



# MAISON FORTUNÉ ORPHANAGE

An occasional bulletin to report progress of the children's orphanage in Hinche, Haiti. It is also available on the internet: [www.richmonddioocese.org/haiti](http://www.richmonddioocese.org/haiti)

June 2008

## THE MONEY PICTURE

The Foundation's Board of Directors recently approved a budget worked out with orphanage executive director, Lefort Jean-Louis. The 2008-2009 operating budget of **\$211,190** is based on having 120 boys and girls in residence, 32 of whom will be attending secondary school. It represents an average actual cost of \$4.82 per day per child or \$1,760 a year.

The budget includes overdue salary increases for each employee and the hiring of several additional personnel for the girls' annex, especially a "directrice" responsible for the girls and for supervising the cooking, laundry, and housekeeping staff.

The Foundation took on the responsibility of raising the amount it needs by 7%, so we are hoping and praying that you our donors will respond accordingly by raising your donation by 7%. Thanks so much for considering this!

As Foundation President Karen DiRenzo pointed out in her emergency appeal letter, we are at a crossroads of a lagging national economy and the need to raise funds not only for the annual operating budget, but for a three-million dollar endowment by 2012. About 15% of our readers responded to Karen's letter and donated approximately **\$20,670.35** toward the \$22,000 we need to bring the girls on board in late August. *There is still time and plenty of need for the other 85% of you to help.*

The good news is that we do not anticipate any capital expenses next year. (The one remaining building in the Master Plan is the chapel, but we have been able to raise only about \$5,000 for that thus far—mainly through the efforts of Mr. Thomas Furlong of Pennsylvania.)

## A SUCCESSFUL GATHERING

For the past five years the Diocese of Richmond's Haiti Gathering in has brought together representatives of the Virginia parishes and organizations that work with their twinning partners in Haiti.

One of the breakout sessions at this year's Gathering was titled, *Little Pots Get the Big Pots Filled—How We Built an Orphanage and a School*. Retired Coast Guard Captain Ben Thomason, a member of the Foundation's Board of Directors, led the session, describing how the chance encounter of orphanage director Lefort Jean-Louis with three orphan boys led to the home and school we have today.



Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation Board Member Ben Thomason describes the orphanage at the Haiti Gathering

## BENEFIT YARD SALE

The Catholic Church of St. Mark, 1505 Kempsville Road, Virginia Beach, will host a yard sale on **Saturday, July 12<sup>th</sup>** from 8am to 2pm. Items for sale include clothing, toys, furniture, household goods, baby items, and more. All this with the same low prices as last year! The sale will be held rain or shine. There will be food, beverages, and baked goods for sale as well.

All proceeds will go to benefit the children of Maison Fortuné Orphanage to provide some of their basic life needs.

For information, contact Joyce Gridley at 757-675-6486 or [jgridley@cox.net](mailto:jgridley@cox.net).

## GOOD NEWS NOTES

*Susan Pleasants, RN, Wellness Program coordinator and chair of the Library Committee, was recently in Hinche and provided these notes. As we go to press she is returning to Haiti for a follow-up visit.*

### Wellness Program

I met with the *Zanmi Lasante* physician, Dr. Cruff Renald, and found him very enthusiastic about helping with the health care of the children of Maison Fortuné. He offered to do initial physical exams for the kids and even to visit the orphanage over several weekends. He will also meet with director Lefort Jean-Louis.

I reviewed the current medical charts and vaccination records and plan to incorporate this information into an Excel data base. During the chart review I learned that we have no demographic information on the children and no previous history. I am recommending that our volunteers this year obtain an oral history of each of the children.

### Maison Fortuné Library

The library is about to celebrate its first anniversary! The children are really enjoying it and are always looking for new books or magazines whenever someone visits the orphanage.

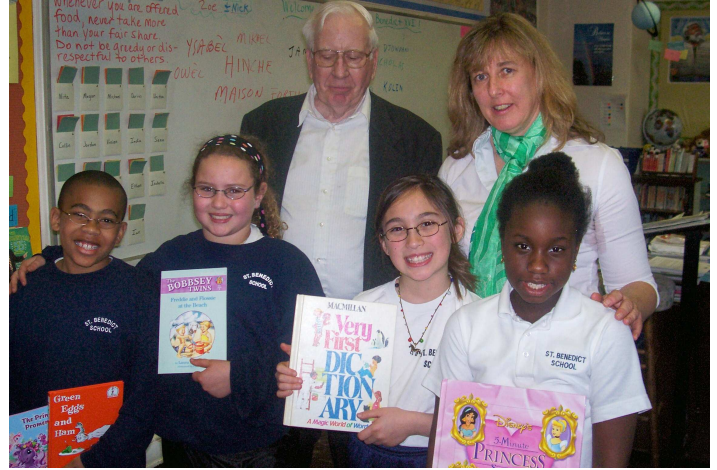
Several Virginia Catholic schools have had projects to support the library this year.

St. Gertrude's High School Foreign Language Club, moderated by Mme. Betsy Louis, raised over \$300 for the library. Mme. Louis has also been very supportive of letter exchanges between the St. Gertrude students and the children of Maison Fortuné—a great way for the children to practice their language skills.



St. Gertrude High School (Richmond) Foreign Language Club

Mrs. Dini Howell's fourth graders at St. Benedict's School, also in Richmond, initiated a book and school supply drive, donating some great books which are already being enjoyed by the children of Maison Fortuné. Brother Cosmas Rubencamp talked with Mrs. Howell's class about Haiti—a very lively discussion, which included translating the children's names into Kreyòl! They loved that!



