



## Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Summer 2016

### Legacy Gift Supports Single Mothers' Microfinance Program in Cuvier Village



A group of single mothers – most of them in their 20s – have formed a solidarity group called **Famn Vayan** (“Women Overcoming”) to address problems affecting them in their village of Cuvier in the area of Croix des Bouquets. Collectively the women engage in cooperative agriculture on a small piece of land that they purchased last year with help from **Sr. Susan Nchubiri, MM**, a Maryknoll sister from Nigeria shown (photo right) together with **Blandina Juleus** (photo left), one of the group leaders. Individual members support their families by engaging in “ti komes” (small businesses) such as selling produce, stationery, water, or juices. Sr. Susan has also helped the group establish a micro-finance program that makes small loans to

group members so they can expand their businesses.

A legacy gift from Mr. **Victor A. Romito** of **Ligonier, PA** who passed away in 2015 at the age of 89, will enable expansion of the microfinance program by increasing substantially the amount of capital available for loans within the group. Romito, who loved gardening and caring for the land, was a long-time supporter of the **Rich in Mercy Institute**, who believed in the dignity and rights of women. He left a portion of his estate to Rich in Mercy in order to further its work in Haiti and its mission of “promoting global solidarity for a more just and sustainable world”.



The **Famn Vayan** revolving loan fund provides much-needed capital to these single women who are the sole support of their children and who have little or no access to credit. Loans are made for an initial period of 5 months and the group has enjoyed an nearly 100% rate of repayment since beginning the loan fund two years ago.

### “Education for Change” Promotes Positive Change for Solino Children and Youth



Contributions to the Rich in Mercy **Education for Change** fund provide scholarships based on merit and need to more than 80 children and youth – mainly from Solino, a desperately poor neighborhood in Port au Prince dominated by violence, poverty, hunger, and despair. Students attend both elementary and secondary classes at the Frere Alexandre School and meet regularly with program director **Fr. Patrick Eugene, C.S.Sp.**. Support for Education for Change has come from Mt. St. Peter parish (New Kensington, PA), St. Margaret Mary parish (Lower Burrell, PA), solicitations from RIM board member Vera Swiergol, and other individual donors.



Orphaned in the earthquake that shook Haiti in January 2010, **Peterson Alcuis** continued his secondary school education on an **Education for Change** scholarship. In 2014 he graduated first in his class and received a full scholarship to begin medical school in October 2015 at a premier university in Santiago, Cuba. In June 2016 he completed his first year of medical school, receiving the second highest overall scores on his final exams!

## **Ohio “Dress a Girl” Chapter Promotes Dignity and Worth While Bringing JOY to Girls**



A group of sewers from the greater Cincinnati, OH area, affiliated with the “**Dress a Girl Around the World**” campaign of Hope 4 Women International, has donated more than 30 handmade dresses to the Rich in Mercy Institute that were distributed to girls at the **Fondation Enfant Jesus** (FEJ) orphanage in Kenscoff, Haiti.

The “**Dress a Girl**” campaign organizes dedicated volunteers throughout the United States and other countries to sew and distribute dresses to “at risk” girls in need around the world because we believe 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 member of **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.

## **“Skip a Lunch, Save a Child” Fund Provides Head Start to “At Risk” Pre-Schoolers**

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 a minimum of \$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!



Children born in Haiti are subject to some of the harshest conditions on earth. Malnutrition rates are among the worst in the Caribbean. Pre-schoolers are particularly at risk for impeded physical and intellectual development. Nearly one-third of all Haitian children under five suffer from stunted growth and three-quarters of children aged 6-24 months are anemic. Since 2015 hunger has been increasing in Haiti. The majority of staple foods – such as rice – must be imported and the value of the local Haitian currency continues to decline. A 50 kilo sack of rice which sold for about 600 Haitian “dollars” in 2008 during a world-wide food crisis now sells for over 800 Haitian “dollars”.

## **Poultry House Enhances Food Security at Fonfred Center for Sustainable Agriculture**

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

A **Rich in Mercy** development grant is supporting the Foyer’s initiative through the purchase of some 50 hens that will supplement local food production from the Foyer’s farm, where aspiring young farmers can learn about environmentally friendly food production.

Food produced at the farm provides healthy meals to priests, religious, lay catechists and other guests of the Foyer who seek spritual renewal, to deepen their commitment to ministry, and to increase their capacity to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people of Haiti. In addition the surplus farm produce generates income to support the mission of the Foyer.

