



N'AP Kanpe Ansanm

Newsletter of St. Vincent's Center for Children with Disabilities / CMMH
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

"We Stand Together" FALL 2023

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Our Mission

The mission of SVC is to provide children with disabilities in Haiti special opportunities, support and resources to learn, grow and reach their full potential in their young life's journey toward adulthood.

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St. Vincent's Envisions the Future

While daily chaos and violence in Haiti continue to dominate the news, St. Vincent's Center is not only ensuring security, education, medical attention, and nourishment, we are also actively envisioning the future. Parents are requesting residential space for their children on the 8.6 acre Santo 17 campus, which would ultimately eliminate the need for lengthy bus trips and allow a more rigorous academic day with extra-curricular activities. St. Vincent's used to provide boarding opportunities for students: large dormitories segregated by gender, but not by age or disabilities. They were basic at best.

At Santo 17, the Education Committee (composed of both Haitian faculty and Americans experienced with education and construction) have scoped out the location of various facilities. The proposed plan makes optimal use of our space, which may sound extensive, but, in reality, is small for some 300 residents and daily users (students, caregivers, faculty, administrators). We must first

address infrastructure - power and sewer for the entire complex - before we can even contemplate constructing an initial dormitory. Solar panels on the roofs and anaerobic digesters are long-term answers to issues with reliable electrical power and waste disposal. Anaerobic digesters deal not only with sewage, they also provide gray water for the garden and methane for cooking. They require a fraction of the space that a leach field needs. It is only as we successfully raise the money for this phased approach and accompanying increased annual operational expenses that we can move forward. The purchase and installation of a campus-wide potable water system was step one. Now, we seek funds for solar power and the anaerobic digesters. The first will require upwards of \$25,000. The installed digester will cost \$15,000. Please consider another gift, in addition to operating support, to help with that. Two checks - one for annual and one for capital projects - fit easily into the enclosed return, reply envelope! Thank you!

The Faces of St. Vincent's: Miracles Made Possible By You



Classes Have Started

In Haiti, the Ministry of Education mandates the school calendar: openings, holidays, exam days, closings. Last year, the "full" academic year began not in September, due to violence, but in January, so everyone was shortchanged. This year, classes started on September 11th. The usual pattern is that the first week or so is slow...not all students return right way. Our full complement of students is 227; and, last year, we averaged 190 students and all faculty daily. That's a remarkable statement given the hurdles both had to overcome to get safely to campus.

On Friday, September 8th, there was a teachers' meeting to discuss the opening of school. For those of you who regularly follow the news in Haiti, you know that the violence in Carrefour Feuille has been especially grim. Among the thousands who have fled are 16 SVC faculty and three employees. Most people fled without taking anything, and their homes were first looted and then torched. At Friday's meeting, 14 of these victims attended the faculty meeting, which gives an idea of how deeply committed these teachers are to their students and their work.

Once on campus, the usual routine is for the school nurse to check each student's health. If a physician is required, the student is taken either to our downtown Medical Clinic or to a nearby hospital. The biggest issue, however, which often finds students in the

morning with headaches or stomach aches or even writhing in pain, is lack of food. Parents have been unable to provide breakfast. So, the school nurse administers the most-frequently used medicine: food. Students then deemed well head straight to class, where they become immediately engaged in their lessons.

The length of our academic day depends on traffic pattern and today, those patterns often depend on locations of gang activity. Bus drivers refuse to drive if there is violence near pick-up spots. When this action became pronounced last year, parents banded together and rented taptaps (the local taxi) to convey their children to class. That is how deeply they value their children's education and what they risk to ensure it.



Meet Wilken Bruno, SVC's School Principal

A straight A student from elementary school onward, Wilken Bruno chose to teach at St. Vincent's because he was "amazed to see what parents and physically-handicapped children are willing to go through to receive an education." He has been a teacher at SVC for 25 years and is now an administrator "because I believe that this is what God wanted me to do." While his training for working with the disabled was informal, he is a lifelong learner and went to "many seminars about reading and writing Braille, sign language, child psychology, discerning handicaps in children, and evaluating the ability level of our students with handicaps. And, every time I face a challenge, I learn from it and make the best with what I have to overcome it."

St. Vincent's is special because it is the first and oldest (1945) school for children with handicaps in Haiti. It educates every student here who is not cognitively impaired. Because "the government is unresponsive to the needs of the population, St. Vincent's is the one place among a handful of schools that is trying to provide an education." While the school is obviously for students with special needs, "We employees also feel special by servicing these students."

