

Opportunities for Communities, Inc.

260 Lincoln Avenue, Amherst, Mass. 01002

opportunitiesforcommunities.org

A Quarterly Newsletter

Autumn 2009 Newsletter 3

HAITI

Simon Restavek School



The kitchen is cooking!

In June, OfC brought propane cookers to the school in the Simon neighborhood of Les Cayes. Part of the OfC curriculum is for OfC faculty and students to collaborate with the school in teaching vocational cooking and sewing. On the left are Amos Filius, the headmaster, and Timothé Indrik, OfC faculty in Haiti, showing off the completed kitchen. The kitchen's construction was initiated and funded by OfC and employed local labor.

Beyond providing a daily meal for the school children, the kitchen facilitates the cooking classes at the school. This project involves OfC students in raising funds; sponsoring teachers; and supporting construction of the school's kitchen to replace wood as a fuel with LP gas to reduce Haiti's deforestation.

Bois Landry

A few kilometers outside of Les Cayes is the village of Bois Landry.

In the heart of a beautiful and rich agricultural region, OfC has begun an agricultural demonstration project as the basis of a new OfC course. Here will be a center for OfC students to work with the local village to learn about soils, crop management, the importance of trees, and Haitian culture in a magnificent setting near the Massif de la Hotte, the far-southwestern mountain range of the island that supports one of the last remnants of cloud forest in Haiti.



The OfC field at Bois Landry

Meet some of the people of OfC -

Directors - OfC's board of directors is comprised of its three founders.

Doug Albertson

The meeting of Doug's passions and convictions made OfC inevitable. His vision for OfC as a forum for teaching sustainable development is a natural combination of his desire to assist communities with improving living conditions and his conviction that the best way to help people is to teach them. OfC results from the spiritual roots of his care for the condition of the world combined with his desire to go someplace warm in the winter. In the mid-'80s, Doug served in Peace Corps in Papua New Guinea advising local government projects. He then got his Master's of Urban Planning from the University of Washington. As the town planner for Belchertown, Mass., he also serves on several local, regional and state-wide boards to further community and educational development. Doug is also vice-chair of the Kestrel Trust, an Amherst-area land conservation trust, and is active with South Amherst Congregational Church and its outreach work.

Dave Wintsch

Dave has been a youth leader for 35 years, the last 20 with Young Life. Dave's work has inspired OfC as he has brought teenagers to Haiti, Mexico, the Navajo reservation, Bahamas, New Orleans, Miami and more to learn about needs and how to address them. He has also taught auto mechanics and been a high school wrestling coach. Dave is a true spiritual leader, living out the tenets of his Christian faith in all he does through his devotion to loving all people and his commitment to serve where he sees needs. Dave solidly adheres to Gandhi's credo to be the change you want to see in the world. Dave does this by acting on Jesus' admonition to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, to care for the imprisoned and oppressed. Dave does all this with great joy, humor and outright silliness, endearing himself to all, especially teenagers.

Ken Mundt

Ken's heart was touched on a trip with Dave and Doug to the Dominican Republic, where the three – with Ken's daughter Amanda and Timothé Indrik – talked about forming OfC. Ken's experience on this trip changed his life - and this change is indicative of what happens to any of us who become involved in and work with a community different from our own. Ken realized that not only are there needs to be met and young people to teach, but there are many adults who seek fulfilling activities and contributions; OfC is a way to link all three. Ken's vision for OfC is to teach effective sustainable development through the three communities OfC serves: the youth of the Amherst area, the host communities, and the adults who support and participate in OfC's work. Ken is a frequent world traveller in his paying job as an epidemiologist at ENVIRON International Corporation. He is a former University of Massachusetts professor of Public Health.



Doug, Timothé, Ken, and Amos with donated sewing machines



Timothé and Dave in a field of pigeon peas at Bois Landry.



Doug, Sarah, Diane, Ryan and Timothé's friend Sonny in the restavek classroom

Pam Albertson, Treasurer

Having spent 20 years living in many countries via State Department postings, Pam and her husband, Steve Hartwell, settled near Amherst. Pam is glad to use her accounting experience to assist OfC. Beyond OfC, Pam is Finance Committee Chair of US National Committee for UNIFEM (the United Nations Development Fund for Women) and is their past treasurer. She continues her work as an accountant for a private accounting firm.

Elizabeth Mundt, Manager

Elizabeth is who keeps OfC operating. She has over 20 years of experience managing multiple operations simultaneously including field hockey clubs, children's schedules, Ken, and the Amherst ENVIRON office. She is the perfectionist we need, and without her the rest of us would be all over the place.

OfC benefits by the expertise of its accomplished and widely respected advisors.

David I. Bell, EdD, Advisory Board Chair

Associate Professor, International Development and Social Change, IDCE Coordinator of Experiential Learning, Clark University, Worcester, Mass. David has worked extensively in southern Africa in education, empowerment, social transformation and community development. He has also worked at the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding. His current research is in the social and political juncture of education policy in sub-Saharan Africa and the role of higher education in social transformation. His work includes a focus on experiential and service learning.

