



# The Haitian Connection Newsletter

Lorraine Antieau, Editor

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## Summer Camps Offer Fun and Learning

Haitian Connection was blessed to be able to run two summer camps during August of 2024. One camp was in Caracolie a neighborhood in Jeremie, and the other was in the countryside in Deschamps, a small village outside of Jeremie. School does not start until October 1, and while we cannot afford to sponsor an additional summer camp in September, we are able to sponsor a day of recreation for both sites. The kids are already looking forward to that special day.



Pastor Erik, a community mental health agent from Haitian Connection's community mental health program, was instrumental in organizing the summer camp in Deschamps. The children love the program, they have a lot fun, and in these hard times, it is the full meal they particularly enjoy.



In Caracolie it was Eliasme Jean Silfin who organized our summer camp. He already works for Haitian Connection as the leader of the after-school program. His wife recently gave birth to a little girl, but she was able to assist with the summer camp. The children all enjoyed it, especially the craft



and cooking areas and all the singing and dancing. They also made a little video to thank Haitian Connection for this opportunity.



## Renate Speaks on Mental Health

Dr. Renate, President of Haitian Connection, was invited by HAMOC (Haitian American Museum of Chicago) to present part of her thesis on Mental Health in rural Haiti. Her talk was well received and the museum invited her to work with some of the Haitian migrants and Haitian youth soon. A lively discussion was held after the event, speaking about the implications of culture in mental health issues. Some students in attendance were interested in continuing this discussion.



Join Dr. Renate Schneider, President and Founder of Haitian Connection, in a conversation about mental health in rural Haiti.



## Community Mental Health Outreach

On August 17, 2024, the second in a series of Community Mental Health Outreach opportunities was held in the town of Mavette. There were 50 participants, 12 men and 38 women.

Sponsored by Haitian Connection, and led by our trained Mental Health Workers, the goal of these events is to prevent and treat stress, especially among populations suffering from traumatic injuries caused by natural disasters and gender-based violence.



Using techniques such as brainstorming, Power Point presentations, group discussions, question-and-answer periods, games, and small group exercises, leaders work with community groups to help the community reduce stress, enhance mental health and communication skills, identify and refer those in need of more intensive services to appropriate services, and reduce the incidence of domestic violence.



## Donor Spotlight

Donna Summerville (shown here with her mother) is sponsoring a Haitian Elementary school teacher's salary for a year. She is doing this to honor her mother LaVoyd Summerville. Donna feels that "investing in our educators has the greatest return. By investing in a teacher, you elevate students, their families, their communities, and ultimately their nation. Hopefully we can have all of the teachers' salaries endowed and then we can use the money, previously earmarked for salaries, for teacher training, improving classrooms (including supplies), and ultimately student scholarships."



## Recreation Day in Deschamps a Success



On September 12, Pastor Erik organized a recreational day for local children sponsored by Haitian Connection. Since school is not starting until October 1, the kids were thrilled to have a day for fun and food. The kids absolutely loved it. They played a lot, enjoyed a good meal and it was a nice break for them to have a special day like that.



Haitian Connection has working in the community of Deschamps for years supporting the school by paying some teachers' salaries and having a cash without conditions program. Pastor Erik is a faithful member of the Haitian Connection team, participating in many of our programs.



## Third Annual Youth Haitian Empowerment Exchange Impresses



The Youth Haitian Empowerment Exchange Program is an initiative led by the Ambassador of Peace in Haiti and the Ambassador of Human Rights of the Office of Citizen Protection, Mr. Love-Kendy Jourdan. This program, led by the national champion of human rights texts in 2020, aims to offer young Haitians an education focused on peace, respect for human rights and the promotion of non-violent actions.

Alongside Mr. Jourdan, Pouchenie Blanc, Executive Director of YHEEP, and Berlensky Léger, Vice-Coordinator, share this desire to contribute to the improvement of living conditions in Haiti.

This year, sixteen young people from ten cities in eight states gathered from all over Haiti, along with eight interns and four managers.



Participants had opportunity to attend workshops on a huge array of timely topics, including human rights, social activism, conflict resolution, gender-based violence, culture and art, and mental health. Haitian Connection was pleased to provide financial support to this event, as well as to sponsor the mental health and well-being

component. The young people showed a lot of interest, recognizing the importance of mental health in Haiti. They would like to have additional sessions, and Haitian Connection is grateful to the Youth Empowerment Program to have been given the opportunity to reach out to young people.



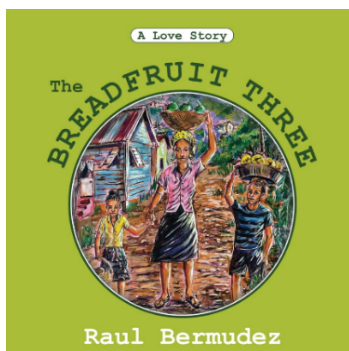
## Ayiti Pap Peri! (Haiti Will Not Go Under)

Our featured Haitian artist for this issue is Wilson Bigaud (1931-2010). Originally working in clay, Bigaud became a student of early 20th century painter, Hector Hyppolite (1896-1948), known as the Grande Maître of Haitian Art. Bigaud gained early recognition for his skillful use of color, light, and shadow. His vivid paintings caught the eye of the US art world and the Museum of Modern Art in New York acquired his “Murder in the Jungle” shortly after the artist painted it at age 19.



