



February 2006

## **EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!**

By Julie Groves

Well, here I go again - trying to encapsulate what can only be described as a 'move of God' into mere words. I'm not even sure if my trusty thesaurus will help this time. In November, Russell and I traveled to Cap-Haitien to meet with our teachers, visit their classes and together assess the first year of running the literacy program. Our years of traveling to Haiti have trained us to expect the *unexpected*, expect *challenges* and expect *miracles*. We were not disappointed.

The weather was something *unexpected*. It rained every day we were there! This made the challenge of getting around a little more than we've been used to. Roads that were previously just dusty,

bone jarring, romps in local taxis became miry, mushy, bone jarring romps in local taxis. The native mosquito population seemed to think the rains were



their clarion call to rise and chomp their way to victory. It did give me something to do at night - play connect the dots on my legs. ☺

The teachers unanimously agreed that the literacy program was successful, was a wonderful blessing to their communities and a valuable tool for change in their nation at a grass roots level. Even they were amazed at the brilliance that had been locked up in the minds of their students, some for 70 & 80 yrs. It did take a number of sessions for the participants to feel comfortable with our teaching method which fosters democratic dialogue. Most Haitians, especially those who are illiterate, would never speak out at a public meeting of any kind. The illiterate do not expect someone would want to hear what they think or value their opinions, so in group discussions, they usually remain silent. Being encouraged to speak and listen with equal respect for each other including the teacher was a very new concept for them. Once the trust was established, their voices ruptured the dam illiteracy had imposed and an unstoppable river of conversation and exchange of ideas poured out. The teachers attested to the fact that most of their students kept up with the fast pace and the difference in ages did not seem to

interfere with how the learning takes place. Most students acquired the basic reading, writing and math skills the program offered. It was unanimous that it will foster change from the family and out to the community level.

Our teachers are a very dedicated group of ladies and the rudimentary conditions we witnessed when we visited their classes was humbling. We saw classes taking place in the pitch black with one small lantern for 30 people, participants using a broken down foundation wall as their seats, those who practiced their letters on one knee while balancing their baby on the other and some who were so skinny you wondered how they could concentrate on anything with how hungry they must be. Some of our teachers were using their own money to pay for transportation to get to their classes and purchasing books and paper as they needed it. In light of their meager \$70 USD per month salaries, this is more than commendable. Singing the praises of these teachers and their students is like singing the song that never ends. They overcame every *challenge* with ingenuity and patience. They are amazing!

We made an unplanned visit to the Cap-Haitien hospital one day to pray with the father of one of our teachers, who was awaiting stomach surgery. There are no private rooms. It is one big ward with the doors literally open to the street with every manner of medical situation all festering together in one room. Once again, words cannot describe the base, deplorable conditions in this place. While there, we were called over by a patient in another bed who we learned had been the victim of gang violence. He had been cut from stem to stern with a machete and left for dead. His family had literally stuffed his stomach back into his wounds and rushed him to the hospital where someone had crudely stitched him up. It was obvious that his fly covered wounds were septic. He did not ask for prayer, he asked for money to buy the antibiotics he needed. It was apparent in his strained, gasping pleading with us for money that he was not a Christian man. With an all too familiar wave of defeatism, he gave in to our *provision of prayer* and our *promise* to return with some money for the medication he needed. He had obviously heard this before and would rather have had the *provision of cash* with the *promise* that we would pray. Later that day, Russell and I put together some of our personal cash and sent it back to the hospital with our Haitian administrator. He reported back to us that the man was astonished and admitted he never believed we would return. He felt he was destined to die in that bed. With a few dollars wrapped up in the love of Jesus, he now had a chance. We don't know if he gave his heart to Jesus that night because of our witness or, if he purchased his antibiotics and will live until the day God places someone else in his path. What we do know for sure is that it was a 'Divine Appointment' - a **miracle!**

## WORDS FROM HAITI

**The following are some quotes from the 2005 literacy students in Haiti:**

"My P.W.P. friends, it is this little piece of paper that gives me the chance to say "thank-you" for helping me to realize I am not just a poor person. I am a person who can read now."

