



Share Care RAYJON

“Save a Family Plan” Hosts RAYJON’s First Trip to India

RAYJON has enjoyed a special relationship with Save a Family Plan (SAFP) for several years. This relationship took another positive step forward when Lesley Porter, SAFP’s Executive Director, visited the ICDP area in St Marc, Haiti in May 2007. She noticed several similarities between our projects in Haiti and SAFP’s in India, where they have been working for over 40 years. “Why not come and see for yourselves?” she asked. Well 9 months later, Ryan DeVries and I have just returned from an amazing trip to India (January 7 – 31, 2008) – RAYJON’s first venture to that wonderful country. Dieudonne, RAYJON’s Field Director in Haiti, was also with us and will be there until mid February. The purpose of our trip was to visit SAFP projects in India and identify project ideas that could be replicated in Haiti. Lesley had also invited us to share our experiences of Haiti with SAFP staff in India.



John and Ryan riding an elephant in Rajasthan

During the 3 weeks we were there, we visited 6 project areas in 2 States - all quite different from one another. The hospitality, everywhere we went, was excellent. We were impressed with the SAFP organization and with the collaborative roles of Church, Government & NGO’s – all very socially minded. The Church appears to be playing a highly effective facilitative & supportive role. It was also good to see the 3 major religions: Hindu, Muslim & Christianity coexisting in harmony. India is very rich culturally, and we witnessed lots of celebrations and rituals. We traveled by plane, train, bus, truck, ferry, boat, elephant, auto-rickshaw & foot – and saw a variety of wildlife. We also had the privilege of being in Delhi for the 60th Anniversary of Gandhi’s assassination.

Overall, the visit more than exceeded our expectations. We concluded SAFP’s watershed development model is a highly effective tool focusing on grass roots development. The role of SAFP and partner NGO’s is to facilitate the involvement of Government and the provision of resources to communities in need. The process involves bringing together all stakeholders and interest groups. Technical input is a feature of the process when assessing water quality and providing expertise on water collection, storage & distribution systems. Gender equality & environmental sustainability are incorporated as two cross-cutting themes. Training is a key aspect of the process - as are monitoring & evaluation of progress.

Dieudonne plans to review the learnings from her visit with her staff & development advisors in Haiti and assess what can be replicated in Haiti. It was indeed a memorable trip which Ryan and I will be pleased to describe at the upcoming RAYJON membership meeting on February 29th. Thank you SAFP for the opportunity – and for being wonderful hosts.

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RAYJON SHARE CARE

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*Caring communities building
partnerships through education,
development and aid.*

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CIDA Support

RAYJON is pleased to acknowledge the role that the **Canadian International Development Agency** (CIDA) has played in support of the St. Marc Community Development Project, HAITI. CIDA has matched funds for the project since 1989.



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Coming Events

RAYJON membership meeting

Friday, 29th February at 7.30pm
at Sacred Heart Church meeting room
Impressions from John & Ryan on their visit to India in January
Guest speaker Debra McGill (see page 8)
Everyone welcome!

Cuba Party

Saturday, March 1st at 7.30pm
at the Sarnia Riding Club (see page 7)

Trips

Awareness trip to Haiti March 10th 17th
Awareness trip to the DR March 10th 17th
5 Nursing trips from Lambton & Barrie Colleges - March/April
Marjorie Paisley to Cap- Haitien x2 - March/April
Small group to Cap- Haitien - April 4th 12th

Earth Hour 2008

Last year, World Wildlife Foundation Australia pioneered Earth Hour this year Earth Hour goes global! At 8 pm on March 29, the world will turn off its lights for just one hour to show it's possible to take action on climate change. Switching off your lights is just one simple action that you can take to help make a difference and it sends a powerful message that we care about our planet.

Spread the word you are just one person, but you can make a difference.

Red Bud Project

The Degroot/RAYJON Red Bud Project is gearing up to be an exciting event. The latest news from the grower is indicating that the trees will be ready for distribution in June. Details for potential volunteers (and we'll need many) will be included in the next newsletter.

