

## TO-ing AND FRO-ing

Orphanage Director Lefort Jean-Louis will be in Virginia November 8-24 for meetings with the Foundation Board and a couple of its committees. He will also be speaking at all the services at St. Stephen Martyr Catholic Church in Chesapeake the weekend of November 19-20.

The following folks will be visiting Maison Fortuné within the next few months:

November 1-8	Group from St. Stephen Martyr Church, Chesapeake, with Susan Schrack
December 26-31	Student/faculty group from Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk
January 3-10	Church of St. Mark, Virginia Beach, group, with Fr. Jim Griffin
January 16-22	Jay Brown will be in Haiti, including a visit to MFO
February 4-12	Nathan McCann's documentary-filming trip*
April 9-15	Fr. Griffin and a group from Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School, Virginia Beach
May, TBA	Group from Prince of Peace Church, Chesapeake, with Rick Martin

\* Thanks to a grant from the estate of the late Susan Mowbray, Richmond filmmaker Nathan McCann will be going to Haiti with Board member Susan Schrack in February to work on a 20-minute documentary featuring Maison Fortuné. Watch for it this spring!



# MAISON FORTUNÉ

## Orphanage News

### The Maison Fortuné Family is Growing!

*Brother William Griffin CFX*

Brother Bill arrived at Maison Fortuné on September 20 and has been busy ever since. The article below is from his first message to his family and friends.

All of you have been in my thoughts and prayers as this new chapter opens in my life in this new land of the precious Haitian people. Brother Cosmas and I enjoyed the flight here from Baltimore immensely, watching a glorious sunrise of countless shades of crimson red, pink, yellow and gold paint the horizon of the Atlantic as we travelled south to Miami and on to a perfect tropical welcome on this isle in the Caribbean. Our flight arrived early in Port-au-Prince, and customs and immigration was a breeze (earthquake damage still keeps part of the airport closed). Br. Mike McCarthy and three residents from the orphanage, Exone, Sonson, and Guilnot, helped us carry our luggage to the van. We headed for Hinche, about 2.5 hours' drive from the airport, and enjoyed the trip up to the Central Plateau.

I've spent the first weeks learning to speak Kreyòl from a variety of teachers, children who range in age from 4 to late teens, and former residents who are eager to help. The little ones get very excited teaching this old dog who came from the sky to Haiti. Merlande, a middle

school girl here, asked me today when I will return to the sky, an expression she understood to mean to fly away from Haiti. She's teaching me Kreyòl and I'm helping her and dozens of others with their English. It really is so much fun and exciting for all of us.

If the first week is any indication, I think I'm going to love it here! The ministry strikingly resembles that of my years in Kenya, presenting very similar challenges and a rich tradition of a quarter century of Xaverian presence to build upon. The Bishop of Hinche, Simon Pierre Saint-Hillien, invited the director of the orphanage, Jean-Louis, and four of us Xaverians to dinner on my first Sunday night, a very pleasant social evening. The bishop is a Holy Cross priest, the same group that runs the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. He was most gracious. I spoke several times in my beginner level Haitian Kreyòl, at one point saying mistakenly that I did not appreciate his offering me a cup of tea. Everyone enjoyed a good laugh. I know that the only way I'll ever learn to speak Kreyòl is to speak it, mistakes and all.

Br. Mike and I biked three miles or so higher up on the Central Plateau to our Xaverian House in Pandiassou for a night away from the hustle and bustle of the orphanage. I really appreciated the quiet and stillness, meeting many of our friends up there and seeing how good the house looks since my last visit, with new gardens, shrubs, a rabbit hatchery with nineteen rabbits at various stages of development. We've been feasting on avocados this week as this is the peak of the season. The food has been quite tasty and nutritious. It is also the rainy season now with a shower hitting late each afternoon.