Brother Cosmas Rubencamp and Susan Pleasants with St. Benedict children Unitha Cherry, Giovanna Pamplona, Jordan Foster, and Siena Glave holding some of the books they sent to Maison Fortuné

In Virginia Beach, Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School's Haiti Club also continues to be a major supporter of the library. We hope to have a story about this club in one of our upcoming newsletters.

It is very inspiring to see these young people taking an interest in the library.

Did you know that we have printed note cards featuring the artwork of the children of Maison Fortuné? These, now being sold in the four Foundation parishes, are very popular and a great way to support the library and wellness programs. Our appreciation to Andy Bacuzzi and Leo Blumle for all their help and support for getting the note cards printed. Both individuals have donated money and a tremendous amount of time to this project; without them it would not have been possible. Jean-Louis would like to continue to promote the artistic skills of the children, many of whom are quite talented (it was very difficult to narrow down the art work to five designs for reproduction on these note cards).

Included in the recent two containers shipped were over forty boxes of books, puzzles, and some bulletin boards to display art work. Dr. Luce De Vitry of Georgetown donated over fourteen boxes of French books and will be sending some French children's videos. Dr. Richard Johnson of Williamsburg, Va., has continued to provide a steady supply of English, science, and technology books. Barbara Batt Willson and her sorority are always on the hunt for wooden chil-

dren's puzzles and hands-on learning tools for the library. The children are always very grateful for these efforts! They have a "wish-list" of book requests and we hope to send some of these in the next few months.

## INTRODUCING MINASSON NISSAGE

Anyone who has visited Maison Fortuné has probably met Minasson, one of the residents who is in his first year at St. Martin de Porres, the secondary school in Hinche. He's a friendly guy with pretty good English skills, which he hones when U.S. visitors are around.

Both his parents are dead. He has older siblings who are scattered around Haiti and the Dominican Republic, but they are no longer in contact with him. He did live with a sister in the DR, where he worked for food, but she finally brought him to Jean-Louis in 2002 and asked him to take him in so that he could get an education.



Minasson Nissage

Minasson is also learning to sew and told a recent visitor that he'd like to get to the point of being able to work during the summer on one of the orphanage's sewing machines making school uniforms for the other boys.

Minasson is anything but lazy, always one of the first to volunteer to help out when things need to get done. At the same time, he's doing well in school and seems to have a bright future ahead.

## THIS SUMMER AT MAISON FORTUNÉ

Brother Michael McCarthy tells us that in July we'll have a new form of collaboration on the Plateau when eleven philosophy students from St. Charles Seminary outside of Port-au-Prince conduct a month's enrichment program for the residents at Maison Fortuné. Under the guidance of Jean-Louis, Pettris Joseph, and Brother Michael, these Haitian seminarians will offer each youngster an hour of

math, reading, and catechism skills each day during July. The older fellows will study algebra, French, physics, and an introduction to chemistry and Spanish. Each day will begin with prayer, songs, and Haitian fun under the enormous mango tree by the dining room. Now the hands extended to the youngsters at the orphanage will belong to their fellow-Haitians, students on their road to being missionary priests!

We will also have two summer volunteers at Maison Fortuné. **Ilsa Leon** is a student at Philadelphia's Temple University School of Medicine, and **Peter Everest** is a student at Colorado College. Both will be helping out during their summer vacations from school.

In addition, **Katie Gordon** of the Church of St. Mark in Virginia Beach and a recent graduate of the University of Tampa will be serving for a full year as a Xaverian Volunteer, working with Brother Harry Eccles and Brother Michael McCarthy. She will be commissioned on July 5 and leave the next day for Haiti. We'll be hearing more about her and from her in the next issue of this newsletter.

## DEVELOPMENT CORNER

Recently there was a story in the Richmond Times Dispatch about a seven-year-old named Thomas who received gifts for his birthday that weren't for him. They were for soldiers in Iraq. And he was happier than most birthday-party children! Thomas says he has everything he needs, so with help from his parents, he chose the recipients for his gifts. Then they asked those coming to the party to bring a gift for a soldier. What a great way to help Maison Fortuné. Encourage your children to at least share some of their gifts with children in the orphanage who have no idea of abundance and certainly not of over-abundance. Great going, Thomas!

## HELP WANTED

The Development and Marketing Committee for Maison Fortuné is looking for members. If you have an interest in helping us think of new and creative ways to raise money for and to build awareness of the orphanage, please contact Richard Costello at 804-966-2022 or [rcostello@xaverianbrothers.org](mailto:rcostello@xaverianbrothers.org).

For convenience of meetings, it would be best if you live in Eastern Virginia. This would be a great way to make a difference in the lives of others

## MAISON FORTUNÉ ORPHANAGE, HINCHE, HAITI INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP CONTRIBUTORS: 2007-2008

*Listed below are the individuals & groups that contributed between July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008 to the day-to-day operating budget (food, clothing, salaries, furniture, etc.) or to the capital budget (for building construction), through the Haitian Ministry Commission of the Diocese of Richmond. We are most grateful; the orphanage could not survive without them.*

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|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orphanage operating budget     | <input type="checkbox"/> Endowment Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> Library Project     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Capital budget (girls' campus) | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapel Project | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle replacement |

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