RAYJON Seeking To Hire Project Coordinator

RAYJON is looking to hire a full-time Project Coordinator to support RAYJON's Project initiatives in Haiti. The position will be based primarily in Canada but will require periodic visits to Haiti. Salary will be in the range of \$30,000 - \$40,000 depending on experience. The position is expected to start in April 2008. A list of duties and responsibilities together with required qualifications and attributes is available on request from John Barnfield at jbarnfield@sympatico.ca or 519-337-0338

Report of November Monitoring Trip

Nine of us, all Board members and members of the Project committee, spent a week in Haiti from November 13th - 20th on what we call a Monitoring trip. These Monitoring trips happen twice a year - just a few of us go down, visit many of the Project areas and basically see for ourselves just how things are progressing. Not all 9 of us were Project Monitors - John Barnfield, Armando Notte, Peter Westfall and my husband Ben worked with our Field Director Dieudonne on part 2 of the CIDA proposal regarding our government funding & did work on finances, getting ready for our January audit. Maggy and I were looking for new accommodations and places to visit when we take an Awareness Trip down in March, taking pictures and gathering information about *what* was happening & *who* was making it happen, so we can tell our stories better back here. The only 2 people in our group who had never been to Haiti before were Tanya Wolfe and Johnna Johanssen - they went down as representatives of the Rotary Club of Sarnia, of which Tanya is president. Rotary donated \$8500 of the \$10,000 necessary to outfit a Lab in the RAYJON area - can you imagine?

A Lab.....deep in the rural area of Gilbert where our large 24 hour Dispensary is located. This Lab has been a dream for some years now - having the ability to do basic blood and urine tests, malaria screenings, etc. will make life so much easier for the people in the RAYJON area. Up until now, it has been necessary to walk all the way to St. Marc for Lab work, which can take anywhere from 1-4 hours *each way* depending on which part of our area they live in. You've heard many of us say before how remote our area of concern is - when we say it's the boonies, we really mean it - and our 2 new people on this trip have a new appreciation for what that word really means now. The Haitian government promised last year that IF we built a Lab, they would contribute everything we needed to do Aids testing as well. We'll see if they deliver on that promise.....Our own Bluewater Health donated several large pieces of equipment - a microscope and centrifuge for example - and did all the costing out of the supplies needed to outfit a Lab to work efficiently. God bless John Lofthouse, head of our Lab here and Paul and Graham, my buddies in Biomed, who prepared the equipment for us to take with us. The day we visited the new Lab was so exciting, for all of us. But for Tanya and Johnna, it was truly amazing - there they were, in the middle of what could have been a National Geographic Special, actually seeing with their own eyes what the Rotary donation really accomplished. Dieudonne & her team had worked hard to have as much as possible completed by the time we arrived, but in true Haitian style, many of the supplies she'd ordered had not yet arrived, not that any of us noticed! It was amazing - I know I keep saying amazing, but it was. Our Lab - a 20 X 10 foot room made of cement blocks attached to the L end of the Dispensary - it had a generator for electricity, the microscope and centrifuge, test tubes, pipettes and a Lab technician from St. Marc who was a graduate of the RAYJON schools. It even had a step-on garbage can ! - which apparently is a safety requirement.



Elizabeth from Almonte who helped set up the lab, the lab technician, Tanya Wolfe & Dieudonne in the new lab.

The Academy Awards wouldn't have been as exciting.....While we were all admiring the Lab, at the other end of the Dispensary, a monthly vaccination clinic was in progress. There had to be 100 people in the outdoor waiting room, most of them women with their babies and toddlers all dressed in their best - the babies all had little head wraps that matched their mother's dresses. Rosaline, one of our excellent Health Agents, was teaching them as they waited about the vaccinations and about proper nutrition for their little ones - and for themselves. These peasant women have grown up hearing that nutritious foods like eggs, chicken and vegetables are not good for them or their babies - that these foods are for sale in the market only, rather than "wasting" on themselves. Until this visit, I had never heard this before, but it's an old wives tale that takes a lot of work to undo. I wish you could have been there - it's colorful and busy and hopeful and altogether totally inspiring - my own sense of privilege for being part of it kept washing over me in waves.



