

# Maison Fortuné

## orphanage news

March 2015

Hinche, Hati

### Nine University Students From Maison Fortuné

Cosmas Rubencamp CFX

*Brother Cosmas Rubencamp reflects on his time spent visiting with Maison Fortuné's newest college students.*

This past December I had the unexpected opportunity to get to Hinche with Mary Kwasniewski, the Foundation's new Executive Director. We had lots of experiences, but for now I want to focus on the latest phase of the ministry of the Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation—providing, with your help, the opportunity of a college education to those MFO residents who can best make use of it. It has been a privilege to know several of these young men since they were small children at Maison Fortuné Orphanage fifteen years ago. You can only imagine how heartwarming it was to return to Haiti and see them in college!

In December, Jean-Louis, Mary and I visited three of the university campuses where MFO residents are now studying:

- UNAP (Autonomous University of Port-au-Prince): a comprehensive university located in Rhode, about three miles north of Hinche. We have one student there, Kensy Paul, who is studying computer science.
- UNDH (a nursing and medical technology branch campus of the University of Notre Dame d'Haiti, Port-au-Prince, the national Catholic university). This campus is in Sapaterre, about five miles south of Hinche. We have four students there: Exilien Jean, Exone Santil, Adelet Louis, and Wilson Theremé (pictured right). All are majoring in biology in their first year and aim at becoming medical lab technicians.
- UPC (Université Publique du Centre), in Papaye, about three miles east of Hinche: a branch campus of the national agricultural school at Damean, near Port-au-Prince. It is difficult to get accepted, but once there students pay only about \$100 a year. Rosinel Sylverin ("Ti-Okap") was accepted here starting in December and will be studying agriculture.

We did not get to UCCC (Université Chretienne de la communauté de Caïman) in Lejeune, where Jeanty

Etienne is studying agronomy, and Gulno Cambron is studying medicine. Nor did we visit Charlin Pierre, enrolled at the École de Droit de Hinche (EDH), the law school in downtown Hinche. It has a business program which he attends at night.

I was very impressed at the seriousness with which our students are approaching their studies. They are obviously very proud to have this opportunity. All are from peasant families and would have no opportunity for post-secondary studies were it not for the Foundation's Higher Education Fund.



We have another six or seven students now in their college-prep year in secondary school who could be eligible for university study, but whether that is possible will depend on your contributions to the Foundation's Higher Education Fund!

Thanks to those who are supporting the nine current students. We are determined that they will have the opportunity to complete their studies, but each year we would love to add others who have the ability. Please help! Our website is [www.mfofoundation.org](http://www.mfofoundation.org)

*Brother Cosmas Rubencamp, now in the Xaverian retirement community in Massachusetts, is a former member of the MFO Foundation's Board of Directors and continues on its Higher Education Committee.*

## Haiti Trip Reflection

Guerphara Louis, Student at Seton Hall University

I have always wanted to go on a mission trip and when I got the opportunity to go to Maison Fortuné with Seton Hall University, I was excited. When we arrived at the orphanage, the kids were really happy to see us and it was an overwhelming joy. Also, the hospitality at Maison Fortuné was very welcoming and the people made us feel like we were at home. I must say I enjoyed my bucket showers; they were very refreshing.

Throughout my trip I got to talk to the boys and girls and a few of them shared their stories with me. Many of the kids came to the orphanage after the earthquake because they either lost their parents or their parents did not have the funds to take care of them. Some children were abandoned by their parents as a child and the orphanage is the place that they call home. I am glad I had the chance to meet them because now I have gained more than a handful of brothers and sisters.

On the girls' campus, one of the activities we did was write positive words on construction paper that described them. They then created a flower out of it and hung it up at the orphanage so that every time they looked at it, it would help them understand that they contributed to something beautiful, which also makes them beautiful. The last day we went to visit the girls, many came up to us and told us they were beautiful. The look on their faces made us happy

because we knew that was a step towards them gaining self-confidence.

Overall, this trip has helped me in so many ways. I learned that time is very valuable and essential; once it is gone you can't take it back. I have learned to appreciate the things and the people I have in my life. This trip has also helped me to understand that complaining does not solve anything and that no matter what I am going through there is someone else out there that may be going through something worse. This mission trip was really something that I've never experienced before; it has opened my eyes to a different level of community service. I will never forget the relationships that were built in such a short time and I hope one day I can go back to visit the kids at Maison Fortuné.



## Celebrations at MFO

Lefort Jean Louis, MFO Founder and Executive Director

For many Christians worldwide Christmas is the biggest celebration of the year. It is the time when we rejoice for the birth of Christ our Savior, it's a moment to share our love, a time of reconciliation, and to celebrate our togetherness. At MFO the celebration was all of this and more! Thanks to the support of our donors and the collaboration between MFO and MFOF both campuses were brought together and all of our kids joyfully celebrated Christmas and the New Year!

We had our Christmas Party on December 24th and it was followed by a Mass during the afternoon of the 25th. During the party 4 members of the Haitian Association joined the children, Mme. Germain, Mr. Moleon, Mr. Jean-Noel Bethny and Mr. Geordany. Each one of the members addressed the children with a special Christmas message. They touched on the themes of love, respect, and responsibility. The party lasted until midnight with music and dancing. The feast included special food with decorations that were organized by

Mme. Veronique Joseph, our girls campus director.

The celebration for the New Year in Haiti also commemorates the Haitian declaration of Independence from France. It is typically celebrated with traditional Pumpkin soup and the following day is also a national holiday called Hero Day. This year the kids enjoyed their soup and also a BIG meal of rice, beans, salad and meat on the 2nd. The generous outpouring of support allowed the celebration to also include a purchased cow! The cow meat was plentiful and smiles were everywhere!

