



Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Spring 2017

House Repairs and Reconstruction Speed Hurricane Matthew Recovery in Ducis Village



In October 2016 a category four hurricane with winds up to 145 mph ravaged the southern interior of Haiti uprooting trees, ripping off roofs, and collapsing houses. The **Rich in Mercy Institute (RiM)** targeted assistance through the local church in the village of Ducis, prioritizing for reconstruction or repair a dozen houses of widows, single mothers, and similar persons based on the extent of damage and the degree of need.

Under the oversight of **Fr. Patrick Eugene, CSSp**, and with the collaboration of homeowners and local construction workers, seven destroyed houses have been rebuilt and five damaged roofs repaired. “Doors and floors” will be added to complete the modest 4 room structures and two more roofs will be repaired. A second phase of recovery assistance will include planting varieties of fruit trees to replace those destroyed by the storm and address the long-term threat of chronic hunger in the region.

During a site visit at the end of February, Mme. Yolene, whose house was destroyed when an uprooted palm tree split it in two, declared “*Only God can repay you enough!*” A visit to Mme. Jeanine - a solitary, unmarried woman - found her carrying a plastic basin of rocks to cover the floor of her new house. Smiling broadly, in spite of her advanced years, she boasted “*I am not afraid of hard work*” and expressed her deep gratitude and pride of ownership for the new house which she was helping to finish through her own hard work!



Funding for “Hurricane Matthew Recovery” came from the **Ryan Memorial Foundation**, the **Bozzone Family Foundation**, **Mother of Sorrows Outreach** (Mother of Sorrows parish, Murrysville, PA), the **Congregation of the Holy Spirit**, and many generous, individual donors.

St. Vincent College Students Develop “Global Solidarity” through “Service Learning”



Six students from **St. Vincent College** (Latrobe, PA), accompanied by service learning coordinator Jessica Parsons and RiM executive director Dr. Rich Gosser, spent their “spring break” on the campus of **Fondation Enfant Jesus (FEJ)**, a non-denominational, non-profit organization that promotes human development for impoverished children and their families through education, health care, community development, and entrepreneurship.

The students, enrolled in Gosser’s “**Haiti: Window on Our Worlds**” course, engaged in educational activities with elementary school students and worked side-by-side with Haitian youth to repair a storm-damaged road in Cuvier village. In Mirebalais students met with women entrepreneurs on the “**Chemen Lavi Miyo**” (Pathway to Better Life), a program for “ultra-poor” women in Haiti’s central plateau introduced in 2007 by FONKOZE, the microfinance organization that provides financial services to Haiti’s “organized poor”.

St. Vincent College students also learn about critical, global issues affecting Haiti and deepen their understanding of cross-cultural affairs and the impact of US policies on countries like Haiti. They grow in self-awareness and contribute to building a global “culture of solidarity” and engaged citizenship at **St. Vincent College**.

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University Scholarship Program Provides Youth with Opportunities for Higher Education



The **Rich in Mercy** "Education for Change" fund has provided opportunities for elementary and secondary education to hundreds of children and youth, mainly from the Solino neighborhood of Port au Prince, an area characterized by violence, hunger, disease, and despair. **Peterson Alcuis**, one such recipient who was orphaned in the massive earthquake that shook Haiti in 2010, is currently studying in Santiago, Cuba where he ranked second in his first year of medical school.

Three new university scholarships, based on merit and need, are giving opportunities for higher education to more Haitian youth of exceptional academic ability. **Lordson Angervil** (shown left) began studying education in October 2016 at Quisqueya University, a top-ranked, private university in Port au Prince.



An anonymous donation in support of the **University of Fondwa** (UNIF) has made possible two additional university scholarships. **Bossejour Bouloune** (26), from the rural community of Trouin, is a third-year student in agronomy. She hopes to become a community leader in sustainable agriculture. **Jeff Josephs** (27) is a first-year student in business management who aspires to creating jobs in his rural community through commerce and entrepreneurship.

Emergency Food Aid to Seniors and Students Supports Recovery in Barraderes Village

In October, the community of Barraderes, normally isolated and accessible only by large trucks and high, four-wheel drive vehicles, was rendered completely inaccessible due to flooding following hurricane Matthew. Severe food shortages soon followed.



Rich in Mercy, with the generous support of an anonymous donation received via the **IHM Sisters** (Monroe, MI), provided emergency financial support to Sr. Denise Desil, PSST of the **Little Sisters of St. Therese** who oversee a food distribution program of rice, beans, sugar, and cooking oil to more than 300 "at risk" elderly and handicapped persons. Additional food aid was extended through a lunch program for some 80 young girls who learn sewing, needlework, crochet, cooking, and baking from the sisters.

Rising food prices, linked to declining currency values and growing food shortages following hurricane Matthew, continue to increase the vulnerability of already-marginalized populations across the southern interior of Haiti, who are at "high risk" for hunger and chronic malnutrition. A sack of rice selling for about 600 Haitian "dollars" in 2008, during a world-wide food crisis, now sells for more than 800 Haitian "dollars"!

Ohio "Dress a Girl" Chapter Highlights Dignity of Women and Brings JOY to Girls

A group of sewers from the greater Cincinnati, OH area, affiliated with the "**Dress a Girl Around the World**" campaign, has provided more than 60 handmade dresses to the Rich in Mercy Institute for distribution to girls at the **Fondation Enfant Jesus** (FEJ) orphanage in Kenscoff, Haiti and at the **St. Louis de Montfort** parish in Port au Prince.

The "**Dress a Girl**" campaign organizes dedicated volunteers throughout the US and other countries to sew and distribute dresses to "at risk" girls in need around the world because "every girl deserves at least one new dress" as a sign of worth, respect and love.



Believing that "every girl deserves at least one new dress" as a sign of worth, respect, and love, the gift of dresses was arranged by **Nancy Kenny** of Lebanon, OH, a co-worker with **Presentation Ministries**, a lay-association in the Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati, OH. The dresses were transported to Haiti by students from **St. Vincent College** (Latrobe, PA) who traveled to Haiti in March as members of the "**Haiti: Window on Our Worlds**" service-learning course taught by **Rich in Mercy** executive director, Dr. Richard A. Gosser.