



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.richmonddiocese.org/haiti

December 2007

ENDOWMENT FUND OFFICALLY LAUNCHED!

Our five-year campaign to raise a three-million dollar Endowment Fund was begun in style on October 19 in Portsmouth, Virginia! Guests were treated to an authentic Haitian dinner, and then Lefort Jean-Louis, orphanage director, gave a moving talk about his work and his continued commitment to the orphans at Maison Fortuné. He was accompanied by his wife and two children—their first time away from Haiti—and they did very well trying to communicate (though they speak only Kreyòl). Brother Harry Eccles CFX, who lives at Maison Fortuné, spoke about his role as unofficial “grandfather” there. He told those present how happy he is to be involved with the children as teacher, counselor, and comforter. Karen DiRenzo, Foundation President, explained how the endowment works; and Michael Johnson, Foundation Vice President, presented a slide show depicting the progress on improvements to the orphanage campus. In his closing remarks, Brother Cosmas Rubencamp, Foundation Secretary, said that he was 75-years-old and he hoped when he reached 80, the endowment campaign will be successfully done. Everyone enjoyed the evening, and as a result of the dinner, the Endowment Fund now stands at over \$65,000 in cash and over \$500,000 in pledges!



Lefort Jean-Louis, his wife Marie-Presta, their daughter Fetchina, and their son Wedji



Board members Chip Wirth (l) and Dr. Chris Foley (r) with Endowment Committee member Mark Williamson

Several of our former volunteers at the orphanage were present: Jonathan Dohanich, Michael McGeehin, and Ryan Kenrick. Kevin McArdle intended to be there, but was trapped in the DC traffic on a Friday evening and never made it!



Former Xaverian Volunteer Mike McGeehin with his wife Shelby and Susan Pleasants, chair of the Library Committee



St. Mark parishioners Lita and Pert Razon were among those who enjoyed the evening

We hope that you who are reading this newsletter will want to make your own financial pledge to the Endowment Fund, either by donating cash or stock, making the Foundation the beneficiary of a life insurance policy, including the Fund in your will, or by making a pledge, payable over a five-year period.

Just as important—maybe even more so—is helping us expand our donor base by giving us the names of people who might be willing and able to contribute to the Fund. We also need volunteers to host gatherings of friends and neighbors who might be interested in helping the kids at Maison Fortuné by contributing financially to the Endowment Fund.

Of course, while we are raising these Endowment Funds between now and 2012, we still need to maintain the current level of support for the 97 boys who live at Maison Fortune and the girls we hope to have with us next year. We also have to maintain support for the school, which now provides a free education to over 100 “street kids” who otherwise have no access to education.

So, we need you to continue what you are doing—and also contribute to the Endowment Fund, which will provide the bulk of the operating budget for the future! And thanks to those who have already given generously. For further information, please contact the Foundation Secretary, Br. Cosmas Rubencamp CFX, at crubencamp@comcast.net or 804-358-6210.

A SURPRISING NEW DEVELOPMENT

Recently, officials at the United Nations compound next door to (and sharing a wall with) our girls’

compound in the Village Creole section of Hinche, approached Jean-Louis with an offer. They need more office and living space for their civilian staff and would like to lease our property for three-to-five years. They offered to pay \$6,000 a month in rent, and they would complete the construction and furnish the place at their own expense—something we have been unable to complete because we do not have the \$70,000 we believe it would cost.

In view of the fact that the Foundation is in the process of raising funds for construction AND for the operating budget AND for the Endowment Fund, when Jean-Louis submitted the UN proposal to the Board in October, this seemed to be a heaven-sent gift. However, neither Jean-Louis nor the Board want to delay taking in girls any longer, and since we have targeted September 2008 as the time to begin welcoming them, we had a dilemma: we didn’t have the funds to reach our target date, but accepting the UN offer would seem to put the target date three-to-five years away.

Jean-Louis came up with a solution: rent temporary quarters for the girls. He felt that he could find a suitable location not far from Maison Fortuné. After a long meeting with him, the Board agreed. At the present we are completing the final paperwork with the UN and Jean-Louis is house-hunting. Stay tuned!

“Bibliyotèk, Bibliyotèk!”

Susan Pleasants, chair of the Foundation’s Library Committee, sends us this report from a recent visit to Maison Fortuné.

The children of Maison Fortuné shout the Kreyòl word for library when the door is opened! They run in and are very excited to be there. The library, thanks to all the kind donations and the support of the Founders, has become a favorite place for the children. Rolando says “Every day, I like to visit the library and read.”

During my October visit, we developed a strategy for the children to clean the library on a regular basis, under the direction of the librarians. It only took fifteen minutes for an enthusiastic group of younger children to dust, sweep, and straighten the library. We talked about the importance of everyone being involved in sharing responsibility for this special room.