Martin Ross, ME

Marty is a mechanical engineer whose work is mostly in heat transfer and thermodynamics. He studied mechanical engineering at UMass, RPI, and Caltech. He is interested in alternative energies and heat recovery. Most of his career he has worked in power generation, submarines, and aircraft engine components. He is on the UMass MIE Alumni Board and is an officer in his local ASME chapter. Marty is a Commanding Officer of a US Naval Reserve unit in the Bronx, but spends most of his military time at the submarine base in Groton and in Washington. Marty and his family live in Windsor Locks.

Joan Paul, Esq.

After a career in tax and joint venture law in the Silicon Valley, Joan came to live in the quiet of Amherst with her husband, Bruce Schaeffer. Joan is a member of the Massachusetts and California bars and has a private practice in Amherst. During a previous career as a mathematician, Joan was a volunteer teacher in a special program teaching math to underprivileged elementary school students. This experience interested Joan in creative education as a tool for effecting meaningful change. She finds the energy, creativity and potential effects of the OfC mission very appealing and is pleased to have the opportunity to be part of growing this organization.

Amanda Mundt

Amanda is an inspiration to all ages in her ability to attract and touch children just by showing up. OfC has affected her significantly. She wrote: Watching the organization both locally and in Haiti begin and develop has taught me a lot about how to think, act and handle different situations I would normally not face. Watching this development take place both within OfC and within myself helped me realize what path I wanted to take in my life. I am now studying International Development and Social Change at Clark University. My hope with OfC is to bring a different view to the advisory board, one that represents the youth and students.

Rev. Caroline Meyers

Pastor, South Congregational Church, Amherst, Mass., M.Div. Yale University, 1985; AB in Education, Smith College 1979. Caroline has served United Church of Christ congregations in Michigan, Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, and is a licensed Spiritual Director. She is a clown, a retreat leader, and the mother of two teenagers. While invigorating the South Church congregation over four years, Caroline has emphasized the work of the church as service and outreach.

David R Buchanan, DrPH

Professor, Community Health Education; Director, Division of Community Health Studies; Director, Institute for Global Health; Full Professor of Community Health Education, School of Public Health and Health Sciences, University of Massachusetts. David earned his Master's and his doctorate in health education from the School of Public Health at the University of California. His primary research interests include public health ethics; community-based participatory research; education programs; and international health.

Coming Projects

(this is the exciting part!)

TWO TRIPS!! January 2 through 12 and February 13 through 20

Les Cayes, Haiti

Working under the direction of OfC faculty and OfC's Haitian partners, you will learn how to plan and implement sustainable development programs while engaging in projects and building relationships with the local community. Learn how to build a sustainable development program while learning about Haiti's culture, language, foods, landscape, and political and social climates. Work with OfC instructors in creating urban and rural development programs that will make an immediate difference in the Simon and Bois Landry neighborhoods. Interact with school children in Simon in vocational training and basic English classes.

Curriculum

- Research, planning and pre-travel preparation
- Haitian Creole language/culture lesson (daily)
- Establish a sewing co-operative with rent-to-own micro-lending
- Work with Bois Landry residents to plant trees and vegetables at OfC's Agricultural Demonstration Center
- Day trips to Port Salut and Île-à-Vache.
- Team-building sessions and sharing of our observations and experiences
- Tour Port au Prince (overnight at Wall's Guest House)

Details:

- Depart JFK Saturday January 2, 2010 OR Saturday February 13
- Return to JFK Tuesday January 12, 2010 Saturday February 20
- Eight nights at Hotel Concorde, Les Cayes Six nights at Hotel Concorde
- Two nights at Wall's Guest House, Port-au-Prince
- Estimated costs: \$1,200 including all travel, accommodations, insurance and tuition

For more information or to register, contact: registrar@opportunitiesforcommunities.org

The OfC Web Site is...

well, better than it was. It's still in progress, but as it is, you can find some information there and most importantly, *make a donation while you're there!* We are linked through PayPal and you can make your deductible donation with a credit card. \$5 a month supports a restavek student; \$75 a month pays for a teacher; \$50 buys seed stock and seedling trees - a little buys a lot in Haiti.

The OfC site: <http://opportunitiesforcommunities.org>

Donation is on the bottom of the menu on the left. Try it and see if it works!!

Other ways you can help make OfC's courses more effective --

We always accept donations of usable soccer supplies

We need working sewing machines and sewing supplies

We take shoes and clothes suitable for a warm climate

Tell others about us! Pass along this newsletter. Post it where you work, worship, go to school, etc.

Arrange for us to present OfC's core curriculum to your club, church, school, etc.

Contact: dalbertson@opportunitiesforcommunities.org

Opportunities for Communities, Inc. (OfC) admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex or religious affiliation to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to OfC students. OfC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex or religious affiliation in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs and other school-administered programs.