

HELPING IN  
**HAITI**  
A Story of Hope,  
Charity and Faith

HOW  
TO  
**HELP**

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People interested in making nonmonetary contributions of medicine or other supplies, or who want to learn more about the foundation's work retreats to Haiti, can call 781-961-6927.

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# Small comforts in a **HARD WORLD**



■ **Celaine Ennaude, top photo, and her children used to sleep under beds in their mud and thatched-roof hut to stay dry during storms. In the photo above, Ennaude, who is twice-widowed, sits in her new home with some of her 10 children.**



■ **Ennaude says the new concrete house with a corrugated metal roof has meant a drier and better life for her family.**

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A cinder-block house with two or three rooms, a concrete floor, a corrugated metal roof and a porch costs between \$3,500 and \$4,000. Local residents are hired as construction workers, so the organization provides shelter for one family and offers work in a region where 85 percent of the people are jobless.

"I don't think the goal is to make Haiti or Haitians like First World people," said the Rev. Gerald Osterman, who was pastor of St. Boniface Church in Quincy's Germantown neighborhood when parishioners first visited Haiti in 1983 and has been coming back regularly for the past two decades.

Father Jerry, as he is called, grew up in Hingham. His father, John Osterman, was superintendent of schools in Hull.

The Rev. Osterman, who is 61 and has a mop of white hair, is now pastor of an Everett parish and lives part-time in Hull.

He says God has helped him and other St. Boniface volunteers help Haiti.

"In this small area, we have been able to alleviate some suffering, but the bigger thing is it's a model for what any group in the United States could do if people put their minds to it and were sensitive to the problems," he said.

"You don't have to wait for the government to solve it, because they won't. Like

anything that's people-to-people, it grows."

And it provides hope where none existed before.

Ymmaculé Jacques lives with six of her children, her sick mother and a niece in a mud house smaller than most American bedrooms. Three rickety beds are crammed so close together in one room that visitors have to squeeze to pass through. Some of the children sleep on straw mats on the floor.

The roof is made of thatch. It rained the day before, and one mattress is still damp.

"I need a house. You see that," said Jacques' 16-year-old son, Yves Florant, who learned English at the local Catholic school built by the St. Boniface Foundation. "I don't have money."

Jacques does what she can to provide for her family.

During a typical week, she might make 50 Haitian dollars selling rice or some other product at market. That translates into just a little more than \$6 in U.S. currency. She uses it all to buy food. There is nothing left over for a new house.

But her family will get one, thanks to the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation. Construction should start in the next few months.

Jacques' simple smile is evidence of her appreciation, but just in case, she utters these words in Creole: "Happy, very happy."

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FACE OF  
**HAITI**



■ **Briel Laveielle is restoring hope to Fond des Blancs residents by helping them find jobs and meeting other basic needs.**

**B**riel Laveielle takes long strides as he leads visitors up a rocky, muddy hill. At the top, just a few feet from his concrete house, is a large wood structure that looks something like a giant gazebo.

This is home base for Ratrap, Laveielle's attempt to improve the quality of life in Fond des Blancs.

Through his organization, 600 residents have purchased hand tools or basic farming equipment. Small groups of men are then sent out to clear land or plant crops for large property owners. They use a fraction of their earnings to pay over time for the tools.

Through another program, residents receive chickens. Laveielle disappears into a back room, then emerges with jars of antibiotics and antiparasitic vaccines used to ensure the animals are healthy.

For years, Laveielle watched as residents lost hope and abandoned the region his family has long called home. Some went to Port-au-Prince, desperate for a job. Others tried to find their way to the United States or Canada, risking their lives because they saw no future for themselves in Fond des Blancs.

He vowed not to let that continue. He has become something of an unofficial mayor for the region.

To pay for Ratrap, an acronym for a series of Haitian words no one uses, Laveielle solicits help from international relief organizations, large and small. Among the groups he turned to was St. Boniface Haiti Foundation, which works with Laveielle to build new houses for some of the region's poorest residents.

"This is a section where the state government doesn't care for its people because it's so in the back," Laveielle said in Creole.

Laveielle, who during the day is a security guard at St. Boniface Hospital, credits the St. Boniface foundation with helping meet the basic needs of people who live here — health care, housing and education.

And that is providing something else.

"People who left for many years are coming back to build houses in Fond des Blancs," he said. "Most of the people who leave don't leave because they don't want to live here. They could not imagine before that there could be hope. There's more hope now."

HERE AND  
**THERE**

**Numbers that count**

	Haiti	United States
Telephone lines (per 1,000 people)	20.7	1,117.9
Internet users	30,000	142.8M
Population with improved sanitation	28%	100%
Population below poverty line	80%	12.7%
Per capita income	\$250	\$25,237
Paved highways	628 miles	3.56M miles
People per household	5.1	2.62
Homes with electricity	45% in Port-au-Prince 3% outside Port-au-Prince	99%

SOURCES: World Bank, United Nations, The World Factbook 2003, U.S. State Department, U.S. Census

MICHAEL BERTRAND/The Patriot Ledger

LINKS TO THE **SOUTH SHORE**

**T**wo decades ago, when Esther Madden first visited Haiti, a nun she met told her the country and its people would creep inside her heart and refuse to leave.

"You'll never be set free," Madden, 72, recalled being told. "You'll always come back."

The words proved prophetic. After her first trip in 1983, Madden returned at least once a year until 1986. She went back again in 1990, this time with two of her seven children. After more than a decade away, she returned again in 2001.

A lot has change since that first trip when a dozen people from St. Boniface Catholic Church in Quincy's Germantown neighborhood journeyed there to donate a few thousands dollars from a fund-raising walk. In those first years, they went armed with simple gifts like stickers and candy to give children, and brought what they could to give away.

"Friends would say, 'Do you think you're going to save a nation with a suitcase of second-hand clothes?'" she said. "It just showed that the Lord stepped in."

The first time Madden visited Fond des Blancs, the village

adopted by the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation, there were hardly any wells for drinking water. People dropped gourds tied to strings down holes in the ground to capture water. As they pulled them up, the gourds would jiggle around. By the time they got to the surface, just a few drops of water remained inside.

When Madden, a Hingham resident and case coordinator in the civil division of Quincy District Court, returned to Fond des Blancs two years ago, she saw the hospital, operating room and nutrition center that the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation had built in

the years since her initial visits.

Occasionally, someone will ask Madden, who is secretary of the foundation's board of trustees, why she travels all the way to Haiti to help people when there is poverty so much closer to home.

"Most people assume it's either here or there, that if you're involved with the poor in Haiti, you're not involved here. It isn't like that," she said. "The people I know who are involved in Haiti are also involved in places like Quincy. The difference is there is no help in Haiti except for the church."



■ **Esther Madden of Hingham**