Jacklin and his library cleaning crew at work

There is now an “artist place” near the entrance where our budding artists can display their work. Maxon, our resident artist, was called upon to design a cover for the library dedication scrapbook, which the children love to look at to remember the happy day of the dedication. Ryan Kendrick, former Xaverian Volunteer, and his friend, Emily, recently assembled some photo albums with pictures from previous visitors. The children like to look at these too and remember visitors who have come to see them. (Visitors who come to the orphanage: you can send albums or scrapbooks for the kids as a reminder of your visit and these will be kept in the library.) We actually had a small “scrapbooking party” when I returned because I had not finished the dedication scrapbook! Jacklin and Imetal patiently helped to glue down captions.

Brother Piet Van Kampen came over one morning with his assistant to hang the Founders Plaque, the crucifix donated by Anne and Chris Peterson, and the framed library rules. He was also kind enough to hang a beautiful plaque with a picture of Tom O’Brien who donated the funds to start the library—Mr. O’Brien hangs in the computer room where he can keep an eye on everyone. Brother Piet has also started making the small table and eight chairs donated by Kathy Faw and her family. These will go into the little children’s corner as we try to customize this area for them. Thanks to the kind donation of Greg Mason, Brother Piet is also working on mounting three maps which will hang in the library and serve as excellent tools for the teachers. Greg is a former Xaverian Volunteer who led a large group of Penn State students to Maison Fortuné last spring.

Jean-Louis and I met with the teachers to involve them more in the library. They will begin taking a class to the library for one hour each week. Jean-Louis suggested having the 5th and 6th graders do book reports. Their teachers are going to let us know which books they would like and we will order enough copies for each grade. The books can be reused from year to year.

We have very exciting news! St. Gertrude’s High School (Richmond) Foreign Language Club, under the direction of Mme. Betsy Louis, and the Youth and Government Club, under the direction of Mrs. Susan Gregori, will help the library as their project for the current school year. They would like to donate books which will be sent next June when a library trip is scheduled. Mme. Louis is also helping with a letter exchange of thirty-five letters with the Fortuné Jean-Louis Primary School. This will allow both schools to practice French and learn about each other’s culture. Mme. Louis is also coordinating letters from six of the older boys with French students at Benedictine High School.

We have discovered that it is difficult to manage the large over-sized books on the current shelves so we will need to construct additional shelving for these books. Book covers are starting to be placed on books and I have learned how to repair books. The one copy of the USA Woman’s Soccer team book was in need of repair after just one week! The children love books about soccer and we are therefore looking for additional soccer books. Dr. Richard Johnson continues to donate books which he carefully selects. These books are becoming favorites of the children and he has introduced the children to the French Tin-Tin series. Many wonderful events are happening for the library which would not be happening without the support of our present (and future) donors.

Help needed: I would greatly appreciate help in researching the procurement of new books. The boys are making requests and help is needed to locate a source for these books. Also the book inventory list needs to be updated and maintained. We would like to do an annual inventory with the goal of replacing books that are in poor condition and updating the collection.

MAISON FORTUNÉ ORPHANAGE, HINCHE, HAITI

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP CONTRIBUTORS: 2007-2008

Listed below are those 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.

Pearl Baird	Thomas Furlong	Felicia Karicofe	Constance Poore
Linda & Kevin Bevilacqua	Karen Gdula	Michael & Sue Kassel	Kermit & Mary Pope
Barb Drass	Barbara Ann Gerloff	Louis & Faith Keczan	Br William Reigel, CFX
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Terri Elliott	Betty Jones	Kevin & Mary Murphy	Kevin & Mary Beth Warner
Nicholas Fall	Sally Joyce	Helen Rita Nelligan	Natalie Yonker

LIBRARY FOUNDERS

The Founders of the Maison Fortuné Library contributed \$100 or more for the purchase of books & library furnishings. Our deep gratitude to each of them.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority- Rho Eta Omega	Br Harry Eccles CFX	Betty Jones	Mr. & Mrs. Charles O'Neill
Dr. and Mrs. Charles Blumle	St. Mark, Virginia Beach	Jonathan & Genevieve Kehoe	Michael & Kay Peloquin
Leo & Margaret Blumle	St. Stephen Martyr, Chesapeake	A.J. Kelleher	Anne Marie & Chris Peterson
Mary Louise Blumle	St. Thérèse, Chesapeake	James & Eleanor Leftwich	Susan, Rick, & Lauren Pleasants
Joshua Browning	Church of the Epiphany, Richmond	Earl & Carol Lienemann	Br Cosmas Rubencamp CFX
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		Sharon Neuhaus & Susan Vinson	Chip & Patty Wirth & Family

ENDOWMENT FUND CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey & Celeste Acosta	Drs. Christopher & Susan Kim Foley	Sr. Christina Malonzo	St. Mark Catholic Church
Maurice & Terry Allen	Anne & Joe Galler	Nick McCann	St. Thérèse Catholic Church
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|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support for the operating budget | <input type="checkbox"/> Endowment Fund | <input type="checkbox"/> Library Project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support for the capital budget | <input type="checkbox"/> Chapel Project | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor a Child ** |

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Please make checks payable to **Catholic Diocese of Richmond** and mail to:
Patrice Schwermer, Office of Justice & Peace, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond VA 23294

****Child Sponsorship checks should be made payable to: The Foundation and sent to The Treasurer: P O Box 3092, Chesapeake VA 23327-3092**