

## Sacred Heart Haiti Mission

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As we grow older, we reflect over the past 37+ years and recall when we were called to help in Haiti. It all started in the fall of 1979 with a call for volunteers to help build a clinic/school building in downtown Port au Prince, Haiti. While getting ready for the first trip, Dr. Bill Frida set it up for us to pick up the used linens from Mayo Clinic. Every other week we would pick up sheets, towels, and anything else he could find for us and transport it to Assisi Heights where they had given us 2 rooms to use for storage. In those 2 rooms, we sorted, folded, and boxed up everything for shipping to Haiti. It didn't take long for us to realize all of the other things they could use in Haiti and we started going to rummage sales and digging through department store dumpsters!



Joyce went on the first trip and we both went the next year. The head Sister took to Joyce and the next spring called us saying they needed a volunteer house built so people could come and help the people of Haiti and have a place to stay. So, along with Father Fieten, the priest at St. Pius X in Rochester in the late 1970s, we raised the money and the Sisters had the volunteer house built. Of course, Joyce was drafted to book the rooms and care for the house!

Along with the linens from Assisi Heights, we started sending beds, mattresses, tables, chairs, and kitchen items—all of the things needed for the volunteer house. Then we started collecting and sending toys, shoes, clothing and all of the things the poor of Haiti could use.

In 1990, we took early retirement and moved to Haiti. There we teamed up with Brother DePaul from the Mission of Mercy. We rented a house large enough to accommodate 8 volunteers. Our job was to work with as many mission groups as possible to get them to work together. We found 2 very poor communities and helped them with food and medicine.

While living there, we met Mr. Jones who ran a children's home in Petionville, a suburb of Port au Prince. He talked about moving to the country to help the people STAY and not move to the city. The city is an undesirable place to live because it is overpopulated, a breeding ground for lots of illnesses, and has a very high crime rate. We thought keeping the people in the country was a good plan and went with him.

While in the country, we went to a church in a small village called Violé where we met Father John Laudocour. We asked what we could do for them. He said they needed a bell for the church steeple to ring before Mass. Then came the speaker system and a Monstrance for the Holy Eucharist. Then hurricane damage meant a new roof for the church.

One morning we were sitting on the front porch and counted 18 people coming out of one woven stick built house. When we asked who all of the people were, we were told that the family took in several relatives' families when their houses went down in the hurricane. That was when we decided to build the first house. Several of the men in the neighborhood came to help and we soon built 10 more houses.

We finally moved back into town and soon had many projects going. One family needed help to pay the rent; one needed a new roof; one needed a new door; and one needed help to send their children to school. The needs were, and still are, endless.

One day, we were walking down the street and passed a pharmacy. There were 3 people standing out front with prescriptions in hand. For two gouds (Haitian money) they could see a doctor but could not afford the prescription they needed. Two gouds equals 40 cents. We ended up buying the prescription for them. The poverty is overwhelming!

This year we sent two containers and have a third ready to go in early September. That makes a total of 84 semi-truck loads of items sent to help the poor people in Haiti in the last 37 years! Along with the containers, 116 houses have been built for families in need.

We think of all of the lives that have been touched through your generosity. Thank you so much to all of the men and women who sew children's dresses, diapers, quilts, etc; the Men's group in Elysian who saw a need for rolled bandages and handmade a "bandage rolling machine" and send us cases of bandages; the people who gather in Rochester to pack and sort all of the items being shipped (shoes, clothing, religious items, school supplies, toiletries, toys, etc.). It is in your selfless giving of time and effort that we are truly blessed to carry on this mission. A special thank you to all who contribute financially; for without you, the containers could not be sent to Haiti and the houses could not be built.



Loading the container  
in Rochester

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts,

*Dale & Joyce Grabarkiewicz*

Founders of the Sacred Heart Haiti Mission



Unloading the container  
in Haiti