"I ask you to find the way to continue this program. Today I can write you this request. Yesterday I could not. Because I could not write I would not even have the capacity to make the request. I am happy to think of what I will be able to do tomorrow."

"Before, my name was just a mark on a paper. Now I put letters where the mark used to be. Before I was blind. Now I am able to see. Now I make my signature and many other words. My life is growing."

"I am encouraged with the other students to work in a better way in our community. I will never get tired or discouraged now."

"Now that I can write, I am looking forward to see what other experiences will come to me."

"I say "thank you" a lot to P.W.P. When I am in the market now, I can make a better job. I can take better care of the way people pay me for my things. I can make the exchange on paper."

"Thank-you because this literacy program is what makes me stand. With my pencil, I have learned how to write. I can make the things come from my head to the paper now. I can't stop looking at the words. They make me happy."

"I thank God and P.W.P. to permit this program in my area. I ask God to bless you with favor for what you have done."

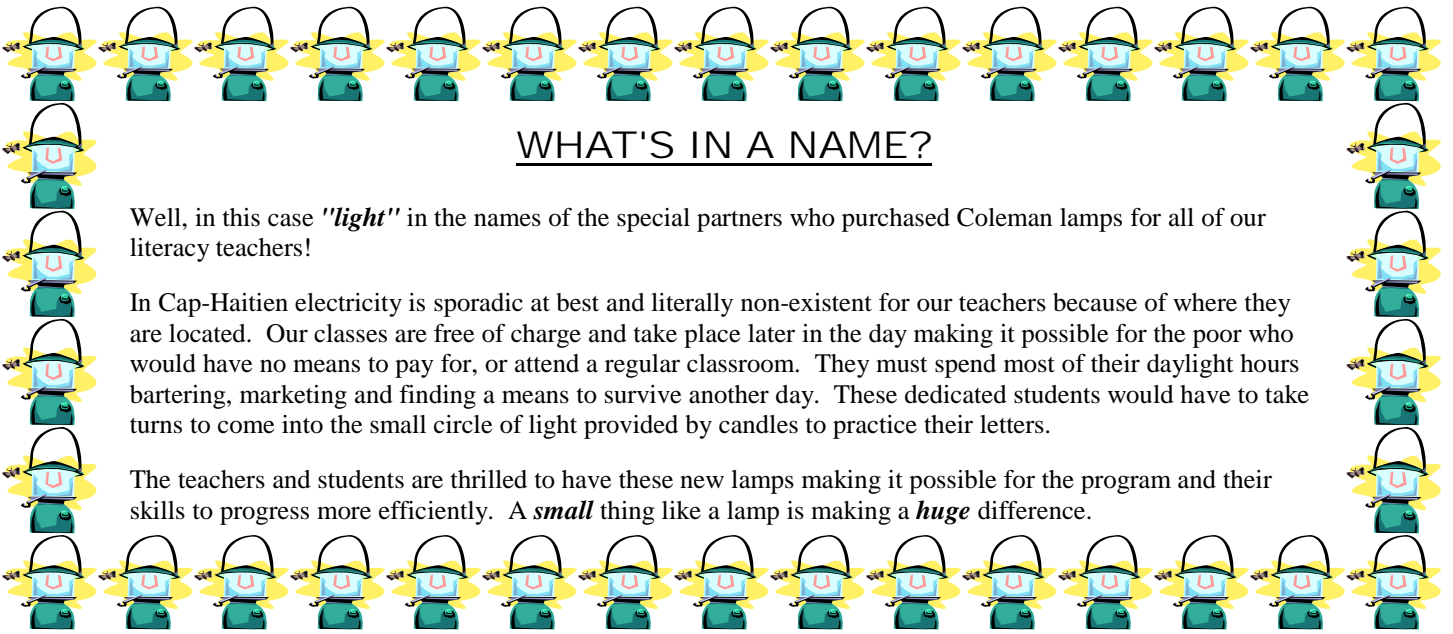
"How did you think to come to us in Cap Haitien? I think God showed you the way to us. I am happy for the book you gave Madame Sylvie that shows us how to make letters. She has a lot of patience with us. I know God's grace is hers."

