

## Helping Haitians Help Themselves

PO Box 1062, West Bend, WI 53095 • [www.viphaiti.org](http://www.viphaiti.org)

### A Message from a Former VIP President



#### **"Hooked on Haiti"**

I made my first trip to Haiti in 1991. I saw a presentation from the late Heidi Thomas who had been working in Haiti since 1984. For many years I had the dream of going on a

"mission trip" to a third world country. All my options at the time were for a month or more, and that was not possible for me... But when Heidi talked about a two week "mission trip" to Haiti—I was hooked.

Joyce (my wife) had seen the same presentation and was equally excited and when we told our family, our son John who was in college at the time wanted to join us as well.

When I saw and experienced the poverty my heart was touched. It is hard to imagine a life without water at a tap—that had to be carried sometimes blocks, no electricity, a house of cement blocks with only a door and no windows, and cooking and sharing a meal outside—even just a plate or bowl. If I was lucky I could call home, after walking a mile and the phone system was working. But that all became secondary when I experienced their welcome. The language barrier was soon overcome. I do not mind having to carry

water to drink and bathe, eat food prepared the Haitian way, and enter into any service project with them. I was hooked on Haiti. The next thing I



knew I was invited to serve on the Ventures in People Board, and returned to many more two week mission projects. Fortunately over the years dorm living during the two weeks had improved, but definitely not "4-Star" stay.

My last trip was in 2014 due to cancer and surgery. Even though I cannot return, I have continued to support the board as they continue our many projects. It was and still is a great journey to be connected with the many people of Haiti and their projects. I've been able to see a Haitian whom we have educated in our VIP Education start his own school, and is presently also serving a church. I'm still "hooked."

It is a joy to see many of our projects continuing to thrive even in our physical absence since Covid and unrest. From a distance we have been able to support and motivate our various projects.

(continued on next page)

## Hooked on Haiti cont.

The Education Program now has over 200 students in school and a Haitian coordinator because friends of Haiti agree to support a child at \$175/year. Imagine in the US it costs more than \$12,740 per child per year (Wis. Census 2020).

VIP started a 4-H program, now numbering 29 clubs and involving several hundred youth with total Haitian leadership. Youth can even receive a goat and the training needed to care for it.

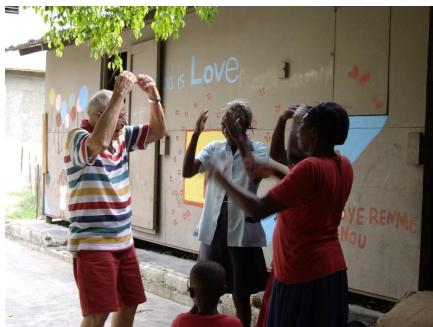
A program that supplies water filters and teaches how to use them has reached thousands of Haitians.

The medical assistance we have provided over the years has given way to a huge medical complex serving hundreds in the Central Plateau area.

Unrest has given pause to our travel to Haiti at this time, but the Haitian leadership we have trained over the years has allowed our many projects to continue to thrive. It has been an honor to watch our mission of “Helping Haitians Help Themselves” become a reality.

All this happens because we have people in the states like you who have been to Haiti, or heard about Haiti, have made a contribution to our many projects and “got hooked” on Haiti and its need. I invite you to become one of those who are “Hooked on Haiti.”

~George  
Schowalter,  
Former  
President



## Thrivent Financial Donations

If you have Thrivent Choice Dollars from Thrivent Financial, Ventures in People is now an accepted 501c3 organization to designate those dollars to! If you or a friend has Choice Dollars please consider sending them to Ventures in People. Any money donated through Thrivent will be placed in our General Fund.

If you are a Thrivent member and are looking for an Action Team project please reach out! We have projects and opportunities that could benefit with your Action Dollars like our Brat Fry fundraisers this summer. The money raised during these fundraisers goes to support all of our projects in Haiti.

## Education

Thank you to all the sponsors who are helping 217 Haitian Students in Mirebalais, Haiti, for the 2023-2024 school year. With your support, these students have access to education and opportunities for a brighter future.

Our coordinator, Louis, is busy finishing taking the student pictures.

English is taught in three schools. Our goal is to educate as many children as we can.

