

Helping Haitians Help Themselves

PO Box 1062, West Bend, WI 53095 • www.viphaiti.org

A Message from the President



I hope this newsletter finds you and your family in good health and ready for the holidays.

This time of year, is so busy with preparations and sometimes we

forget what is really important. To me it is enjoying friends and family. Many people dread the holidays with thoughts that no one cares about them. The people of Haiti are no different. I'm sure that you have heard about all of the unrest in Haiti and the changes that they are trying to make for a better life. We are in touch with the coordinators for the different programs that are taking place in Haiti. At Ventures In People, we are not going to abandon our programs or the friends we have in Haiti, while they struggle to improve their country. We will continue to support our programs. Ventures In People has been around for 40 years and we hope for many years to come but we can only make it work with your help. I hope as you gather this holiday season please remember the people of Haiti and the challenges they face. Hopefully in the next newsletter we will have good news about improving conditions in Haiti. Until

that time please keep them in your thoughts.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

Julie Stauss—President

Education

It is with heavy hearts that we write this article. Every October, people take a mission trip down to Mirebalais, Haiti to meet the children in Ventures in People's Education Program and take their pictures for our sponsors. Upon their return, we send information and pictures of the child or children to the sponsored families. This year, this work did not happen and the following quote from Ann Neumann, one of our VIP Board members, explains why: "On Sunday, October 6th, we were scheduled to board Delta airlines to fly to Mirebalais, Haiti to take pictures of 228 students sponsored by people here. Due to the demonstrations, we had to put our trip on hold for our safety and the safety of our student education coordinator, Louis Tenior Guerrier."

WHAT IS BEHIND THE CRISIS IN HAITI:

For four months, Haiti has been shaken by intensifying protests. These protests have actually been happening on and off since July 2018. Usually they last for a few days and

Education Cont.

then things go back to normal. In February 2019, protests lasted for ten days. People are scared and upset that the protests have lasted so long. These protests are rooted in the frustration and anger of the Haitian people directed at the Haitian government/leaders. The corruption, inaction, and policies are just too much to bear. The opposition wants President Jovenel Moise to be removed from office. The President has repeatedly said he will not resign. In addition, there is no prime minister because the legislative branch is also in chaos. Protestors are upset about billions of dollars missing from the government accounts, the rampant inflation (currently at about 20%), the limited access to fuel. The government owes fuel suppliers about \$100 million in past payments. So, suppliers have refused to deliver petroleum products. Thus, residents are bearing the brunt. This situation has become under



Long lines at gas station in Mirebalais.

pic write: increasingly difficult since Venezuela ended the Petrocaribe program last year. The program proved subsidized fuel to Caribbean nations. The Haitian government must now pay more money for petroleum products, including gasoline. Fuel prices are increasing at unbelievable rates. In the markets, the prices of food and other staples have quadrupled in the past few months. Sponsors have been calling us asking about the situation in Mirebalais and the safety of the children. We have relayed these messages to Louis and here is his reply:



“Glad to know that families care about the kids. Most of the children live outside of Mirebalais but those who live in town, They do suffer from these violence protests. Schools are closed on protest days because police shoot tear gas and it’s dangerous for the kids. About 50 percent of the kids made it to school the past few weeks. Because most of the parents are scared to send them, some parents stay in front of the school all day long. If something would go wrong, they could take their kids and run home. Some parents take the risk because here, if the school is working, even if you don’t send the kids to school, you have to pay for the year anyway. The schools have to pay the teachers.” Tenior’s final comment was, “In spite of violence, VIP, through my presence here, is still doing my work when it’s possible. Sometimes it is risky. The principals do what they can to offer some education to the kids.”

When it is safe for us to go to Mirebalais, we will take your students’ pictures. PLEASE KEEP THESE PEOPLE IN YOUR THOUGHTS IN HOPES THIS CAN COME TO A PEACEFUL END.

VIP Education Program Committee: Barb Seefeldt 262-338-1320
 Karen Hintz 414-70409393
 Ann Neumann 262-354-5719

Despite Country's Unrest, 4-H Clubs Continue to Meet

By now, you have probably heard about the political turmoil that has settled upon Haiti. Although I see global headlines every day about unrest in different parts of the world, the news takes a different meaning when a dear friend is living it first hand. I have been talking frequently with Bernine, our Haitian 4-H coordinator, who lives in Mirebalais. **Thank the Lord, she has been safe from the violence and protests thus far.**

That being said, she, along with countless other Haitians, are facing many challenges at the moment. Bernine said that daily life has become more difficult; that every day is a problem. Food prices have skyrocketed, so she and many others are struggling with food insecurity. Bernine has not been able to visit the 4-H clubs like she normally does, because of road blocks, safety risks, and the high price of fuel. And for her son, and many others, school is still closed.

Despite all of this, Bernine has been able to stay in contact with the 4-H leaders and even visit a few nearby clubs. She reported that **4-H clubs continue to hold their regular meetings.**

What a bright spot 4-H must be for the young people during this tough time!

A foundational component of 4-H is teaching citizenship, leadership, and life skills. I have always spoken of the power of 4-H to change lives, but I can't think of a more crucial time and need for 4-H than now. While schools are closed, this may be the only education that youth are receiving. With all the hardships in their lives, this may be one of the few moments during their week when they can sing, dance, and laugh with their friends. In a time of uncertainty, 4-H gives young people something to look forward to, and hope that this situation won't last forever.

Please keep Haiti in your thoughts and prayers. Thank you!

Warmly,

Jocelyn Ritger

Ventures in People 4-H Coordinator



Trianon 4-H Club started hosting a Mother's school after the parents of 4-H members expressed an interest in learning how to read. 16 mothers and 4 fathers have been attending the classes!



Members of Rue Docteur Mathieu 4-H Club worked on improving their meeting place recently. The club built benches, installed a chalkboard, and made paper decorations.

Water Filters



VIP was planning to distribute family size water filters to poor people in the lower central plateau area of Haiti. Due to the unrest, we are postponing this trip. When it is safe to return, we have about 1330 units to distribute with funds raised by Ventures In People and various Rotary clubs and individual donors.

We use the Sawyer Point One filter because it is reasonably priced, available in Haiti, low maintenance, reliable and has good flow. The filter fits on a five gallon bucket and we personalize them with the owner's name.

In Honor Of

Donation in Memory of **Mark Schowalter**

~Given by Ann Neumann

Donation in honor of **George and Joyce Schowalter**

~Given by Mr. & Mrs. Richard Linhart

Donation in honor of the marriage of **Jocelyn & Abner**

~Given by Julie Stauss, Karen Longrie, Barb Seefeldt, and George & Joyce Schowalter



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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the VIP Board!