

Haiti Trip Report for September 2019

My trip to Haiti occurred during September 16-28, using the DC3 plane of Missionary Flights International out of Ft. Pierce, FL to avoid Port-au-Prince, now a hot-bed of civil unrest. Because the country was without gasoline for two weeks before and during my visit, limited trucking resulted in a sparse variety of food in Savanette. Dinner was leftover lunch, usually beans and rice and boiled spaghetti; and lean goat which provided some meat for the week.

I visited the current projects in the Savanette parish and have provided an overview of our activities there. Our purchased-animals project continues with the distribution of goats born from our previously purchased she-goats. Kids are being grazed behind the rectory until old enough to be given to poor families without a goat. Fr. Nicolas keeps a detailed notebook of the 121 families who now have benefited from this program. I transported a microscope, centrifuge, and various lab supplies to the recently constructed clinic, to allow the resident nurse to conduct simple diagnoses for blood and intestinal parasites. Our potable water building, which uses reverse-osmosis and UV treatment for purification, has been operating since November 2018 and already netted \$2700 in profit. Schools receive free water, and surplus water is sold to residents in Savanette and surrounding communities (Pignon, San Raphael, LaVictoire). The bagging machine produces an 8 oz. bag of water every 2 seconds, and the facility is operated by generator purchased from "Food for the Poor". All surplus water is sold, and demand exceeds supply, as this is the only treatment facility within a 20- mile radius. The Middle School (grades 5-9) has 191 students, and now includes a grade 10 for students who passed the national exam to qualify for Secondary School (high school). Because the nearest secondary school is 4 miles away in Pignon, it is too far to walk or by donkey to be an option for students who want to continue their education. Therefore, Fr. Nicolas has secondary teachers from Pignon rotate teaching in Savanette and pays them based on contact hours vs salary. In June, our sewing school graduated its first class of 13 students (2-yr program), who now provide sewing services, such as school uniforms, locally and to surrounding communities.

With respect to the five chapels of the parish, the chapel communities of Benabite and Jacsonville are stable, particularly now that St. Jude in Radford is sponsoring 50 school children in Jacsonville. The chapel of Bailly has a new roof on its church, funded by St. Mary's in 2018. Their church has no doors, was built in the 1940s, and suffered such disrepair that umbrellas were used in the church. Our school in Bail is doing well, and I took photos of 157 students at the school. The annual tuition sponsorship campaign will begin in the Narthex in January. The chapel with the greatest needs right now is Guacimal, accessible only through an abandoned orange grove. This community has a broken well pump, no school, and 45 preschool children (ages 4-5) who meet in the church each week-day with one part-time teacher. The nearest school is about 3 miles away in the next parish. I met with these children and their parents in the church, and when I ask the kids if any were 'grangou' (hungry in Creole), they all stepped forward. When I see children with red hair, I know that malnutrition and protein deficiency is a problem. They asked whether we could support a second teacher to allow the make-shift school to be more manageable, and whether a lunch program was possible, given the hunger and malnutrition here.

Parish priest Fr. Nicolas and vicar priest Fr. Ismith extend their gratitude and appreciation to us for all that we have been able to accomplish, changing the physical and spiritual lives of so many children and adults in their Savanette parish.

–Submitted by Dick Neves