"This program will make a beautiful history for my area. I can write a little. I can read a little. Now, I am thinking maybe I will write a little story for my family."

"My name is Charles Atilia. For sixty-four years now I have not been able to write my name. You can see that today I have put it in this paper for you. Today, my teacher sees how big my heart is when I write the lesson."

"Today Madame Madeline asked me to write a message for P.W.P. I feel I am writing to friends who cared to bring this program to my area. Even though you cannot see my face, you can see I am able to write "thank-you". I am your friend Daniel Papouloute."

"When you see these words "pa bliye mwen" (don't forget me) I know you are reading them. It is something you can see on this paper. If I was not able to write them you would not know what I was thinking."



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Well, in this case "*light*" in the names of the special partners who purchased Coleman lamps for all of our literacy teachers!

In Cap-Haitien electricity is sporadic at best and literally non-existent for our teachers because of where they are located. Our classes are free of charge and take place later in the day making it possible for the poor who would have no means to pay for, or attend a regular classroom. They must spend most of their daylight hours bartering, marketing and finding a means to survive another day. These dedicated students would have to take turns to come into the small circle of light provided by candles to practice their letters.

The teachers and students are thrilled to have these new lamps making it possible for the program and their skills to progress more efficiently. A *small* thing like a lamp is making a *huge* difference.

## "BESEECHING"

That's what the Bible calls it. You may call it pleading, imploring, petitioning or, perhaps, pestering, hounding and begging. © Whatever you call it, we are unashamedly doing it on behalf of the students who completed our literacy program in 2005 and are passionate to continue. At this point, our program only has curriculum for one year, offering basic reading writing and math skills. Our students range in age from ten to eighty and this is the only opportunity they have ever had to become literate. All education in Haiti costs money which is one of the main reasons 80% of the population is functionally illiterate. P.W.P. is doing all it can to keep our program simple so it can be offered gratis for any who want to learn.

We have a difficult time expressing to folks here just how life changing literacy is in Haiti. It brings a level of respect and self-worth along with the practical skills it affords that simply goes beyond words. The people who finished the program in 2005 are like butterflies that have just emerged from their cocoons. They want to fly - they just don't know where to.

In our December newsletter, we outlined a plan we have designed that would provide a way for our first year students to continue on in 2006 honing their reading, grammar and penmanship proficiency. It would also be a vehicle for them to further develop their confidence to participate in equal voice, democratic discussions as our teaching methods promote. This is an invaluable skill they

can use in community meetings, church groups and/or family situations when problem solving is necessary.

We could orchestrate a second year program for approximately \$2500 -\$3000 U.S.D. This is where the "*BESEECHING*" comes in. We do not have \$1.00 in place for this. However, we did not have \$1.00 in place for our lamps before Christmas and we now have all of those purchased. We believe. We really do believe that there may be one person reading this article that God will speak to and ask to provide the whole amount. Perhaps He will ask you to get your group to hold an event at your church or organization to raise this amount. We don't know how He will speak, but we know He will. Please, please (okay we've moved from "*beseeching*" to "*begging*" now) be sensitive to that still, small voice that may be stirring in your heart right at this moment to take up this cause. There is a whole bevy of beautiful butterflies waiting for take off in Cap-Haitien!

*All donations are income tax deductible.*



# The Proof Is In The Pudding....."Reading"

Partners With Purpose has always been convinced that we've been "called" to work with education and women in Haiti. Our November, 2005 working trip to Cap-Haitien confirmed our belief in the value of the program your contributions are supporting.

The ROTALPHA literacy program suits the needs and culture of Haiti perfectly. Teachers are given the skills and insights they need to transmit their knowledge to students who have had no previous education. Students hunger and thirst for teaching and advancement.

The following points address what aspects impressed us most as we visited several of the literacy centres and what attributes most caught our attention when we met with our teachers and administrator.

-Meeting ten female teachers who are totally dedicated to their role as a vehicle for sharing the gift of literacy with as many students as possible!

