



## Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Spring 2015

### Dr. Rich Gosser Continues “Haiti Work” as Executive Director of Rich in Mercy



After more than 13 years as executive director of **Partners in Progress** (PIP), Dr. Richard A. Gosser stepped aside from that role to become executive director of the new **Rich In Mercy Institute (RiM)**, a new “faith based” nonprofit that has its roots in the “Haiti work” that he and his wife, Daneen, began in the early ‘90s following their initial visit to Haiti in 1987.

Gosser is emeritus professor of mathematics at **St. Vincent College**, Latrobe, PA, where he taught from 1975 until 2005. In 2011 he received an honorary “Doctor of Humane Letters” degree from St. Vincent College for his work in social justice, human rights, and sustainable development. In October 2014 Gosser was awarded another honorary doctorate by **Marywood University**, Scranton, PA for his nearly 30 years of working for social justice and sustainability in Haiti. Currently he teaches a “service learning” course called “**Haiti: Window on Our Worlds**” as an adjunct professor in the department of history at St. Vincent College.

### “Education for Change” Graduate Receives Full Scholarship to Study Medicine

In 2010 **Peterson Alcuis** (shown right) was forced to drop out of high school when both his parents were killed in the massive earthquake that struck Haiti. Last year, thanks to the **RiM** supported “**Education for Change**” fund, Alcuis had the highest score of anyone in his class on the Ministry of Education secondary school graduation exam. As a result he has been awarded a full scholarship to study medicine at a premier university in Cuba. Alcuis will begin his professional studies in October 2015.



The **RiM** “**Education for Change**” fund, administered by **Jean Patrick Eugene, CSSp**, (shown left), helps provide scholarships based on merit and need to some 100 students mainly from Solino, a neighborhood of Port au Prince characterized by extreme poverty, violence, disease, and despair. Funds come from individual donors, and “pocket change” from religious ed students of **Holy Trinity Parish**, Ligonier, PA, and a legacy gift from the “**ESPOIR Haitian American Organization**” of Detroit, Michigan.

### “Skip A Lunch, Save A Child” Gives Preschoolers a “Head Start” and a Chance

Children in Haiti are born into some of the harshest conditions anywhere on earth. Nearly all are seriously disadvantaged in terms of growth, development, and potential to thrive. Malnutrition rates are among the worst in the Caribbean. Nearly one-third of all Haitian children under five suffer from stunted growth and three-quarters of children aged 6-24 months are anemic.

[World Bank, Demographic and Health Survey, 2005].



Created by **Marlene Shaw** of Republic, PA following a **Rich in Mercy** “reverse mission pilgrimage” to Haiti the **RiM** “**Skip a Lunch, Save a Child**” fund provides partial financial support for a nutrition and early education “head start” program directed by **Sr. Eileen Davey**, a Holy Union Sister from Fall River, MA working in the **St. Louis de Montfort** church in Port au Prince’s Delmas section. Supporters of the “**Skip a Lunch**” program contribute \$5 a month to provide a

daily, nutritious meal, structured play, and various formative educational activities for “at risk” children. Beginning with 30 children in 2002 the program now serves nearly 100 preschoolers!

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The official registration and financial information of Partners in Progress may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll-free within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

## **St. Vincent College Students “Serve” While Learning about Haiti and the World**

RIM executive director, Dr. Rich Gosser, accompanied students from **St. Vincent College** (Latrobe, PA) to Haiti during “spring break” for a week of “service learning” on the campus of the **Fondation Enfant Jesus (FEJ)**, a Haitian, non-denominational, non-profit organization that promotes sustainable human development for impoverished children and their families through programs that include education, health services, child and family advocacy and protection, community building and entrepreneurship.



The St. Vincent students are enrolled in “**Haiti: Window on Our Worlds**”, a “service learning” course offered by Gosser through the college’s history department that combines academic learning and critical reflection with service in Haiti. Students identify critical, global issues affecting Haiti and deepen their understanding of cross-cultural issues and the connections between the US and countries like Haiti. Through this experience students also grow in their awareness and understanding of themselves and contribute to building a global “culture of solidarity” and engaged citizenship at **St. Vincent College**.

**Rich in Mercy (RIM)** has been organizing “reverse mission pilgrimage” immersion trips to Haiti since 1992.

## **Little Sisters’ Grants Provide Education for Youth and Food to Senior Citizens**

The **Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus** are an indigenous order of Haitian religious women devoted to educating poor children and adults; teaching environmentally sound agricultural techniques; helping meet medical needs; and providing programs for the promotion of women. They have about 200 members and 42 missions scattered throughout Haiti. They work with almost 150,000 Haitians each year in their elementary and secondary schools, teacher preparation center, hospitals, clinics, programs for handicapped children, professional centers for young women, orphanages, homes for the elderly, farms, and adult education.



**Rich in Mercy (RIM)** provides general support for the Little Sisters’ ministries in conjunction with the tri-IHM committee of the **Sister Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM)**s from Monroe, MI, Scranton and Philadelphia, PA who have partnered with the Haitian Sisters for more than 7 years.

**RIM** also provides financial support for the “**Barraderes Project**” coordinated by **Sr. Denise Desil, PSST** (pictured left with former PSST superior, Sr. Bernadette Nicolas, and Barraderes pastor, Fr. Junior Jean Jacques) which distributes food (rations of rice, beans, sugar and oil) to 300 elderly residents who are “at risk” for malnutrition and chronic hunger. Additionally the project provides basic health care for “seniors” and vocational education for local youth.

## **RIM Grant Helps Spiritan Parish “Raise the Roof” on New Church Building**



In 2008 the Spiritan parish of **Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish (OLPH)** in Kotplaj, Haiti began construction of a new church building with some support from **Rich in Mercy (RIM)**. Despite being situated very near the epicenter of the massive earthquake that shook Haiti in 2010, the new building survived completely intact, but progress was stalled when funding for the project ran out.

In 2013 **Jean Patrick Eugene, CSSp** became pastor of OLPH and announced the goal of “raising the roof” on the new structure so that services could be transferred from a nearby tent that had been in use for 6 years. In a remarkable show of sacrificial giving parishioners of this materially poor parish raised \$10,000 themselves! A **Rich in Mercy (RIM)** grant, funded in part by the **Bozzone Family Foundation** (New Kensington, PA), made it possible to complete the roof structure with a small excess that was used to tile the church sanctuary and paint the interior!