Mothers & children in the clinic outdoor waiting room

We saw many other aspects of the Project, but this next story affected us all deeply. Dieudonne had arranged a Saturday Workshop on "Democracy and all its definitions" - a "Good Governance" workshop. I was trying to describe this incredible day to someone right after we got home - he was stunned by the topic and asked me if this wasn't just a little "high falutin" for people in a country so backward, so desperate for so many "things" like food, shelter and basic medicines. He brought me up short - yes, Haiti does need those things - but I'll tell you what I told him. People's well being doesn't just depend on calories. Yes, we do help to supply food, medicines and school supplies - but Rayjon believes in developing the *whole* person and good

governance is part of this too. So - good governance - why this? And why now? Haiti has historically always been under repressive dictatorships - until the 1990 *real, free* election of Fr. Jean Bertrand Aristide. Now Aristide's no longer in the picture, but that first taste of democracy caused a new kind of hunger with the people. The gangs and the underworld gave the word democracy a bad name in Haiti - we've all heard of or read about the shootings, the looting, the fear they have caused. But because the International Community has invested so heavily in Haiti in the past few years, there *has* been change for the good. Right now, the country is quiet and there's a sense of hope for the future - but there's also a growing frustration among the people regarding the lack of progress with the present government. Freedom is heady stuff and it doesn't mean doing *whatever* you want, *whenever* you want, *wherever* you want - freedom has twin sisters and their names are responsibility and respect. Education is key - hence, this workshop. All 9 of us weren't just present at this workshop, but took an active part in the group discussions at Dieudonne's insistence, and with her help. There were about 75 people present, an incredible *intended* mix of RAYJON's St. Patrick's High School students, young professionals, and peasant women. At first, I thought that the women from the mountains were at a terrible disadvantage - socially, they didn't really "fit." And I thought having the 9 of us join in the discussion groups would make the participants shy and nervous - even though most of us don't speak or understand Kreyol very well, we're white, and we're powerful and intimidating just by our presence. But Dieudonne in her wisdom said to them - "This is life - there will always be someone you don't know, someone who has more education or more money than you - but it doesn't mean you are less of a person - you all need to learn how to make good choices, because now you *HAVE* a choice". She told them that they were all leaders - that they would take what they learned back to their homes, their schools, their villages and their workplaces and show that what a true leader does is *to serve*. She told them that each one has their own gifts to bring to the group and to life - that they were *valued* and *valuable*. I wish you could have been there and seen the difference in the group as the day went on. By the time it was over, there were 75 different people than the 75 who started out - the air was electric with promise & knowledge. Amazing, eh? At times like this, I don't feel that I just have my finger on the pulse of the project, but that I'm part of the actual heartbeat.

So - what now? What will I learn when I go back in March? Or next year? Haiti can always be volatile - promises will be broken, there will be anger and frustration, but that's life. One thing I know for sure - we will go back. We will be their witnesses. We will tell you what we have seen and how it affected us, because you have invested in them too. Worlds of privilege & poverty can exist only blocks apart, but it doesn't mean we aren't connected. We *are* connected.

Dianne McKillican



Dieudonne presenting at the Good Governance workshop

A Future Worth Watching

Since I have become involved with Rayjon's Urban Community Project I have had numerous people pose the question, "Do you think there is hope for Haiti?" Without reservation the answer is yes. To understand why I am convinced that Haiti has a promising future one needs to understand the source of its problems.

Haiti is a complex country. Its problems are political, not in the pure sense of corrupt politics but in the sense that everything is political—history, economics, culture and societies. It is easiest to explain the dilemma at three levels, at the international and national levels and within the local societal structures.