The piece to the left, “Adam and Eve,” shows a biblical scene chock-full of creatures. A boar wades in the water while a goat looks on from a riverbank. A peacock stands between Eve’s feet. The snake bursts out of a crack in the tree just above her outstretched hand. Notice the delicate spiderwebs spanning the tree branches and the spotted giraffes nearly camouflaged by the layers of details. Other notable works of Bigaud include “Paradise,” which won second place at the International Exhibit in Washington, D.C. in 1950, and “Marriage at Cana”, a mural he painted in the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port-au-Prince.

## **Book Corner**



### **The Breadfruit Three: A Love Story by Raul Bermudez**

At Chicago's 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Back-to-School event, hosted by Alderman Lamont Robinson, children received the recently published book *The Breadfruit Three: A Love Story*, by Raul Bermudez. Aimed at young readers, ages 5-10, the story follows a young boy who brings home a breadfruit tree. The books were donated to the 4<sup>th</sup> ward by Trees That Feed Foundation, one of Haitian Connection's collaborators.



## **Haitian Immigrants in Springfield, OH Experience Harassment**

Amid a climate of harassment and racist sentiment toward Haitians in Springfield and other parts of Ohio, access to resources, particularly financial and mental health, has become even more crucial for the Haitian American community there. Financial support can help organizations on the ground respond to the immediate needs and threats of the community, from ongoing harassment to digital security. Here are a few organizational websites to visit if you'd like to donate or get involved.

### **Haitian Community Help & Support Center**

Guides and assists refugees and immigrants, especially Haitian nationals residing in Clark County and the surrounding area.

haitiansupportcenterspringfield@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.haitiansupportcenterspringfield.org/>

### **The Springfield Unity Fund**

Provides targeted services to Springfield nonprofits supporting Haitian neighbors.

Website: <https://givebutter.com/SpringfieldUnityFund>

### **Haitian-American Community Association of Central Ohio**

3510 Sullivant Avenue, Columbus, OH 43204

(614) 486-6300

Website: <https://www.hacaco.org>

### **Columbus Urban League**

Address: 788 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Columbus, OH 43203

Phone: (614) 257-6300

Website: <https://www.cul.org>

## **Haitian Connection**

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) tax exempt organization founded in 2005, which focuses on the needs of women, children, and young adults in the Jérémie region of southwest Haiti. A variety of projects have already touched thousands of lives: houses have been built for more than 97 women and their children; a small microcredit program is providing economic opportunity for women in 2 communities; a potable water initiative is giving healthy water to one thousand families; and local school teachers have received training in the Child-to-Child method. Haitian Connection's Divergent Thinking Institute is providing Divergent Thinking seminars all over Haiti.

As a response to the earthquake in January 2010, and its psychological aftermath, Haitian Connection has established a mental health program in Jérémie to provide counseling as people resettle, tally their losses, and adjust to a new reality. 27 members of the community have been trained in psychological first aid. This served the greater Jérémie area well after Hurricane Matthew in October of 2016. Our mental health agents were able to hold community meetings to give people an opportunity to debrief and receive some training in stress reduction techniques.

## **Support Us**

Haitian Connection is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation registered in Illinois and your gifts are tax deductible. Our projects depend on volunteers and the financial support of people who desire to help.

**The cost of building a home for a woman and her family in Jérémie is \$2,000.** The houses have three rooms and a latrine. You could contribute to a house, or even get your church/organization to sponsor a whole house. After Hurricane Matthew, this has become a priority for people in the region.

**Scholarships for needy students from elementary to secondary schools.**

**Microcredit group: contributions accepted.**

**Mental Health Program: contributions to mental health center accepted (total cost for one year \$10,000)**

**Support for training programs in Divergent Thinking, mental health, Child-to-Child, and continuing education.** For every program for 25 people, we provide a meal for all participants and give the facilitators a stipend (about \$500 per training).

To support our projects financially, donate online by visiting our website at: [www.HaitianConnection.org](http://www.HaitianConnection.org) and clicking on the PayPal button.

If you would prefer to send your donation by mail, please address checks to: **Haitian Connection**  
**5300 South Shore Drive # 27**  
**Chicago, IL 60615**

## **Get Involved**

We are looking for volunteers: English teachers, educators, specialists in various fields to give short conferences or seminars. To volunteer, contact **Renate Schneider** at [haitianconnection@gmail.com](mailto:haitianconnection@gmail.com) or by phone at **312/493-3719**; in Haiti: **011/509/3 463-7532**