There are protests in the city now and to protect the children, the schools are closed for two weeks to keep them safe. It is difficult to even imagine what it is like to live in such fear. Keep everyone in our thoughts and know that Louis will keep us informed on the ever-changing situation.

Please consider joining us in our mission by sponsoring a student for \$175 a year and/or a donation to our English Teacher program.

## 4H: A Closer Look at Our Leaders

This picture is from several years ago, but I wanted to use it to showcase all the dedicated leaders that keep 4-H in Haiti going strong. Bernine, pictured front and center, in the cream dress, is our main coordinator. She receives a small salary from VIP every year for all of the work she puts in to coordinate over 30 clubs and 2000 youth. Here are some of the many things **Bernine** is responsible for:



- Communicating with the VIP board
- Distributing grant money and overseeing the 4-H bank account
- Visiting and overseeing the operation of all of the clubs in the Mirebalais region
- Serving as a resource and consulting with leaders
- Helping new clubs get established
- Making arrangements for yearly goat seminars- securing a location and instructor, selecting students, overseeing their instruction, and purchasing goats

Bernine has one assistant who also receives a small stipend, but otherwise, all of the other leaders are volunteers. These **volunteer leaders** are responsible for:

- Providing the vision and guidance for each individual club
- Organizing 4-H meetings, which may serve anywhere from 20-100 youth
- Planning educational opportunities for the youth
- Helping devise entrepreneurial efforts to support the club
- Guiding service projects that give back to the community.

Some leaders have been volunteering since 4-H started over 20 years ago! 4-H simply would not exist without them! We are so grateful for their dedication!

Last, but not least, **in recent news**, Bernine reports that the political instabilities in the city have impacted 4-H. At the time of this writing, 4-H meetings are not being held. She also said that due to insecurity, some members and their families have left the city. On the flip side, she shared that a new club has formed (Lozama 2), and that at one club that she visited (Rue Doctor Mathieu), the children have started to learn how to make liquid soap.

We will keep you posted as we hear more about 4-H. In the meantime, remember that spring is a perfect time to give a gift to keep our 4-H programs afloat. We send out our grants in summer, and right now, our grant fund is looking fairly low. Maybe YOU can help us help 4-H'ers in Haiti!

In gratitude,

Jocelyn Ritger, 4-H Coordinator



## Water Filters

The need for water filters is huge. While we cannot be in Haiti at this time we have Haitian people we have trained to do the things we would normally do. Here is a report on the water filters we distributed in 2023.

We distributed 1200 filters in 10 different communities. As of January 2024, 1,157 filters are working and being used. That is 96%. This is excellent!

There were 1,523 families asking for filters. The filters not being used had broken or missing parts. We hope to correct this when we next distribute filters. We need to raise funds sufficient to purchase and distribute another 1,200-1,500 filters. We hope to reach this goal in the next six months. Please consider donating to Ventures in People and designate your contribution to Water Filters.

~Ken Schumann

## Turn Your Trash Into Cash and WIN, WIN, WIN!

**VIP has partnered with Planet Green Recycle!**

Late last year VIP partnered with Planet Green Recycle to initiate a new and exciting Ink Cartridge Recycling Program!

Many fundraising efforts ask supporters to reach into their wallets. Planet Green Recycle fundraising simply asks our supporters with printers to do what they already do, which is to recycle used ink cartridges in an eco-friendly manner. The big difference is that by doing so through Planet Green Recycle, Ventures in People, Inc. raises funds for our

mission, which is to Help Haitians Help Themselves.

Thanks to the generous donations of our supporters, we received our first proceeds from this ongoing program. Whether you donated your used ink cartridges, collected ink cartridges from others, or helped in some other way, thank you for your support.

VIP will continue to oversee the collection and shipment of used ink cartridges. You are welcome to pass them onto a VIP board member or bring them to one of our upcoming brat fries this Summer. If you would like a clean bankers box for your collection, please contact Julie.

The ink cartridges can be new, used, any brand, and in any condition. Funds raised from the ink cartridge collections will be contributed to the VIP General Fund.

Please note: this recycling program does not extend to toner or laser cartridges, nor large print cartridges at this time.



***Please collect your ink cartridges!***

When it comes to fundraising, Planet Green Recycle stands out as a game-changer. Let's embrace a greener, more efficient approach to fundraising one ink cartridge at a time. See you at a VIP brat fry this Summer!