First, at the international level, Haiti, like many poor countries, finds itself at a disadvantage to powerful developed nations. Policies set forth by the World Bank, and foreign trade policies of developed nations, always put Haiti at a disadvantage. When unable to meet the repayment schedule of its foreign debt, Haiti has been forced to restructure its internal policies through SAPs or Structural Adjustment Policies. This has translated into reducing the money allotted for social programs like health and schools thus weakening the country's value of human capital. Equally, tariffs were removed allowing foreign imports of cheap rice and sugar into Haiti. This resulted in the decimation of Haiti's domestic rice or sugar cane production. However the international community is aware of the mistake and is now considering debt forgiveness.

Second, national policy has been set to benefit the rich. This also was subject to foreign pressures, and while Aristide had good intentions to assist the poor, his government ministries were riddled with corruption that eventually led to failure. However, during his time in office many positive strides were made including the disbandment of the national army, the creation of the Ministry of Status and Rights of Women, and the change of the language of education from French, the language of the elite to Creole, the language of the majority. Through what appears to be a small change, the power structure of the elite is no longer perpetuated. As the majority of the population learn to read and write in their native tongue they will create resistance against an unbalanced social structure. They will be able to understand the laws that rule their country and their lives. Local radio broadcasts are now produced in Creole disseminating information to the masses so the poor will be able to force the political agenda and will no longer be held hostage by elite decision makers.

Third, in society at the local level, gender inequality is rampant. This is true across the globe but more so in Haiti than anywhere else I have visited. Historically, Haitian women have shown the courage to fight dictatorships and cultural inequality through resistance that takes many different forms. It is through this strength, combined with a culture that demonstrates a philosophy of prioritizing the common good over personal advantage that I see a hopeful future for Haiti. Women are demanding their place in the restructuring and redesigning of their country, demanding not into a liberal democracy but a participatory democracy where politics does not minimize itself to the narrow perspective of capitalism and economics, and the power struggles of the elite, but to a focus on women's politics. This ideology includes national education, health care programs, equal voice and participation in government decisions, clean potable water, a justice system that works for victims of rape and violence, and accountability of fathers to their children. These are the women's concerns that link the perceived spaces between the individual and the collective. These are the concerns that demonstrate that everything is political.

Putting politics at the service of the people is what will eventually save Haiti. Haitians need politics that will not diminish humanity through the structurally constructed barriers at local, national and international levels, but used to include participation of all citizens. Shared power is the prerequisite for dignity, justice and quality of life. This matched with the Haitian's ferocious instinct for survival will be a future worth watching.

Jennifer Vansteenkiste

Director of RAYJON's Urban Community Project in Cap Haitien

Go to the people, Live among them, Learn from them, Start with what they know, Build on what they have. Teach by showing, Learn by doing, Not a showcase but a pattern, Not odds and ends but a system, Not relief but release. Of the best leaders, When their task is accomplished, The people will remark: "We have done it ourselves."

Dr. James Yen

Haiti Reflection

Having had such ample time to reflect on my Haiti Awareness Trip of March 2006, one would think it would be easy to summarize, but having such an amazing experience with so many tests and challenges jammed packed into 8 days, it's very difficult to explain, and as clichéd as it sounds, I have not been the same since.

Haiti has become my passion, social justice has become my obsession and making a difference has become my goal. In September 2005 our trip meetings began; we were prepared for what we were going to see, but not necessarily for how it was going to affect us. I could never, ever have imagined that those 8 days would determine who I wanted to become and ultimately what was most important to me. "Tell your story" - is something RAYJON founders and members encourage, and I have not stopped! There is not a day that goes by that I don't reminisce about the feeling I had when I first landed in Haiti and remember the sadness I felt when I left 7 days later, not necessarily because of the poverty we witnessed, but because of the hope, love and acceptance I was forced to leave behind to return to the hectic, selfish land of North America. I remember the smells, the sounds. I remember the personal exhaustion following the long hike up the mountain, counteracted by the amazing songs of the children that brought tears to our eyes. I love the people and the giant smiles on their faces, I love their commitment, I love their hope, and I envy them in so many ways.