M. Bruno is also an engineer (see article on page four of this newsletter.) He's liked construction since he



was young and designs houses, schools, churches and always supervises the construction. Because he likes woodworking, he also creates furniture "for fun." And, because he grew up on a farm, he also enjoys growing his own vegetables.

This multi-talented Principal faces many challenges at St. Vincent's: furthering the training of all teachers to be student-centered, the need for technology (iPads, Chrome books) to train students for future employment, additional Braille machines, and introduction of more comprehensive sports and music programs. In his words, he continues "to help those in need by the love of God and our dedication."

St. Vincent's Buys A Truck



Yes, the media reports are true: there is a fuel shortage; and when fuel is available, it is hugely expensive. But, transportation to purchase food and to take ill students to physicians is a part of the School's daily life. Also, the vehicle should be as unobtrusive as possible, for security reasons. Hence, this handsome "new" black pick-up is our most recent acquisition. It is "pre-owned," and in good condition.

And SVC is grateful beyond words to St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Williamsburg, VA which has raised the \$8,000 deposit on the \$13,000 purchase price. Several years ago, when it was still safe to travel to Haiti, St. Martin's then Rector, her spouse, and several parishioners visited St. Vincent's. They have kept that spirit alive in their parish and responded steadfastly to needs outside of the operating budget. They have also blessed several of St. Vincent's Advisory Committees with their considerable skills and experience. Deane Gordon chairs the Operations Committee and Dorsey Smith plays a key role on the Education Committee. St. Vincent's is enriched by their dedication.

Thank you, Père Duveaux!

Recognizing the urgent need for physical therapy space and confidential space for both the social worker and the psychologist at the Santo 17 school campus and keenly aware that the St. Vincent's Center Board did not have the resources, Père Duveaux decided to fund the construction himself. On his Haitian salary.

The therapist, social worker and psychologist are all key to preparing Individual Educational Programs (IEPs), and each needs private space in which to work. For the past year, Père Duveaux has had to schedule them on alternate days in the library and faculty room, because there was nowhere else for them to work.

Père Duveaux has contracted with M. Bruno, the school principal and an engineer, to do the construction, and the contract is between the construction company and Père Duveaux directly, not St. Vincent's. He has made the first payment and will pay the remainder in installments over the next nine-twelve months. As the picture shows, work is well underway.

Explaining his philosophy, Père Duveaux said: "Whenever I work in parishes, I explain to the faithful

the efforts that our partners make to organize fundraising, at great sacrifice, in order to help us in Haiti; and I also tell them that we have to give our share, however small it may be. My contribution with this work is to put into practice the teaching I give to people is not just to ask them to contribute, but also to contribute yourself without making a fuss. My vision is always to move St. Vincent's forward at all levels, and if I have to put my hand to the grindstone to make a project a reality, I'll do it. I hope that this shows you that we in Haiti will pursue as much as you the ideals advocated by the founder of our institution 76 years ago. Already, I thank Almighty God who has given me the opportunity to contribute financially to the realization of this work. May it be for the benefit of the disabled and to the glory of God." Amen.



Here's What Your Gift Does...



You feed 300 people daily, most of whom are deaf and/or/blind and/or in wheelchairs: the student population, their faculty, caregivers, administrators, cooks, gardeners and guards at the school campus. For many, this is their only meal each day. You pay the salaries of 120 teachers, doctors,

nurses, therapists, and others serving this disadvantaged community. You torque newborns' club feet until they can walk properly. You provide vision tests, diagnostic x-rays, blood and urine analysis. You enable classes in Braille, sign language, Kréyol, French and English. You offer potable water for people and irrigation for their organic garden. You treat 5,000 children a year in need of pediatric and orthopedic services. You make a difference!

St. Vincent's annual operating budget is \$600,000. It goes a very long way, as the above paragraph testifies. Similar entities in the United States have budgets in the millions. It is challenging to raise the money each year - and more that is needed for

"extra" expenses, such as solar power, an anaerobic digester to replace a decaying septic system, and a new pickup truck.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has." So spoke world-renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead. You are the ones changing the world in the haven in Haiti known as St. Vincent's Center. You enable the deaf to hear and understand through sign language, the blind to see through Braille, the lame and crippled to move with wheelchairs. This is new life and hope for even more.

Please continue your generosity. You may give online at our website www.stvincentshaiti.org or by mailing your check to:

St. Vincent's Center, Haiti
925 Hertzler Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

All gifts are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. To make a gift of appreciated securities or mutual funds please contact Ken Quigley at khquigley@comcast.net or call him at 717-645-2989.