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Dear Friend,

Greetings! OfC has started the year with two more successful courses in Haiti. In January, we had a special educational opportunity with the presence of Dr. David Bell of Clark University, a specialist in sustainable international development. We were in Port-au-Prince for the earthquake anniversary on January 12, which was a solemn commemoration. Our group had departed last year just before the earthquake struck, so there was a deep personal sense for those in our group who had also been on that trip. In February, we worked with the two schools OfC supports. Please read on to learn about some of what we learned, to meet some of our students, and to meet some of our friends in Haiti!

Doug

Douglas Albertson

*President*

Ken Mundt & Joyce Schaubert

*Board of Directors*



## Meet OfC's Team in Haiti

### **Timothé Indrik, OfC's Haitian Program Manager**

OfC would not have so many courses and projects running in Haiti without our extraordinary Haitian partner, Mr. Timothé Indrik. Timothé's intelligence, leadership and organizational skills, infectious smile and love for all people make him the heart and soul of OfC's Haitian program!

Timothé was born in Les Cayes, Haiti, to very poor parents who could not afford to send their 10 children to school. Timothé, though, loved to go to church, and when he was 9 years old, a woman visiting his Sunday School class asked if he would like to go to school - he enthusiastically answered, "YES!" Soon Timothé was on his way to kindergarten. He completed primary and secondary school at the Baptist Mission Schools in Simon, the neighborhood in Les Cayes where he was born.



Timothé recently explained how he became so involved with his community and especially the children:

*"I felt so blessed and wanted to give a response to God for what he had done for my life. Now I feel called to return home and serve my people and my communities through a retreat center and with other projects. I give thanks to God who made it possible for us to meet and build that great network which is called 'OPPORTUNITIES for COMMUNITIES,' which has already done a lot for my people and my communities. Thank you so much and I really feel blessed through our friendship and partnership. Thank you."*

In addition to working for OfC for 3 years, Timothé has more than 15 years' experience in organizing youth sports programs at the community, national, and international level. For the last 10 years, Timothe served as Haiti's representative to the International Sports Coalition, and participated in exchange programs in Thailand, France and several Caribbean countries. He has two beautiful children, Edilson, 18 (pictured with him above), and Jessenia, 16.

### **Samuel Emmanuel ('Samy')**

Participants in OfC's January, 2010 course met Samuel Emmanuel, a young man from Port-au-Prince, on the last day of our course. In fact, it was January 12<sup>th</sup> - just hours before the devastating earthquake later that afternoon.

Samuel Emmanuel - or Samy - contacted Ken by e-mail several days after the earthquake, and they became friends. In December, 2010, Samy met another OfC team in Port-au-Prince, and soon we were talking about ways we could work together. Samy's English is excellent, so we have invited him to provide translation assistance and Haitian Creole (Kreyol) lessons to each of our teams of students on our courses in Haiti. Apart from his language skills, Samy is a



natural teacher, team leader, and a "bon gen" ("good guy" in Kreyol)!

Samy is also the recipient of a micro-loan from OfC, with which he is currently taking driving lessons. Between his language and computer skills, his great people-skills, and ability to drive, he will be able to help many different groups working in Haiti. We thank Samy for being part of OfC and wish him every success!

### Meet One of Our Students

**Anna Jacob** is a junior at Pennsylvania State University majoring in toxicology. Anna speaks French fluently and has picked up Haitian Creole easily. She has been an OfC student for three course trips in the past year and has integrated what she has learned into her academic studies. Anna also has been deeply affected by the emotional and social experiences with the Haitian people who have become her friends. Here is a statement from her about her most recent course:

*"The January trip was my third to Bellabe. Although we may have in our minds that we go to Haiti to help and to teach, I am convinced that I learn more than I would ever be able to give back. I continue to learn about the power of communication, of community and of friendship. The very first time we were in Bellabe, the village leaders welcomed us into their community as honorary citizens. This bond with the people of Bellabe was strengthened for me this last time by a very special gift from one of the children, Figgins. His thoughtfulness touched my heart and brought tears of happiness to my eyes. This small act reaffirmed the importance of our growing relationships with the people of Bellabe. I am a much better person because of what the people of Haiti and especially of Bellabe have taught me."*

-Anna Jacob, Pennsylvania State University



### OfC's Recent Trips

**OfC's February course** was focused on the community school at LaFrisiliere. We spent several days visiting the classrooms while workers were putting up walls to help finish the structure.

