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Dakotas Conference Mission Newsletter for Haiti Solar Oven Partners

Making Good on Haiti Invite

Brian Liedtke remembers the invitation clearly. In October 2013, Montas and Raymonde Joseph, Haitian directors of Haiti Solar Oven Partners (HSOP), were traveling the Dakotas, visiting churches and supporters. Brian, a retired elementary principal, agreed to put the Josephs up for a night in his rural Glenham, SD home. "When they left," says Brian, "Montas said, 'You'll come down and see us now, won't you?' I said, 'Sure' jokingly." Little did Brian, a member of the Mobridge UMC, know that a little more than a year later he'd be making good on that promise.

He wasn't alone. Pastor Elizabeth Jassmann Massingill, who serves the Mobridge and Selby churches, had been part of a HSOP team in 2011. Her passion for the Haiti Solar Oven ministry, along with the visit by the Josephs to her churches, persuaded four members to join their pastor and get on a

plane as part of the 10-member team to Haiti last November. The group traveled to the small community of Beraud where they assembled and distributed solar ovens from their temporary base at a local orphanage.

"I felt it was something I was called to do," explains Carol Fahrni, a retired teacher from Selby. In fact, as a young teacher in the 1970s, she co-taught a class where students built a solar oven out of cardboard and foil. "We were able to cook with that home-made oven, and so when Pastor Elizabeth brought a solar oven to church I had no doubt that it would work in Haiti," says Carol. "What better way to help these people."

Verne and Marcella Zabel, members of the Selby church, were caught up in the excitement. No stranger to the ministry of helping others, Marcella regularly sews dresses and diapers that are sent to Honduras. Her daughter and family in Mandan, ND, are also regular volunteers at HSOP's Moffit workshop. However, like Brian and Carol, the Zabels had never been part of a mission team.

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HSOP's November mission team. Front Row: Carol Fahrni, Luanne Napton, Pastor Elizabeth Jassmann Massingill, Marcella Zabel and HSOP Associate Director Cathy Hoss; Back Row: Dennis Gatchell, Brian Liedtke, Harris Bailey, HSOP Director Rick Jost, Verne Zabel.



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- UMCOR Advance #418812...Online Giving Link <https://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Donate/Donation-Form?type=1002&project=418812>

*Check out web site: www.haitisolarovens.org

*Find/Like us on Facebook: **Solar Oven Partners**

Making Good on Haiti Invite (cont.)

The Mobridge/Selby delegation joined HSOP veterans like Harris Bailey of Wahpeton, ND, Luanne Napton of Brookings, SD, Dennis Gatchell, Cheyenne, WY,



Carol Fahmi and a young Haitian she befriended during HSOP's November mission trip.

HSOP Director Rick Jost and Haiti first-timer and new HSOP Associate Director Cathy Hoss.

"We were the newbies," admits Marcella, "but the people who had been there before took us under their wings. We were just like one big happy family."

That sense of family was especially poignant as the group lived and worked among the children living at the orphanage. "To see what living is like for them puts our lives into perspective," says Brian. Carol says

she was emotionally touched by the living conditions of the children and Haitians in general. "Everybody reads about poverty and you see it on TV," she explains. "But you have no idea what it's really like until you see it and experience it for yourself."

Among children clamoring for attention and other Haitians working side-by-side with the HSOP team members, HSOP Director Rick Jost says the November group served graciously in the tradition of mission teams by demonstrating compassion and providing hope. Hope was evident in the eyes of 248 Haitians eager to take the simple yet sturdy ovens back home. Carol is convinced the Haitians receiving the ovens understood their immense value. "They were very tuned in to how important the solar oven was and how it would benefit them in the long run," she says.

Once back home, the Mobridge/Selby team has been sharing their HSOP story. Pastor Elizabeth says the shared experience with four of her own was powerful. "I would encourage churches to send a team," says the pastor. "We've shared good times together and sad times.... We weren't just meeting each other

for the first time. We had a real camaraderie among ourselves as well as to the larger team. It makes a difference."

As Brian reflects on his experience in Haiti, it's obvious he's glad he followed up on Montas' invitation. "I went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land last March and we toured the West Bank, and in some ways Haiti is similar to the West Bank," says Brian. "The difference was the pilgrimage was all about the places; the Haiti Solar Oven trip was all about the people." People, he says, who had an impact on him. "I'd like to go back. I really would."



Brian Liedtke has plenty of young assistants as he builds frames for the solar ovens in Beraud.

A Transformative Experience

One fellow member of last November's HSOP mission team had a one-word description for Harris Bailey: the "comedian". Harris' wit lightens what can be a long, hot day of assembling ovens in Haiti. The six-time HSOP volunteer from Wahpeton, ND has become an expert at the ins-and-outs of this important mission work.

Harris says he first heard about HSOP from his son-in-law, Pastor Paul Lint. "He had been on a trip and was so enthusiastic about the difference the solar ovens were

making in individual lives in Haiti," recalls Harris. In response, he joined a team for the first time in 2011 and was hooked. "You see how eager they are to get these ovens home," says Harris. "And then you go for a



walk, see them being used and you know the change it makes in their lives."

His wife, Fern, a retired pastor, has also seen the change his trips to Haiti have made in Harris. "My wife preached on Transformation Sunday. She held me up as an example of someone who has been transformed by the experience." Are more HSOP trips in his future? Explains this committed volunteer, "As long as my health stays good I plan on going back whenever I can."