-The teachers take their role very seriously. Their passion for teaching goes far beyond the culture of self and the self-importance that could come from having employment and a position of authority. One could sense their silent determination that not only would individual students benefit from training, but that Haiti would benefit from this expansion of ability and hope.

-They know that literacy training has often been regarded as an "underground movement" in Haiti. Literacy allows people to formulate their own ideas. This gift is thus a threat to dictatorial herding of people like sheep.

-The students are overjoyed to be in classes and exhibit a keen appreciation for the work of their teachers and the funding from outside their country that allows them to learn and grow.

-Our administrator, Jean St. Albert displays a wonderful mix of disciplined direction and brilliance in management along with a genuine compassion and concern for teachers and students.

-What a great and heartening surprise it was to walk into one classroom and see math equations three columns wide and three columns deep on the blackboard! Then to hear a student stand and read his welcome to us while literally beaming with pride and newfound confidence.

-One of the fundamentals of the ROTALPHA program is that each student learned to write their own full given name. Hard as it may be to believe, 15 adult students from one class learned their actual name for the first time. No longer would they know themselves only by their childhood nickname. Seemingly small, but totally profound.

We returned to Canada carrying a passionate fire that this

work must go on! Our team in Haiti now has a strong track record. One year of literacy classes has been successfully completed. Another year and a whole new set of classes are ready to go!

For \$100 per centre per month, just \$1200 a year, upwards of 25 to 30 people can become fully literate. They graduate from training with a whole new perspective of themselves, their families and their situation. There are certain fundamental building blocks on which any society rests. Literacy is one of these building blocks. Now that there is such definite forward momentum in Haiti, we must accelerate efforts to expand this education in a land whose people are 80% functionally illiterate.

I will leave you with one little story that perfectly encapsulates everything good and noble about his work. As it was a rainy day, the first class we visited could not use their usual location -the shell of a never completed house. Instead, they had moved across the rough pathway between dwellings to a literal "hole in the wall". About ten feet deep and maybe four feet wide, this crevice did have a small blackboard on the wall. As we spoke with the wonderful young teacher in these cramped quarters, a tiny lady, one of the students was doing some unnoticed but important work. Wedging herself in behind other students she slowly and deliberately wrote her first name, "Angelina" on the blackboard.

We noticed that she had done something and as we moved out of the way Angelina began to smile ever so shyly. We asked her how old she was. The soft reply was forty-seven. Emboldened by our attention she once again took chalk in hand and, for an encore, wrote her last name, "Cadet" below Angelina. Forty-seven years old and finally able to write her own name and know what she was writing! By the world's standards a small accomplishment, but, in the eyes and heart and mind of this gentle student, a gigantic mountain has been moved!



To be a part of more mountain-moving in Haiti consider partnering with us today.

Russell Gammon

## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

"This is the true joy of life: the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clot of grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

George Bernard Shaw

"I possess all, but the wanting goes on."

Muhammad Ali

"The dead cannot cry out for justice. It is the duty of the living to do so for them"

Lois McMaster Bujold

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

1. Our number one need is for the funding to come in quickly for the second year program @ \$2500 - \$3000 U.S.D
2. Our number one (a) need is for seven more sponsors for our literacy teachers @ \$100 per month per teacher.
3. Our number one (b) need is for God to give wisdom and encouragement to our teachers as they struggle to operate their classes in extremely primitive conditions.
4. Our number one (c) need is for God to touch all our 2006 fundraising efforts with favor.
5. Our number one (d) need is for fruit to come from the thirty-four Partners With Purpose DVD's that were delivered to TV stations in October, 2005.
6. Our number one (e) need is for our financial partnership to increase so we can continue to advance towards the greater vision God has given us to build Liberty School for Women.

## **Do You Know???????**

If you know, or know of a place where P.W.P. could acquire curriculum for teaching English as a second language, we would appreciate any suggestions.

### **HAITIAN PRAYER**

*Pa mete chay traka ou yo nan yon panye sou tèt ou.  
Mete yo sou tèt Jezi. Ou p'ap gen tèt fè mal.*

**Don't put your load of trouble in a basket on your head.  
Put them on Jesus' head. You won't have headaches.**



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