We were always graciously hosted by the headmaster, *Met Jean*, (Master John), and his family. In the half-year since OfC was introduced to Met Jean and the LaFrisiliere school, the teachers have been paid, the enrollment has doubled, an outhouse has been built, the school building had its walls



finished, and they school has new chalkboards.

**OfC's January course** in Haiti - ten of us made the trip from January 5<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>. It was our privilege to have as an instructor Dave Bell, Associate Professor of International Development and Social Change at Clark University, Worcester, Mass. Under Dr. Bell, OfC students conducted a participatory rural appraisal of Bellabe village, learning many things about the village and also helping its residents learn more about their home.



This process got the residents thinking about the village's history, and about many of the ordinary things they might take for granted, such as the division of labor, who receives education, and who owns the land.

### OfC's Schools

In June 2010, OfC was introduced to Met Jean (from Maitre, or Master) the headmaster of a small community school in the rural village of Lafrisiliere. This school was started by Met Jean over ten years ago simply because he cares about the future of his community and his nation. He did this because he saw the need, not because he had the resources. He trusted that the resources would come.



The teachers of Lafrisiliere had been teaching without pay. The students often could not afford the \$1 monthly tuition. The school building had not been completed and the classes were held without finished walls or floor. The children had no toilet. OfC saw this as the kind of community project that exemplifies our approach of working with the community for what the community wants. We immediately decided to work with Met Jean to help him grow his school and support his teachers.

Since last June, OfC has provided support for the teachers so the children do not have to pay tuition. This has increased the number of students to 120! Yet, they still had no toilet, still had warped scraps of wood they were using as chalkboards, still had partially unfinished floors of bare earth, and still had incomplete walls between the classrooms, and several classes in one room. In January, a generous donor saw the chalkboards and contributed money to buy new ones, which OfC workers built from plywood and chalkboard paint. At the same time, the Amherst High School OfC club has been busy raising money for the school and we have been able to build an outhouse for the students. In February the walls were finished and by summer we hope to have the floor complete for next autumn's school start.

OfC has been collaborating with the Institution Micste Maranatha in the Simon neighborhood of Les Cayes for nearly three years now. This school of restavek children is the vision of headmaster Amos Filius, who has committed his life to educating these underprivileged, and often abused, children, again on faith that any needed resources would come. This school is another example of the community members taking action to address the need of the community without demanding anything for themselves.

Over the past couple years, several OfC donors have continuously supported teachers for this school, as these teachers, too, had often been working without pay. Also, OfC has begun a sewing school with donated machines and materials, and a music program prompted by a very gracious gift of instruments, in this case, over 100 recorders. The joy on the children's faces and in their laughs as they worked through "Mary Had a Little Lamb" was as purely happy as we could imagine.

OfC welcomes your assistance in helping these schools grow. Educating these children to be responsible, creative and contributing citizens is the elusive, but not so mysterious, answer to Haiti's problems. Please help these schools continue by making a dedicated gift.

### [OfC Summer Courses](#)

Two courses to Haiti are offered for this summer. One will depart **Monday, May 30 and return on Wednesday, June 8**. Delta air fare is about \$450 right now. This trip will accommodate university and college students before they start summer jobs.

The other trip will depart on **Monday August 8 and return on Tuesday August 16**. This trip is to accommodate high school students before they start school sports. Neither course is exclusive to college or high school students, though, so others who have either of those times are equally welcome.

