the work that was completed during the week. Songs were sung and letters were read expressing their gratitude. They cooked food and served refreshments and were very good hosts and hostesses.

They showed the team that we can be happy no matter what our circumstances, as long as we recognize Jesus as our Savior. As Argentine so eloquently put it in our conversation, "Nothing is impossible with God."

I learned many things on this trip, but the most obvious lesson is the importance of



teams showing their love and compassion to these children. They belong to God's family. They are our brothers and sisters. It is up to us to be God's hands and feet to minister to His own. We go to give them hope, and most importantly, to give us hope as well.

Building Hope, Growing in Grace—HFC Family Reunion

By Meg Nam

Every summer family reunions provide a time for families to catch up on the events of the past year, enjoy home cooking, reminisce and celebrate growth. These times are often a wonderful combination of fun and meaningful connections, reflecting the joy we have being a part of a close community. This spring the HFC community came together for our own family reunion. At the *Building Hope, Growing in Grace* event, we shared stories of the incredible work God is doing in the children, celebrated the growth in the children, learned of the current challenges and heard HFC's vision for the future.

We connected with one another over a dinner including many tasty Haitian dishes. A slideshow flashed pictures of the growing, smiling, healthy children. We were welcomed by long-time Board Member Dan Dzikowicz and enjoyed a song performed by the First Haitian Baptist Church of Worcester. Dr. Bernard, who helped make HFC a reality by partnering with Marion Austin in the beginning days, shared about the history of HFC. The presence of Dr. Bernard, Claudette and their family as well as Marion's daughter Adrienne Mack brought to memory HFC's rich history.

In addition to celebrating history, we looked ahead to the coming years of HFC. Hal Cleveland, Board Chairman and dedicated HFC missions team member, shared about the vision of the Board of Directors to invest in the building of the children into men and women of God through young adult transition programs. This focus on transitioning the children into adulthood is unique among many orphanages that simply ask children to leave after their 18th birthday. The complicated work required to make this transition a success will require the support and energy of the entire HFC community and we look forward to working with all of you around this initiative.

Nikki Skovron, one of our interns who lived with the children for three months, provided us with a picture of daily life with the kids. She shared how much she enjoyed - and was encouraged by - their spiritual and emotional maturity. We also heard from Sharon Daniel, another long-time Board Member and supporter of HFC about the future of HFC.

We hope you mark your calendars and join us next year on **May 2, 2009** for HFC's next family reunion!

Prayer Requests

- Direction for the older children as they prepare for transitions into adulthood.
- The planning and success of the fall fundraiser in bringing together the community and increasing resources to support the kids.
- The children as they prepare for a new school year.
- Missions teams preparing to travel this fall.
- The ongoing process of adoption for the older children and the families who continue to wait patiently for their children to arrive in the U.S.
- Dr. Bernard and Claudette as they continue to lead the staff in Haiti.
- Pierre and Sharon Daniel as they make preparations for full-time ministry in Haiti with HFC.

HOPE

for the children
of Haiti

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Visit us on the web at:
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Caring for the needs of today,
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Sharing hope in Christ for eternity.

Hope For the Children of Haiti (HFC), a Massachusetts based 501 (C) 3 non-profit organization, owns and operates a Christian school and orphanage located in Bolosse, an impoverished section of Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. The Marion G. Austin Christian School currently provides education for the 55 children living at the orphanage and for more than 200 children from the community.

HFC is called by God to give Haitian children, particularly orphans, the opportunity to experience the hope and the future God has planned for them.

FALL FUNDRAISER—WALKATHON 2008

Saturday October 18th

Hope for the Children of Haiti will hold its fourth annual Walkathon on **Saturday, October 18th at Minuteman National Park in Lexington, MA.** Supporters of HFC will receive a registration form in the mail and forms will also be available on our website in the very near future. The website is undergoing reconstruction and this upgrade should be completed by the end of August. The website address is www.hfchaiti.org. The ten mile walk will wind through beautiful Minuteman Park, which totals nearly 1000 acres. The park commemorates the initial Revolutionary War battle between the colonists and the British.

Registration will begin at 9:00 A.M. with the walk commencing at 10:00 A.M. Lunch will also be served immediately upon completion of the walk. It is an opportunity to see old friends, meet new ones, and support our children and school in Haiti. Mail the registration form to our office in Woburn, and you will receive the participant packet, which includes an HFC T-shirt. The sign-up fee is \$25. Encourage your friends to sponsor you, or better yet, encourage them to walk along with us. 100% of the proceeds are used to provide for the needs of HFC's children.

Please plan to join us on October 18th for this important event. Start exercising right now so that you can walk the entire ten miles! It is truly rewarding to know that you are making a difference. For more information about Minuteman National Park, visit their website at www.nps.gov/mima.

