



MATABONITE REPORT

An occasional newsletter to the Friends of the Catholic Young Adult Association of Matabonite, Haiti, and the contributors to the David A. Goy Memorial Fund. Also available on the internet: www.richmonddiocese.org/hajel

December 2007

NEWS FROM GABRIEL THÉLUS

Dear *Matabonite Report* readers,

I know you are anxious to know about what is going on, what is new in the school, what the community looks like especially after the hurricane named Noel. We are still active. The projects are going smoothly. We all need to note that the absence of any Xaverian Volunteers this year affects us a lot. There is less communication between Matabonite and the US. But when God closes a door, he opens a window. We newly hired an administrator. I hope that will help our communication and make my task easier. Let's look at the projects separately.

School

We opened school one week late this year because we wanted to move the office to the school building, and the new office needed some more work. Now, however the principal can control better the visitors to the school and the coming and going of the students. Don't forget we kept the office for nine years in a classroom, and we were eager to make this move.

There are 268 kids in the school this year, a few more than last year. Our biggest ambition was to complete all the existing buildings. We will keep our word. We are not providing any breakfast this year, not only because we are completing the existing buildings and building a bridge, but because life has become more expensive, and we need to control our costs. Last August, we bought a fifty-five pound bag of rice for \$110 HT to fix food for workers who helped put in a floor in the auditorium. In October, the same bag cost us \$130 HT. Next June, we will be sending 20 students to take the official exams at the end of primary school. We did a good job this past year--we were 100% successful.

New administrator

I want to remind you that the human resources available here to do a decent job were limited. We did not have a secretary, an administrator, any accountant, not even a bookkeeper. But now a light is coming into the darkness. Mr. Berteau Zephir, a college graduate this past summer, came back to share his time between the parish in Pignon and our community. We are very pleased. Now, he is having orientation in Cap Haitien with me. He will call our contact folks in the US soon. (Within the next two years, we will have a veterinarian also.) Berteau has bright ideas. His goal is to build a nursing home for old people. He is responsible for checking our mail at haiticsr@yahoo.fr; his personal email is bzephir1@yahoo.fr. We welcome him among us.

Job training

Since we want to build up the community, we need to set up ways to create jobs for our folks. One group we are focusing on is the kids graduating from St. Rose of Lima School. Last month, on October 1st, we opened a shop to build furniture. Dutoy Augustin, the person in charge, is also training three young men for three years. After only one month, you would be amazed to see what they can do by working together. Anyway, we would like to start two more shops the same way: sewing, and welding.

We have newly created a branch in our organization, called FORMATION AND PRODUCTION. This branch will be responsible for all in-

vestment we are doing in the students who will go to a technical school or university. They will come back to produce items and materials to meet the needs of the community and the country. We want the shops to be self-sufficient and sustainable. We hope that this branch will be a major asset in terms of job creation.

Bridge

I think I explain already the reason for we needed a bridge. To put it simply, it will help communication between the village and the rest of the country. All of you who have had a chance to visit Matabonite know that crossing Ravin Tach (Palm Leaf Creek) is a challenge. It is even more challenging in a Tap-Tap. A muddy smelly creek needs a bridge. This is important for welcoming outside teachers to train our technicians. Also it will help more vehicles come to visit our new market in the village.

Early this year we started to build the bridge with \$5,000 which is 1/3 of the cost. This money came from the students of St Margaret School in Belair, Maryland. They collected 1,000,000 pennies for buying food for the school. We feel, in regards to their effort, if we build a bridge we will honor the pennies better. We are calling it Pon Senk Kob, which means PENNY BRIDGE. We accomplished 2/3 of the construction. Although it was damaged by Hurricane Noel, it is still in use.