If you or someone you know is interested in joining us on a trip, please contact us at [Registrar@OpportunitiesforCommunities](mailto:Registrar@OpportunitiesforCommunities).

## Davis Project for Peace Recipient

### **OfC's Amanda K. Mundt awarded Davis Projects for Peace Grant: "Lekol Dete ('Summer School') for Restavek and Free Children in Les Cayes, Haiti"**

What better way to promote lasting peace and break down social and cultural barriers between children living in Restavek (i.e., indentured servitude) and free children in Haiti than to bring them together for six weeks of summer fun and team learning?

That's what's in store for 200 children in Les Cayes, Haiti, thanks to a \$10,000 grant awarded to OfC student founder, and Clark University sophomore, Amanda K. Mundt by the Davis Projects for Peace ([www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/about](http://www.davisprojectsforpeace.org/about)) .

*"I have identified what might be a unique opportunity to develop and run a school-based program that combines teachers and students from a typical mission school and a special Restavek school" Amanda explains.*

Amanda received additional grant funding from the Restavek Freedom Foundation ([www.restavekfreedom.org](http://www.restavekfreedom.org)) and from OfC.

Since its beginnings as the first independent black republic in the world, Haiti has been plagued with political unrest, dire poverty and domestic struggles to secure basic human rights. Recent challenges include four hurricanes in 2008, the earthquake disaster of January 12, 2010, the current cholera epidemic and tumultuous national elections. These have dashed most near-term hopes of peace and stability. Haiti's peace is further hindered by an insidious cultural element - childhood slavery, whereby destitute families 'loan' their children to better-off families. Ironically, this 'Restavek' (from the French 'stay with') system has been operating since the slaves overthrew their captors and defeated Napoleon's navy in 1804 to win their independence. In exchange for a place to sleep and basic sustenance, these children - usually girls aged 7-18 - do chores such as cooking, cleaning, laundry and hauling water. They are generally denied access to school and often physically, mentally, and sexually abused.

Peace, as defined in Webster's dictionary, is "a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, especially in personal relations."

Amanda writes:

*"I hope that children will be excited about coming to Lekol Dete, and find the curriculum rewarding and the teamwork approach supportive of improved relations between the 'free' and the Restavek children. Uniting Restavek and free children will help them recognize that they all have the same desires, values and educational and social needs. It is my goal to foster mutual respect among all children, enhancing a solid foundation for peace now and as these children become adults and community leaders of the future."*

Congratulations, Amanda, and we look forward to reading about "Lekol Dete" in OfC's Fall Newsletter!

### **Announcing the OfC Scholarship Program!**

Thanks to the generosity of some anonymous donors, OfC has established a Scholarship Program! These friends of OfC are committed to furthering OfC's mission by encouraging participation of students exhibiting outstanding leadership skills and commitment to sustainable development, regardless of their financial means.

Scholarships, which will be applied to Course Tuition/Program Fees, will be awarded on the basis of merit as well as financial need. For its 2011 programs, OfC is awarding a limited number of scholarships of \$250 to defray course tuition/program fees (program fees are typically \$500-600, exclusive of travel and expenses). Please consider supporting this program by designating your tax-deductible donation to the "OfC Scholarship Fund."



### **Wish List**

- Chairs for the OfC classrooms in Bellabe - locally made with cane seat - cost is \$8 each



- Soccer cleats - new or gently used
- Soccer Balls
- Musical Instruments
- \$5 a month pays one child's tuition at Restavek school where OfC has developed & runs vocational training programs
- \$20 can buy 5 fruit trees or 20 pigeon pea plants for the OfC Bellabe village agricultural project
- \$75/month - teacher salary at the Restavek School
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**Your Generosity is Appreciated**

If you care to contribute to OfC's work, you may participate by making a deductible donation by sending a check to OfC. The address and web site are listed below.

We hope to hear from you this holiday season!

Douglas Albertson  
President  
Opportunities for Communities, Inc.  
260 Lincoln Avenue  
Amherst, Mass. 01002

