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HaitiPartners.org

Mountains beyond mountains, goes a Haitian proverb: there are challenges beyond the challenges, so we'd better keep moving.

Motion & Commitment

by Kent Annan, co-director

On dedication day for our new Children's Academy, about 1,000 people have taken over the campus to celebrate. More than seventy children are laughing and playing on a playground designed for thirty. Music is playing loudly, with a steady rhythm that has three older ladies by the composting latrines shaking their hips and laughing. Colorful balloons hang from trees and walls. A seesaw rocks up and down. A small merry-go-round whirls six kids around-and-squealing-around. Two dozen three- and four-year-olds toddle in red-and-white-checked uniforms. Staff and teachers proudly show the classrooms, each crammed with a hundred people looking at the short tables and colorful drawings.

Twenty-five three- and four-year-olds have started an education that respects their God-given dignity and nurtures their minds and spirits.

An hour-long program includes short speeches by staff, a student, a community leader, and the head of the parents' association. Partners



John and Kent celebrate the Children's Academy dedication with Rebecca, Mario Pierre, and his mother Regina.

who helped build the school were presented plaques of gratitude. The Haiti Partners' Wozo youth choir sang. The program opened with a hymn and closed with a prayer. A buzz was most certainly in the air.

Community members voted on which of three colors the building would be painted by putting small rocks in a bucket. (Pastel green won; it was my favorite, too.) Juice and savory pastries were distributed to a thousand people. I

didn't get a taste; it was a big, eager crowd, but I was told nobody got punched. You celebrate both big and small victories.

Motion all around.

Mèt Antenor, a retired elementary school principal, member of the Academy's school committee, and agronomist, spoke. He held up two saplings. One was a sickly six inches. The other was

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Motion & Commitment, Continued from page 1



Our Micah Scholars break from studying and working with churches for the dedication. Below, the new school.

a flourishing eighteen inches. He explained how they illustrated the difference between a child who is nourished with education and one who is not (see box on page 3). This school is about nourishing children and the community so they can flourish in the deepest sense.

Twenty-five three- and four-year-olds have started an education that respects their God-given dignity and nurtures their minds and spirits. More children, classes, and teachers will be added each year. More steps in Haiti Partners' commitment to education in partnership with schools, churches, and other organizations, which has guided us from the beginning.

At the center of all the motion and commotion was John Engle, 49, Haiti Partners co-director, wearing a dark suit and a blue-and-red tie.

When I met John ten years ago, he had a ponytail that, with his attire, clearly said "grassroots." He's held to the grassroots commitment, but the ponytail is long gone. John keeps adapting. He never stays still. He's always moving forward, finding what works. Motion.

And commitment. Motion and commitment—not undirected, but in service of long-term desire to make a difference. I admire this about John. It's one of the many reasons I'm grateful to partner with him. People who meet John, who come back

from Haiti after seeing all his activity and logistics and the two cell phones on the go, use many different words, but essentially they tell me this is what most impressed them about John: motion and commitment.

I first got to know John when my wife, Shelly, and I moved to Haiti in 2003. John and I would take runs together up rocky hills in Haiti. Along the way, we'd talk about work and vision. Up the hills, and back down. Mountains beyond mountains, goes a Haitian proverb: there are challenges beyond the challenges, so you'd better keep moving forward. Otherwise the mountains will defeat you.

If John and I tried to run these same hills today, they'd leave us doubled-over and hyperventilating. But there's an even better reason to climb them now: this new Children's Academy.

It's a beautiful school for many reasons, most of all for the children in this area. Only 50 percent of school-aged children in Haiti get to attend school. It's a travesty that reinforces too many other suffering-cycle travesties in the country.

Those in the lucky half who are able to attend school too often get rote memorization, corporal





Just a small percentage of the people who enabled this dedication—who enable all Haiti Partners’ efforts—were able to be there. But we were thinking of you on dedication day. You keep all this moving, through your generosity and prayers, through your help in many different ways.

punishment, and too much shame alongside the minimal learning imparted to them by well-intentioned teachers who haven’t been well-trained themselves.

Inspiring alternatives are needed, like this new Children’s Academy and our six partner schools that together comprise our Schools Program.

John has been living and working in Haiti for most of the past twenty-two years. Before coming to Haiti, he was in business; he comes from a family of entrepreneurs. Three years ago, in November 2009, the two of us started Haiti Partners together—with a generous group of partners. We brought the experience and

programs we’d been working on. But a lot needed to be built from scratch. Then the earthquake in January 2010 made it seem like a whole country needed rebuilding.

The big picture can be overwhelming. With mountains beyond mountains, you need to stay in motion. And sometimes you need to pick just one mountain you can make it to the top of.

Two years ago, John, with much help from his wife, Merline, and brother-in-law, Alex, chose a mountain in Baocia, which has a beautiful view over Port-au-Prince. (It’s about a mile from where John, his wife, Merline, and their two children, Daniel, 7, and Leila, 5, live.) The area desperately needed a school. It’s right off that path we used to jog together.