Once again we want to thank all of you whose contributions make celebrations possible – it is with hope that we look forward to the new year. We have dreams of expanding our dorms, better landscaping for the main campus and working on the power issues for the girls camps. With your continued support we know that 2015 will be one of our best years yet! MFO succeeds long term when our kids are supported, in school, and provided with transitional life skills! Thank you!!

## Teamwork Works!

Mary Kwasniewski, Executive Director,  
Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation

Meet Dieuliphete, (Jel-li-fet) when his family was unable to care for him we welcomed him into our Maison Fortuné family. He has been with us for the past five years and is almost 9 years old. What we didn't know when Dieuliphete joined us was that he was born with a congenital heart disease that makes it hard for his heart to pump oxygenated blood to his body.

We learned of his condition, through our partnership with the Eastern Virginia Medical School HaitiHOPES group, they diagnosed the problem during their visit in March of 2014. They informed us that his heart would require surgery to correct. EVMS put us in touch with Partners in Health-Haiti and their teaching hospital in Mirebalais, about a 1 hour drive from the Orphanage. The group in Mirebalais connected us with a medical organization in Port au Prince called Haiti Cardiac. With the support of Haiti Cardiac we were able to secure Dieuliphete with a passport and a trip to the Cayman Islands where the surgery was set to



be performed. Dieuliphete stayed in the hospital for ten days while his heart surgery was completed. He is now back at the orphanage, and is working towards a full recovery. Haiti Cardiac promised to stay in contact with us to track his progress and in March the team from EVMS is planning to return to see how their intervention saved Dieuliphete's life. We are thankful for the many teams that worked with us to make sure this second grader got his deserving second chance!

## Sponsorship Made Easy On-line!

Julie Thomas, Sponsorship  
Coordinator MFO Foundation

If you are considering joining our sponsorship program we are making it easier than ever! You can now donate online and sign up for reoccurring donations to take place automatically. Once you set your monthly amount we will automatically deduct that same amount from your account each month. Visit us at [www.mfofoundation.org](http://www.mfofoundation.org) and click on the button called "automatic billing" - this is a link to our secure paypal partner who will process your donations for us on a monthly basis.

Full Child Sponsorship - \$100 / month  
Monthly Meal Sponsor - \$50 / month  
Contributing Sponsor - \$25 / month

Your sponsorship gift is combined with those of other sponsors and donors - rather than just giving it directly to your sponsored child. This ensures that our children, who may never have the opportunity to have a sponsor of their own, will still benefit from your support and our programs. For further information please feel free to email Julie at [sponsorship@mfofoundation.org](mailto:sponsorship@mfofoundation.org)

## Meet Some of Our Girls!

*learn how to sponsor a child at [www.mfofoundation.org](http://www.mfofoundation.org)*

**Shneidou** is 13 years old and in 5th grade. Her name is pronounced "Shen-a-do". Her favorite color is red. French is Sheneidou's favorite subject. She loves to dance and sing with the other girls. One day, she dreams of being a professional dancer.



**Martine** usually has a big smile. She is 11 years old and in the 5th grade. She would like to be a nurse. Like many of the 60 girls, her favorite color is pink! She likes to practice English which is her favorite subject at the Jean Louis Primary School on the main boys' campus.



# Where is My Money Going?

Rick Martin, Treasurer, MFO Foundation

As calendar year 2015 gets started the Foundation thought we would take a moment to THANK YOU and confirm that YES your donations matter!! We also want to let you know a bit more about how your donations are being spent and accounted. The operating cash received is used first to meet the budgeted needs of our children, through the basic operating funds – and then as we were able to do in December 2014 with your generous outpouring we can send additional money to provide for special requests like the Christmas and New Year's celebrations! THANK YOU!

As a 501c3 charity we make it our utmost priority to be transparent with our finances. We welcome you to also visit the Foundation's website ([www.mfofoundation.org](http://www.mfofoundation.org)) where you will find our latest audit which is completed by an independent accountant on an annual basis. We also have internal procedures to account for how your money is being spent. On a yearly basis, we work closely with the Orphanage staff and Jean Louis to agree to the annual budget based upon known and planned expenses for the upcoming year- this process is typically completed by May of each year. The budgeted amount is then wired to the Orphanage monthly through a bank in Haiti, Fonkoze. At the end of each month a report is returned to the Foundation detailing where the money was spent against the budgeted categories. The spending and the income are closely monitored by the Foundation's Treasurer and Board to ensure we are being responsible with our planning and the disbursement of funds. In addition to the budgeted



items, we also work with Orphanage staff to identify needs and projects that are at times unexpected and unplanned and sometimes unavoidable. These projects are covered if we have extra funds or we will do a special request to address the specific need – an example was the funding for 70 NEW mattresses that we were able to provide this past fall. The Orphanage is in immediate need of a septic flush and we are soliciting for funds to complete that task.

The Foundation's current budgeted expenses are approximately \$407,000, covering orphanage operating expenses (food, clothing, health care, primary and secondary education, orphanage and school salaries), higher education (University expenses), and support expenses. We estimate our monthly expenses to be \$34,000 per month.

We are available at any time to answer any questions you have about our processes and hope that you take comfort in knowing that your donation is making a direct difference in the life of a child!

With your help 240 children attend the MFO primary school with a chance to better their future!

Questions? Ready to help! Contact us today at [helpthechildren@mfofoundation.org](mailto:helpthechildren@mfofoundation.org)

Published quarterly by the Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation, Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) organization, to report progress of the orphanage in Hinche, Haiti.

**Editors**  
Mary Kwasniewski  
& Julie Thomas  
**Graphics and Design**  
Lauren Lepper

[www.mfofoundation.org](http://www.mfofoundation.org)  
PO Box 3092  
Chesapeake VA  
23327-3092