**Brothers Michael McCarthy, Harry Eccles, Cosmas Rubencamp and Bill Griffin with Bishop Saint-Hillien and Lefort Jean-Louis**

### MORE SUPPORT: STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Dr. Laura Valente, Dean of Residential Education at Stony Brook University on New York's Long Island, recently sent us a check for \$10,000. Here she explains how they raised it.

We are so happy to have been able to do this. \$5000 was raised through a series of events specifically for Maison Fortuné. Each event brought in a few hundred dollars, so it took us a while to get to this amount. Events included "jail and bail" during which administrators were placed in a "cell" in the Student Activities Center and couldn't leave until they had raised "bail" from colleagues, and "Jeans Fridays" which allowed professional staff members to pay \$5 to be able to wear jeans to work on a Friday.

The other \$5,000 was earmarked from the funds raised during our "Tis the Season" Campaign, which takes place in October and November, during which the Residential Programs staff members organize activities to raise funds from students just before the holiday season. So, of the total \$10,000, about half of the money came from staff and the other half came from students. We don't have a catchy name or anything - we just called ourselves the Campus Residences Committee for Haiti Relief.

Our goal for this semester is to raise money for airfare for a group of us to come and do direct service with the children. There are several dedicated individuals who would like to visit and read to, play with, and care for the children, albeit for a short period of time. We are looking forward to continuing to work on behalf of the residents of Maison Fortuné.



**From Left: Laura Valente, Tamica Shiletto, John Vatalaro, school mascot "Wolfie" with the check, Christine Noonan, Rhonda Nelson, Marlynn Chetkoff, and Myra Polite**



**Gabriele Pianezze (white shirt, center), owner of Salvatore's Restaurant in Virginia Beach, with his staff at the end of a very successful evening benefiting the orphanage. They were great, and we raised not only funds but we also made new friends for Maison Fortuné. Grazie!**

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**A LITTLE BIT OF PARADISE**  
*Brother Harry Eccles CFX*

It's been three months since I returned to Hinche from my "pulmonary embolism visit" to the States, and I'm thriving. A bit slower, perhaps, but certainly in no distress—thanks be to God and excellent medical care. It's now 22 years since Bro. Cos guided Bro. John Mahoney and me to Hinche. At that time, Maison Fortuné was still just an idea in God's heart. In both the longer and shorter time spans there have been more changes than I can keep up with.

These days, there's a constant flow of visitors, especially midwives from Seattle, Toronto, Dublin, as well as from Virginia and other more familiar places. Inevitably they come with incredible luggage for their life-giving work at the hospital and mobile clinics, and they always bring extras for the boys and girls here . . .and for the guest house staff. Wonderful people with lots of energy and compassion. Among the "extras" are ti-boul [tennis balls] which augmented our supply. Distribution of the ti-boul was a big day for the little ones, even though the balls soon get ragged and disappear.

Each afternoon I spend time with the littlest ones on the back porch of the guest house. I have a straight-back chair, a box of books, and a bag of games and cards. The current favorite book is DANNY AND THE DINOSAUR about a little boy who visits the museum and is followed by a friendly dinosaur through the town, playing with the kids. Books introducing the alphabet and numbers are also quite popular. They never get tired of cards and puzzles, or of my "light-up" wrist watch. Some are learning to tell time. Even though it's close-cropped, my soft hair continues to fascinate, and my knees provide a break from activities. I'm a celebrity!

English classes are constantly in demand by the older boys and also by "townies," students from St. Martin de Porres Secondary School and young men at the seminary.

The days are full but do include siesta time. Who could ask for anything more? Well, yes, I'm still not satisfied: I easily get lost in the world of computers and e-mail. I could use a secretary! My skills are more useful in helping to coordinate the guest house, especially in the preparation of the morning "oatmeal-plus." There are no guests here at the moment, and that makes it easier to keep track of our cat Noose's latest triplets. We have barriers to try to control their wandering, but this trio is already more venturesome than earlier ones.