For John constant motion means he is always embarking on partnerships. It’s sometimes hard for colleagues and friends to keep up in conversation because

John will move from ideas about one partner to collaborative possibilities with another. It can be hard to remember who is who, but John talks about them as though they’re all going to happen. Hope is the engine of positive motion.

Some of the collaborations don’t happen, but many do. Haiti Partners’ vision, approach, and faith attract people. I also think our partners recognize that when trying to accomplish good things in a place where so many well-intentioned ideas crumble, it’s valuable to be working alongside someone with deep commitment and who is in relentless motion like John.

Partnerships have made the Children’s Academy possible: Calvary Church in Holland, Michigan (a generous early partner that visits Haiti regularly), Vista Hermosa Foundation, Architecture for Humanity and BAR Architects (building plans), GiveLove (composting toilettes), AMURT Haiti (teacher accompaniment), EAPE (Tony Campolo’s organization and a longtime generous friend), Miyamoto International (structural engineers),

“This Is the Child Whose...”

I have two plants, one in each of my palms. One is always watered, the other never receives water. [The plant that receives no water never grows. This plant represents children who are not able to attend school.]

The one that is watered grows into a large tree and bears fruit. This is the child whose parents sent them to school and who contributed to their learning and development since they were small. These parents make sure that their child is on track to gain knowledge and expertise so the child can make a living and become a good citizen...

We hope that one day the students at the Children’s Academy go on to help others.

Mèt Antenor spoke eloquently (excerpted here) at the dedication about the difference education makes. Very sadly, he died of complications from a stroke as this newsletter went to print. Rest in God’s peace, our inspiring friend.





Yunus Social Business (soon to start a bakery beside the Children's Academy to help fund the school's budget), M & L Construction (Haitian construction company), volunteers who have visited the site, and, so importantly, the local community of parents, construction workers, neighbors, children.

Partnering is making your motion multiply exponentially by coordinating in the same direction. It leads to moments like this dedication. Slow down too much, get discouraged too much, and you might roll back down one of these mountains and never climb again.

So you keep moving, inspired, for example, by Monclair, an eighty-four-year-old man who said to John, "I never thought I'd see a school like this in my village in my lifetime before I died. Now that I see it, I want to stay alive so I can see how this keeps going."

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5, "Because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts..."

Jesus' invitation to follow has its moments of pause—but also joyful reasons to keep working together for love and justice, with motion and commitment.

That's it, right? There is a perseverance that can come from suffering—and, in John's case, also from knowing far too many people who suffer—which can lead ultimately to iron-sharpened hope. The hope, in this case, is for God's justice to reach everyone, with a particular focus now on these children and families on a Baocia hilltop. Too many people in Haiti still need the


opportunities education brings through schools, churches, and communities. But it's good to pause for real celebration with people who have put in much effort.

All this is possible because of you, our partners. Just a small percentage of the people who enabled this dedication—who enable all Haiti Partners' various efforts—were able to be there. But we were thinking of you on dedication day.

You keep all this moving, through your generosity and prayers, through your help in many different ways.

Your partnership is making it possible for more than one thousand children to attend quality schools, including these new students at the Children's Academy. Your partnership is making it possible for our Micah Scholars program, in which twenty-five dynamic young church leaders (who attended the dedication) receive training at Haitian seminaries and intern with us. Your partnership is helping Haitian churches deepen their faith and engage for justice by mobilizing to help society's most vulnerable children.

Your partnership makes it possible for us to help other organizations in Haiti like Habitat for Humanity to improve at grassroots education.

We're grateful for the chance to do all this together with you. Jesus' invitation to follow has its moments of pause—but also joyful reasons to keep working together for love and justice, with motion and commitment. 

Left, Nadine from AMURT Haiti helps our teachers keep improving. Below, John speaks with gratitude to the 1,000 people who attended the Children's Academy dedication.





Jubilee for a New School: An Interview

Joyce Johnson is director of missions at Calvary Church in Holland, Michigan. Over the past six years, Calvary Church has deepened its commitment to missions, with a focus on Haiti. In their congregation of about 1,100 members, more than 600 people have been on mission trips. Many have travelled to Haiti. The church has been a key early partner in making the Children's Academy possible.

Joyce comes to Haiti once or twice a year. She's married and has a daughter and a son, both in their twenties. We caught up after the dedication ceremony, at which she gave the benediction.

“Missions—being engaged in our community and our world—has become part of our church culture. It touches every ministry. Giving generously is integral to our faith.”

What has it meant for a church in Michigan to be deeply involved in Haiti?

When we really got started in global missions six years ago, we wanted to focus on a region. As a church, we've now given \$1 million to Haiti and more than \$2 million to global missions. Thirty-eight percent of our budget goes to missions, locally and globally. We want to be generous to people in need—in the name of Jesus.

