



CHALLENGE

OFCB (l'Organisation de la Force Chrétienne de Bayonnais) Newsletter Volume I, Issue 4 by Actionnel Fleurisma January 2014

Education in Haiti: From Educating a Few Males in the 1970's, to Including Females and 'Wee Ones' Today

This is the third article in the Bayonnais Education series.

In our previous issue of Challenge, we presented the evolution of education in Haiti from the early 1800's and the role that Christian churches have played. However, even with the intervention of the Christian churches, as late as the 1980s few children attended school in Bayonnais. Why was this?

First of all, in remote places, schools were scarce, and teachers were mostly non-existent. (Thank God for the Christian Churches that came to rural Haiti and began educating us !)

Secondly, since mostly we are a farming society, children were needed at home serving or helping parents in the fields day in and day out, taking care of animals, or making sure that there was enough physical labor to grow food for the family.

Finally, ignorance had dominion over the people.

As an example of how these factors impacted life, your servant, Actionnel Fleurisma, was not able to start attending school - Kindergarten - until he was 12 years of age, in 1976. Because of the late start, he graduated from high school in 1990 at the age of 26.

It used to be said that if boys were educated, they would steal their parents' land deed. More terribly, girls, if educated, would communicate or write letters to boyfriends! Girls were not to be educated. Period ! (These concepts were widespread everywhere in Haiti, not just in Bayonnais.)

Worse still, we were in slavery to the voodoo system. On the 24th of December each year, parents and patients in the family would go to their voodoo priest/witch doctors to pay their bills. So, in places where voodoo priests were the only answer for an array of problems, there wasn't much hope for a better future.



Kindergarten

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Special Funding Update

Last month we sent out a request for some special funding for the new school in Nicholas, namely for \$2,000 for a latrine and \$2,500 for food storage (Appropriate food storage will allow Nicolas to qualify for food stuffs from The World Food Organization.).

Great News! The latrine has been fully funded, and the majority of the money for the food storage facility has been raised. Praise God for these Blessings.

The “Wee Ones”

ICB (Institute Classique de Bayonnais), the school founded by OFCB, opened its “doors” in 1994. [The school actually had no doors - nor roof, nor walls, for that matter. It started under the mango trees at OFCB!] Since a main goal has always been to make education a reality for all children, immediately, children as young as three years started coming to school. Children, like Fegens Saint-Louis who graduated from 13th grade in July 2012 at the age of 18 and who received the highest score from the National Exams in the state of Artibonite, began school at ICB at an early age. [Fegens was highlighted in last month’s Challenge.]

However, when ICB began, it lacked qualified teachers to teach the “wee ones”. We did the best we could, but our teachers lacked the formal education for this age group. And this gap existed for a number of years. But, in our second graduating class in July 2005, two bright young women, Venette Merilus and Edith Saint-Louis, felt led to serve our community in the area of Kindergarten. So, Venette and Edith were sent by OFCB to school in Cap-Haitien in 2005. Three years later, they became professional kindergarten administrators. Their return to Bayonnais and their involvement since then has revolutionized one aspect of life in Bayonnais: Kids in Kindergarten.

“The people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6

Education is key to the future of Bayonnais. Thank you for supporting Edith & the rest of our wonderful teaching staff.

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Kindergarten students



Madame Edith Saint-Louis Alerte

Madame Edith Saint-Louis Alerte

In this Fourth (4th) Issue of CHALLENGE, we have the privilege to spend some time with Madame Edith Saint-Louis Alerte, Kindergarten Administrator.

CH: Hello Miss Edith!

EDITH: Hello, Mr. Denis Sanon and Pastor Actionnel!

CH: Can you introduce yourself to readers of CHALLENGE?

EDITH: I am Edith Saint-Louis Alerte, originally from Bayonnais. I was born in a Christian family where there were seven children - three boys and four girls. I spent some time with one of my aunts in Gonaives and the rest of my life here in Bayonnais.

CH: We understand that you are teaching the little kids here at ICB. Why did you choose such a career?

EDITH: I believe that in life there is no dumb profession. It is a question of doing right everything you do. Also, the kids you see today, no one can predict what they will be in the future - Agronomists, Nurses, Doctors, Mothers, Fathers, Lawyers, Teachers, Presidents, Senators, Congressmen, Prime Ministers, Pastors and so forth. Therefore, we must train our little ones well if we should have a better life in Haiti. Children are the foundation for any normal society.