Meet an Oven-a-Month Partner

Great things often come in small packages. The Amelia Bailey Moffit United Methodist Church in Moffit, ND, is a prime example. The church that just turned 104 years old in October averages 30-some souls for weekly services. And yet it was one of the first churches to say “Yes we can!” when challenged to become an *Oven-a-Month Partner* with HSOP. The *Oven-a-Month Partner* campaign is challenging congregations to give \$150—the cost of a solar oven and training—each month in order to provide a more regular and sustained income for HSOP.

What inspired this little congregation to help lead the way? Long-time member and church treasurer Gale Nicholson admits that their direct link to HSOP had an impact. Moffit UMC is the home church of Dave and Renae Silbernagel, HSOP volunteers who provide and operate the workshop that manufactures the solar oven reflectors out of a building on their property.

“Once some of our church people got involved in the workshop

our interest in Haiti Solar Ovens took off,” explains Gale. That enthusiasm was bolstered when Montas and Raymonde Joseph, HSOP’s team in Haiti, visited in



The Amelia Bailey Moffit United Methodist Church in Moffit, ND, joined HSOP as an *Oven-a-Month Partner*.

2013. “Hearing them talk about what this ministry means in terms of helping Haitian families better support themselves really made a difference,” she says. “We saw the passion and gratitude of these people. It made quite an impact.”

How will they raise the \$150 per month? Gale says ideas include a fifth Sunday of the month offering as well as free-will

offerings from the church’s summer Thursday night services. “We’re pretty confident that we can do it,” says Gale, who adds that the church also has generous members who live away from Moffit but still support the church financially.

As important as this church’s financial commitment is, their inspiration has had an even greater impact. Another small South Dakota church, Montrose United Methodist, also signed on as an *Oven-a-Month Partner*. “When I heard that the small church in Moffit had committed to be an *Oven-a-Month Partner* I told our administrative board, ‘If they can do it we can too,’” says Bonnie Smith, a member of the Montrose UMC Missions Committee.

Watch for more *Oven-A-Month Partner* profiles throughout the year. To find out more about how your church can join the campaign, contact HSOP Associate Director Cathy Hoss at 605-692-3391 or hsopadmin@brookings.net. Or go to haitisolarovens.org and click the *Oven-A-Month* button on the home page.

Advent Season Blessings

Advent is a time of hope, and hope was given abundantly this past Advent season. Supporters of Haiti Solar Oven Partners (HSOP) contributed more than \$86,200 towards the goal of \$415,000 in 2015: the cost of getting 2,300 solar ovens into the hands of Haitian families.

Those wonderful gifts came through multiple avenues. The good news began on December 2, when friends of HSOP participated in the second annual #GivingTuesday online event. Supporters responded by donating a generous \$18,345. Global Ministries matched \$9,100

of those dollars, making the total an impressive \$27,455. The match was considerably higher than the \$1,600 matched in 2013. “Our communication team did a great job of getting the message out to donors with explicit instructions on how to increase the odds of getting money matched, and it worked,” says HSOP Associate Director Cathy Hoss.

Generosity didn’t stop there. An additional \$1,663 was given through The Advance web site; individuals, along with churches outside the Conference, gave Alternative Gifts of \$27,937; and

churches within the Dakotas Annual Conference alone contributed \$29,211. “It was an amazing Advent season,” exclaims Cathy.

Director Rick Jost couldn’t agree more. “The generosity of donors affirms our collective desire to look beyond ourselves by making financial gifts to vetted, accountable mission projects,” says Rick. “This financial bump for our ministry not only puts more ovens into the hands of those we serve, but also lends a spiritual boost to our many, many volunteer mission workers.” It was truly an Advent of hope and a Christmas of rejoicing!

HAITI SOLAR OVEN PARTNERS

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Is It Haiti or Hayti?

It wasn't the first time the first word in Haiti Solar Ovens has been confused with a town in northeast South Dakota. After all, 'Haiti' (*pronounced Hā'tē*) and 'Hayti' (*pronounced Hā tī*) look and sound quite a bit alike. However, a recent check sent to the solar oven ministry caused a double take by HSOP Director Rick Jost. The check came from a livestock sale barn in South Dakota and was made out to 'Hayti Solar Farm'.

"Over the years, HSOP has more often than you'd guess been associated with Hayti, SD, which is just up the road a piece from Volga, where our HSOP workshop is located," explains Rick. "But putting 'Hayti' together with 'Solar Farm' just tickled our funny bone."

The name mix-up occurred when HSOP supporters and

Montrose, SD farmers Bill and Connie Smith donated a cow to HSOP before it was sold at the auction barn. While Bill provided the sale barn clerk with the correct name of the ministry and address to send the check, somehow the message got a bit jumbled.

All's well that ends well, and the check reached HSOP, but it drives home the fact that the people we serve in Haiti may not be as far

removed from the Dakotas as we sometimes think! The story also provides a great opportunity to remind our many supporters who farm or ranch that donating commodities like corn or soybeans, or livestock is a great way to support HSOP while providing a tax incentive.

There are certain steps you need to take to ensure that the livestock or commodities have been given to HSOP prior to being sold. If you'd like to find out more about how to give in this way and the tax advantages, Bill and Connie would be happy to talk to you. Contact them at 605-363-5097 or cmsmith@siouxvalley.net; or find detailed information and forms to use by clicking the Make a Donation button on the home page of www.haitisolarovens.org.



Bill Smith's recent donation of livestock to HSOP led to a short-lived but interesting name change of our ministry.