What has changed in your church?

Missions—being engaged in our community and our world—has become part of our church culture. It touches every ministry. Giving generously is integral to our faith. Being involved with Haiti also helps us in Michigan not be caught up in a consumer mentality.

Why work with Haiti Partners?

As a church we decided a few years ago, we'll only invest in partners who are positioning Haitians to make change happen. Haiti Partners does that really well—and really knows Haitian people and culture. You also love God.

Personally, how do you balance the hope and challenges of this kind of work?

As I get older I realize there aren't clear answers. It amazes me when I hear people who think they know for sure the answers, the meaning, the solutions. I'm not clear about a lot of things. But I have seen God answer so many prayers. I've been broken and prayed, “Lord, you have to help me.” I'm inspired by the faith of some Haitians

I know. I've been in deep valleys, so when I come out the hope is brighter. I try to be faithful in the little things.

Switching gears, have you had any funny experiences in Haiti?

We hike to different churches regularly in a beautiful, very hilly area near Kenscoff. On these hills, I'm sometimes in flip-flops, sometimes falling down. For us big Dutch people, hiking

these mountain paths is a struggle! Then an old Haitian woman will come walking beside me, carrying market goods on her head, and she'll help me along the path. It's so embarrassing, but I'm grateful, because I need the help!

What's your favorite Haitian food?

Pikliz, for sure! [Pikliz is a spicy cabbage salad often eaten with deep fried plantains. We love it, too!]



Rose-Betha, Marie Lucie, and Joyce at the Children's Academy.

To follow these stories about education for life, connect with us through Facebook and Twitter.





Program Updates:

SCHOOLS

Our Children's Academy was dedicated (see page 1). Partner schools continue to educate over 1,000 students. Actor/director Ben Stiller visited Leogane to learn about a poultry business that will support our partner schools there. Mr. Stiller supports Yunus Social Business, our partner in creating social businesses.

CHURCHES

Our 25 Micah Scholar students (see page 2 photo) are excelling in their second semester in three Haitian seminaries. More than 500 pastors and leaders have been trained using our Children's Rights Bible Study this year. We've distributed 5,000 Creole Bibles across the country.

ORGANIZATIONS

Thirty-four teachers and school directors, from five schools, started a Circles of Change training in January. The Power of Education School outside Port-au-Prince is sponsoring this training. This will improve collaboration and student centered practices.

PARTNERS

Our 3rd annual Partners Retreat is April 26-27 in Vero Beach, Florida. Fifty friends and partners will gather on the theme "Connecting for Change" at home, in Haiti, and around the world. If you couldn't come, please join us next year! More at: bit.ly/partnersretreat. We also welcome visitors to Haiti.



35 pastors and community leaders in Dondon, in northern Haiti, learning how to mobilize their churches for children's rights.

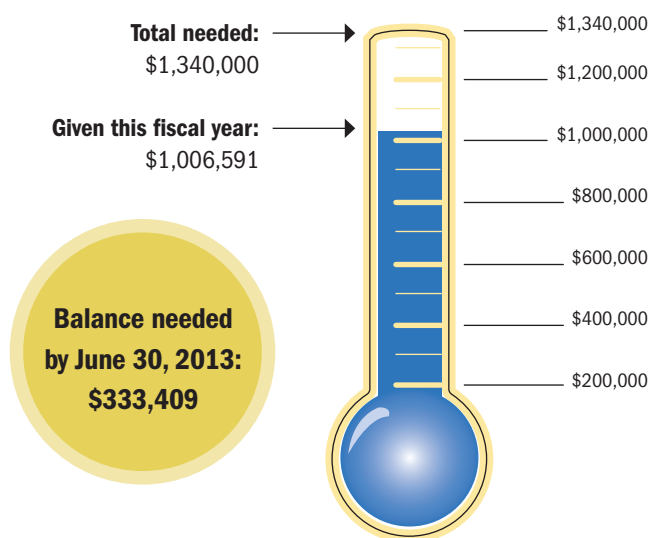
Make a Difference Every Month!

- **Receive Inspiring Monthly Stories:** Join our email list to receive inspiring updates every month. Sign up at haitipartners.org
- **Become a Monthly Giver:** If you're not giving monthly, we invite you to start giving \$30 a month. It's a great way to partner for change through education. You can sign up on our haitipartners.org website or call us at 772-539-8521.

Financial Report

We thank God for your faithful support over the first 9 months of this fiscal year. We've ensured your generosity directly helps Haitians change Haiti through education.

To meet this year's program goals, we need a great response from our partners in May and June to meet the budget. We invite you to continue to partner with us. Thank you!



Haiti Partners' mission is to help Haitians change Haiti through education. We work with schools, churches, and organizations to transform communities.

For details about our staff in the U.S. and Haiti, our board, our audited financial statements, strategy, and much more, please visit HaitiPartners.org/who-we-are/

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