This has been the rainiest season I can remember, but like Camelot, Haiti's rain keeps a good schedule, no more than an hour or so a day. In that brief time the place gets drenched and the youngsters enjoy it. The mud that remains is not so enjoyable, and farmers don't like plowing wet clay. The mud makes my moto-taxi trips more of an adventure, too! Yes, I don't hesitate to say it's a paradise, even with the mosquitoes, but I'm constantly reminded of its limits. The chief one shows itself in questions like "When is Bro. Mike coming back? When are you leaving?" As great as it is here, the children do give evidence of the traumas, the instability which brought them here. So keep us—children and staff—in your thoughts and prayers as we battle the mud and the skeeters on the way to the Promised Land.

**WELCOMING A NEW SCHOOL YEAR**  
*Brother Michael McCarthy CFX*

School bells finally rang in Haiti on October 3rd, and all our youngsters got up early, donned their brand new uniforms, and headed off in response to the 8:00 bell. It was a great sight to see them lined up, singing the national anthem, and beginning the day with a prayer. The new leadership team at the school welcomed the kids and quickly got them into the newly-painted classrooms where the teachers began their lessons. Earlier that day the older residents had exited the campus in a rainbow of colors—each secondary school has a different colored uniform—and this year we have students attending five schools. They were ready to jump in, and that they did as the first team started the charcoal fires before 5:00 preparing their morning plate of spaghetti.

Yes, summer vacation ended and with it all the leisure time for extra soccer matches, chess tournaments and bingo competitions. This summer we had also organized two field trips: one to Pandiassou for 75



Mme. Rosela Chery, new principal of the campus Fortuné Jean-Louis Primary School, addresses the community.

of the students, and the other to Layaye. The kids loved exploring these locations, meeting new people, and enjoying a picnic lunch.

The spirituality team spent a day of recollection in mid-September at the minor seminary in Pandiassou, celebrating the accomplishments of the past four years, as well as welcoming five new members to the team, and setting goals for the upcoming year. They rejoiced in the purchase of the new microphone and tanbou (Haitian drum); they invited the bishop to celebrate Mass in November, and welcomed Mr. Leonard Lorien, the new campus minister at the orphanage. So many new things are coming together to complement the new space we have for our prayers: the dining room extension.



Mme. Rosela (right) meets with the faculty

Over the summer we watched the wall go up around our new property that will one day be our trade school. Some of our enterprising young men earned some pocket money by hauling water, sand, and by doing other chores to complete the task. We're hoping that in January construction will begin, and in October our first graduating class of young men and women from the orphanage will have the option of attending this new trade school, a major board initiative.

Yes, a new academic year has begun; a new leadership team is in place; and many initiatives are on the horizon. In a spirit of gratitude we say, "Thank you, God, for being so good to us; continue to bless all those who make our life here possible. Amen."

**OUR NEXT CHALLENGE**

Our seven oldest residents are now preparing for the possibility of post-secondary studies after they finish their 13th or "philo" [university-prep] year in June. The Foundation's Higher Education Committee is now exploring ways of finding the funds to help them fulfill their dreams of becoming physicians, agronomists, and other kinds of professionals in Haiti, where university education can cost as little as \$1,000 a year [medical school about \$3,000]. If you would like to sponsor one of these young men, please contact our Executive Director, Art Mowbray, through [helpthechildren@mfofoundation.org](mailto:helpthechildren@mfofoundation.org)

Currently graduate Jean-René Clerveaux is studying at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., and Johnny Metellus is at the Faculté de Droit (law school) in Haiti. In addition, another member of the Maison Fortuné family, Mesidieu Corielan [pictured left, the son of Fif, who has been housekeeper at Maison Fortuné since the beginning, is studying business administration at the Hinche campus of the Autonomous University of Port-au-Prince (UNAP).



Mom with son Mesidieu



Kenel, Dieuphète, Hubermane, Adlet, Alizard, Fernand, and Guillot



Any empty lap will do! Our youngest, Oday, is the most affectionate kid on campus. He is also quite proud of the fact that he recently learned how to spell his name.