CH: We know and see that you are very intelligent. Teaching kindergarten does not pay much in Haiti. You could have earned more in Haiti if you had chosen another branch or career. But, you stay attached to teaching the little kids. Would you please explain to us this motivation?

EDITH: Teaching the little ones is a great ministry. Children are very amusing, very affectionate. It is not a question of what I am getting, although it is good to have a fair and good salary. But, I see what I am doing for my society and what I am going to leave behind after my life is over. I always feel WONDERFUL to be with children.

CH: Can you tell us about your background?

EDITH: Actually, I grew up in a poor family here in Bayonnais. My dad's name is Toussaint Saint-Louis; he is a farmer and a pastor. My mother's name is Ivana Simeon. She does house work. Both of my parents are from here, Bayonnais. Both of them are still living here. I am the fourth child in the family. And as you know, I am a kindergarten teacher.

CH: At what age did you attend school and you graduated at what age?

EDITH: Since I was living in the city of Gonaives, I attended school at the age of 6, and I graduated from 13th grade at the age of 24. And I spent 3 years at the training school to become a professional kindergarten teacher.

CH: What are the major obstacles in your work?

EDITH: Many things. First, it is difficult when we have parents who do not know how to read. The learning process gets more and more difficult. No help at home from the parents. Parents can help their kids work in the fields better than they could help them learn how to read and write. We want to have a graduation ceremony every year, but parents cannot help with that. We need graduation costumes for the kids. We need our own classrooms that high school kids would not use in the afternoon classes [Editor's Note: ICB has two 'shifts.' Morning shift is for Kindergarten and Elementary. Afternoon shift is for High School]. For, the high school kids tend to mess up our classrooms and even sometimes stealing our materials here at the school. In the mornings, the elementary kids disturb the little ones while they are in class. A kindergarten school is just a ministry by itself. So, we need to be in a position where should have nothing to do with Elementary and High School Kids.

CH: How long have you been teaching children at this level?

EDITH: I have been teaching children at this level since after my graduation in 2009.

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Madame Edith Saint-Louis Alerte Interview continued

CH: What would you like to see happen to make your department more efficient?

EDITH: Keep High and Elementary School Kids away from the little ones. More appropriate materials. More qualified teachers for the little ones and more trained teachers to do the follow-ups as the kids move up to higher level.

CH: How many children do you have in your area? Girls? Boys?

EDITH: In my area, there are 154 children; including 83, (53.89%) girls and 71 (46.11%) boys.

CH: We know that you were born and grown up here in Bayonnais, did you have in your mind that you would educate children here in Bayonnais?

EDITH: No, I did not have in mind to go to work with the children here in Bayonnais, but God has wanted me to do so and I have agreed since then.

CH: By the way, are you married or single? If married, for how long? Husband's name?

EDITH: I have been married since 2011, my husband's name is Josue Alerte and we have a little boy of 22 months old.

CH: How many people work with you to educate the children?

EDITH: We are a staff of 8 people working together to educate the children here in Cathor, Bayonnais.

CH: We know that Bayonnais is a huge community and many children from 3 to 6 years old cannot come right where you are. What are your perspectives for the vast majority of small children abandoned here in Bayonnais?

EDITH: The means of transportation by vehicles does not exist in Bayonnais, it's just walk. Children of 3-6 years cannot walk 10-15 km [6-9 miles] to come to school. This can cause failure on learning. I am wishing that in 2015, other preschools will be available in different communities of Bayonnais.

CH: Thank you for taking time to answer our questions and we wish you success and courage in your ministry.

EDITH: It has been my pleasure to talk with you and I will be pleased to talk with you again at any time in the future.

How Might You Help?

Scholarships are a key ingredient to the success of the ICB (Institute Classique de Bayonnais) Education Program in Bayonnais. Please consider signing up to support a Bayonnais Student, at WORLD OF GOD's website, www.worldofgod.org. Payments can be made monthly or annually..

While scholarships are the preferred way to support education in Bayonnais, we recognize that some donors cannot make that level of commitment. Even if you cannot fund a scholarship, any level of support would be appreciated. Donations to the ICB Annual Fund can be made at WORLD OF GOD's website, www.worldofgod.org, or checks can be mailed to WORLD OF GOD, 338 S. Sharon Amity Road, No. 280, Charlotte, NC 28211. Every donation makes a difference—from the cost of a visit to the dentist (less than \$5) to a teacher's annual salary (ranging from \$1,300 to \$2,750). Thank you for your support. Please note in the comments section on the website or your check "ICB Annual Fund".

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... a child is waiting