



## Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Spring 2016

### St. Vincent College Students Combine Cultural Immersion and Service Learning

Rich in Mercy Institute 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 students, who are enrolled in Gosser’s “**Haiti: Window on Our Worlds**” course at St. Vincent, engaged in various learning activities with elementary school students at the **Fondation Enfant Jesus** school in Lamardelle and the **H.E.L.P.** (Health, Education, Learning Projects, Inc.) school in La Tremblay.



In Mirebalais the students visited participants on the “**Chemin Lavi Miyo**” (Path to a Better Life), a program for “ultra-poor” women in Haiti’s central plateau launched in 2006 by Fonkoze, the microfinance institution that provides financial services for Haiti’s “organized poor”. In Cuvier village St. Vincent students met with members of the **Famn Vayan** women’s cooperative, a group of 14 single mothers who engage in cooperative agricultural activities to generate income to feed and educate their children.

The St. Vincent College students also learn about critical, global issues affecting Haiti, deepen their understanding of cross-cultural affairs and the impact of US policies on countries like Haiti. Through these experiences students 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.

### Center for Sustainable Agriculture Increases Food Security in Fonfred and Cayes

Hunger is increasing in all parts of Haiti. A new initiative of the **Foyer de la Misericorde Divine**, a Christian community and center of spiritual renewal located outside the town of Cayes, is helping to increase food security in the nearby region of Fonfred through a new center for sustainable agriculture.



A **Rich in Mercy Institute** development grant is supporting the Foyer’s agriculture initiative by funding the purchase of a pair of oxen and ox drawn plow. This “appropriate technology” choice is in keeping with the center’s commitment to natural and organic food production and its intention to model sustainable practices to groups of young interns and other farmers in the area.

Locally produced food from the Foyer’s farm in Fonfred will provide healthy meals to priests, religious, lay catechists and other guests of the Foyer who seek spiritual renewal, to deepen their commitment to ministry, and to increase their capacity to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people of Haiti.

## Construction Grants Advance Faith Communities in Gwayavye, Furcy, and Pon Sonde

A Rich in Mercy Institute “matching” grant is helping to fund the construction of a new rectory in the mountain village of Gwayavye. Following the completion of this construction, the local bishop of Gonaives will establish the new parish of **St. Joseph** in what was formerly a chapel of **Our Lady of Perpetual Help** parish in St. Marc.



The new parish church of **St. Paul** in Furcy accommodates a congregation doubled in size due to a flood of “earthquake refugees” resulting from the massive quake that devastated Haiti in 2010. An outstanding feature of the church comprises 15 stained glass windows designed by **Patrick Vilaire**, Haiti’s most celebrated living artist, and depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments in a uniquely Haitian design that distinguishes the parish church of Furcy as a center of Haitian sacred art. Rich in Mercy Institute provided support for the these windows through a generous grant from the **Bozzone Family Foundation** (Lower Burrell, PA),



The Rich in Mercy Institute was one of several funding organizations making possible the addition of four new classrooms to the **Sacred Heart** parish school in Pon Sonde. The new classrooms are part of a planned expansion of the former elementary school to include “junior high”.

Students who once commuted to the city of Gonaives for secondary education, often by dangerous motor cycle transport, are now able to continue their education at the parish school..

## Donation Facilitates Expansion of Professional Sewing Program in Fondwa Community

Skills in sewing and tailoring combined with basic business training can provide sustainable livelihoods in rural Haitian communities where income opportunities – especially for women – are extremely limited. In the village of Fondwa, the **Little Sisters of St. Antoine** operate a “professional school” aimed at equipping youth with practical education, marketable skills and the knowledge needed to create small businesses of their own. Courses in sewing, tailoring, culinary arts, and basic business skills are offered to youth from the **Fatima House Orphanage**, the **St. Antoine School**, and the wider area around Fondwa.



A grant from the Rich in Mercy Institute – made possible through the generous support of RIM donor **Nancy Kenny** (Lebanon, Ohio) – is helping the sisters expand the already-successful sewing program. The purchase of additional treadle sewing machines will provide increased opportunities for students to practice their skills and allow them to advance to greater expertise more rapidly. In addition to providing scholarships for 10 students, the Rich in Mercy Institute will help equip select graduates of the program with their own sewing machines.

## Petites Soeurs’ Annual Dental Clinic Supports Public Health in Barraderes Community



More than 110 dental patients from the community of Barraderes were treated recently in a weekend dental clinic sponsored by the **Petites Soeurs de St. Therese** (Little Sisters of St. Therese).

A Rich in Mercy Institute grant, funded in part by **Dr. Edward Morgan, DMD** of **Morgan Dentistry** (Derry and Ligonier, PA), funded the purchase of antibiotics, prophylactic materials, and other supplies needed to provide this essential care supporting public health in Barraderes.