Noel and the rains

Since the third week in September, we have had heavy rain. We were working on the bridge, and the rain prevented us from receiving materials to pour concrete. On September 5th, a truck was able to haul the sand and the gravel. The next day, they continued their contract, so we were scheduled to pour the concrete. We continued to receive rain from the storm (Hurricane Noël) which was killing people in the southern part of Haiti. After three days I thought the bridge was safe, but on the fourth day, we had an unbelievable rain. The creek was so high the entire construction was under water. It took away all the sand and gravel which was to go on the work, all the materials which we had to make the ramps, and also all the 2x4 boards and plywood to make the bed of the road. We estimated our loss at \$500 at the bridge site.

Noël completely destroyed a house we were building for one of our teachers in the habitat project. Most of the field and garden were under water. A lot of the flat land is still in that situation. We were lucky it did not take anyone's life in our area compared to the rest of the country. I have never seen anything like that.

Public services

By public services, I mean all the services that the state is supposed to provide, such as roads, parks, cemeteries, bridges, markets, etc. We have an account to spend a little money on things like those and we recently created a public market in the community, something very important for the development we are seeking. We call it Mâche Kanasik (Sugar cane Market) because we grow a lot of cane here. It operates on Wednesdays. Definitely, it will help improve the economic situation of the people.

Website created

Last summer while I was in the States, the students of the Newman Community at Virginia Tech met with me to gather ideas. We decided to work on project I was insisting on starting several years ago,

creating a website for our community in Haiti to let others see what going on. Also present in that meeting were some people from Radford University and some friends from St Jude's church. We have been blessed. It is taking roots. We called it Haiti CSR. You can get a taste of it at the new website, It is not finished yet but right now if you click on www.haiticsr.org, and I went ahead and created an address related to that project, haiticsr@yahoo.fr. They are proposing to form a non-profit organization for the long-term support of our community in Matabonite [see the next article]. I am encouraging our supporters to join the smart group in and around Blacksburg, Virginia who are working on this project.

Future projects

Two other projects soon will be undertaken, water and the mission house. On December 15th, Leo Mulcahy, a gentleman from Sacred Heart Church in Covington, Virginia and Steve Metzler from Richmond, will visit our community to study how best to provide potable running water to the school and later the rest of the village. They will come early to attend the Rotary water summit in Pétionville, Haiti. We welcome these two nice men and wish them good luck in their dream.

The second project will be the mission house we have long wanted to build to welcome teachers to train our future technicians and friends who visit us from the United States to encourage us in the development of the community. This big building was supposed to be started a few years ago to honor Bishop Walter Sullivan, who is responsible for the twinning relationship between the Hinche and the Richmond dioceses. We delayed the construction, because of the political mess in February 2004, which taught us that we need to deal with more security. Now the time has come to start, so we will begin early next year.

Closer to home

As I have told some of you, my health has not been treating me nice. I was in hard body pain last month, and I was depressed. In the middle of October, I was unable to control myself. My doctor tried to help patiently, but it was hard to determine the causes. Right now, I have to rest and I am prevented from lifting heavy loads until for the next six months. Sometimes, the pain is even harder for not being able to do some work.

Two weeks ago, Dominica fell at school, and injured herself badly. I was in Jacsonville at the time. The nun who is responsible for the school took her to the hospital. The next day, the doctor asked for an X-ray. God is good, that went ok. She is doing fine for now. She went back to school, but it was an ugly situation.

Maricile was shocked by Dominica's accident. Her blood pressure went high again. By telephone from Jacsonville I asked her to stay in the house until our daughter was brought back home. I did not want to have another accident in the street. Now, she has a body rash, and it looks like blood problem.

Ti Gabie and Garel are growing. Ti Gabie looks so big she is showing signs of becoming a young woman. That is more work for me--she is only eleven years old.

I want to thank you for your continuing support. As I said, even if you don't hear from me, remember that I am keeping up the good work. God bless us all.

Gaby

NEWS FROM SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

The communities at Virginia Tech campus ministry and the parish of St. Jude in Radford, Virginia, have set up a joint planning group for the support of Gabriel's work in Matabonite. Thanks to Karen Melendez, Catholic campus minister at Radford University, here some news about their efforts. To contact Karen for further information call her at (540) 639-6414, or email her at catholic@radford.edu

The veterinary clinic in Matabonite

Jonathan Dohanich talked about his trip to Haiti in September. During

his time in Matabonite he hosted a one-day veterinary clinic for the community. Jonathan said the animals that they treated (mostly cattle, goats, horses, donkeys and mules) were in poor health, with malnutrition and saddle sores being the greatest problem

Jonathan was joined by Moussanto Dantil, a veterinary student at the University of Fondwa, near the town of Leogane. Moussanto plans to live in Matabonite with his wife after he finishes at the university. He will purchase some land from Gaby and build a house. Once they move to Matabonite he will need a salary to help compensate him for his services.

One of the projects Moussanto did for Jonathan in the last three months was to take a census of all the families in Matabonite. He went door to door asking questions like how many people live here, what are your ages, how far do you walk to get water, and how far do you walk to school. Carolyn Halbert will assemble the data for a report that can be used as a baseline to use as measure for improvements.

Plans for a foundation

The committee then discussed the need to begin developing a not-for profit corporation, a David A. Goy Foundation, to provide for the future funding of projects in Matabonite. The foundation would need a person with business/accounting background to serve on its Board of Directors. Committee members agreed to search for such an individual.

Another form of accountability would be to encourage the Matabonite community to set up a committee in Haiti which would relate to the Board in the US, similar to the Committee on Education in Hinche which relates to the Board of Directors of the Haitian Education Fund in Virginia. Jonathan suggested it have seven people and consist of people like Moussanto Dantil, Gaby's two closest associates, the pastor, and other community members. Thus decisions would be made by a committee and not by Gaby alone. If everyone votes on how the money is spent there will be ownership and cooperation within the community. Gaby would then not have to shoulder all of the decisions alone, but be working for the greater needs of the community.

Subsequent developments

Following the meeting Carolyn Halbert reported on her contact with Patrice Schwermer, the Associate Director of the Diocesan Office of Justice and Peace. Patrice responded that

- Bishop DiLorenzo is in favor of the plan for a Foundation which would be a 501(c)(3) corporation.
- The next step would be to be in touch with diocesan finance director John Barrett for his input.
- When the website is ready, it can be linked to the diocesan Haiti WebPages currently being updated.
- Perhaps St. Jude and St. Mary parish bulletins could be used for advertising for a volunteer accountant to serve as treasurer of the Foundation.

Staying at Matabonite

To help support the beautification of Matabonite and to show outsiders the Haitian way of life, Gabriel graciously allows visitors to stay in his house for week long stays. He and his wife, Maricele, have had to sleep on the [floor](#) on the patio while visitors used the rooms. Larger groups, such as the 26 students from Penn State in 2007, have been forced to sleep on the roof. While a pleasure to host, groups do sometimes hinder the daily progress. Security is also an issue since local people know that many Americans stay here. Gabriel would like to construct a nearby mission house specifically to house visitors to Matabonite. This would be a self-sustaining, two story house with plumbing and intermittent electricity. A perimeter wall would ensure the visitors stay safe and can enjoy their mission stay in Haiti. Projected cost of this house is \$60,000 USD.

**DAVID A. GOY MEMORIAL FUND FOR MATABONITE
INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS: July 2007-June 2008**

Anonymous
Andrea Chenette
Ron Coon
Eric & Erinn Delss
John & Marilyn Dohanich
Joyce Folk
Linda Goy
Rev. James Griffin
Thomas & Mary Ann Harty
Jeanie Kline
Dominic & Norma Luciano
Br. John Mahoney CFX
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CHURCH AND OTHER GROUP CONTRIBUTORS: 2007-2008

Sacred Heart, Remington, IN

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Support for the operating budget | <input type="checkbox"/> Support for school breakfast program |
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Contributions to the Matabonite projects can be made by checks payable to the Diocese of Richmond and sent in the enclosed envelope. Gifts are deposited in the David A. Goy Memorial Fund for Matabonite - and your gift will be transmitted to Gabriel Thélus through the Fund.