Brittnei in Haiti 2005

I traveled to Haiti with 13 people. These people not only greatly contributed to the experience, but they have become such a special part of my life. When I reunite with these people, there is an overwhelming sense of understanding, of acceptance and shared passion, those feelings I cannot find anywhere else. Maggy and Dianne will forever remain influential people in my life. I was extremely touched by their actions, and I am forever reminded of the opportunity they have given to me and to hundreds of others involved with RAYJON.

Two years later, as a second year university student, I often find myself overwhelmed with the stressful hustle and bustle of a student life. I hate that tedious textbooks and lecture material have become my routine, and I'm often frustrated that I am not able to fully explore my passion. I know now that there are some things I need to do for myself before I can reach out fully. I know that I will be back to Haiti; it is a not a matter of "if" but WHEN!

**"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
What I can do, I shall do, and I ought to do."**

*Brittnei Berrisford
January 2008*

Urban Community Project

"Sr. Josette, the young Haitian Sister who is working with me, continues to grow in administrative experience, and the Centre has benefited greatly from her input. She is more than ready to take on the direction of the Centre and I have been able to step back & search for a solid funding base for the programs we are moving into. At the beginning of July ('07) RAYJON of Sarnia took over the budget of the Centre with the continued support of my community (Sisters of St. Joseph) and your generous donations. We have also been seeking funding through CIDA and various foundations. Together we have been able to implement new programs for the mothers & children. The sewing program has expanded into an "Atelye de Pwoduksyon" or workshop where mothers are learning to preserve fruits & make jams & jellies. The commerce program has expanded into a micro-credit program where the women are able to borrow increasing amounts of money to start a new business or expand an existing one. Along with this program have come literacy classes, increased teaching in many life & business skills, and more supervision and support. The savings program continues for both education & housing and we are encouraging the women to dream and plan for better futures for themselves & their children. Thank you for your continued support. The women & the older students are very aware of you, and they too would want to express their gratitude. May the coming year be an exciting and blessed time for you."

Sr Rosemary, Cap-Haitien

February 2008

Condolences to Renee Dietrich on the death of her father in Iowa. Renee is the public relations director for Wings of Hope, a home for mentally & physically disabled children, and St. Joseph's home for street boys, both in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The RAYJON Awareness trip participants visit each of the homes every year.

Condolences to Marg Ecker and Kathy & Jim Smith on the sudden death of Don, Marg's husband and Kathy's father, in December.

Condolences to Jennifer & Greg Vansteenkiste on the death of Greg's father, Cyril (Cy) on January 23rd 2008.

Congratulations to Amelia Raiger on winning the Mosby-Saunders \$1000 book scholarship. Amelia submitted an essay entitled, "Why I Want to Become a Nurse". She was selected as the only winner in Canada for her essay, which was based on her experience in the Dominican Republic in March 2007. Amelia was participant in RAYJON's student nurse's trip to the D.R. and is currently a nursing student at Western University.

The Wise Still Seek Him

In the midst of the storms, Noel & Olga, the community of Fe y Alegria Espiritu Santo celebrated the birth of Jesus in a unique way. We recreated the story using local colour and modern technology. Mary was comfortably rocking while visiting with the Angel Gabriel, Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem on a donkey, the shepherds attempted to shepherd the live sheep, however, in the end, the sheep herded the shepherds! The Three Kings arrived on horseback to give homage to the live Christ Child. The program was the event of the year and thousands of people came from the community to watch and hear the children dance the meringue, sing Dominican carols and watch the video production. For at least an hour, the families could forget that there was no water or electricity in their homes. Our wish for you is that you have the spirit of our people who have joy, hope and faith even in hard times. Feliz Año 2008.

Wishing you and all our old friends in RAYJON many blessings in the coming year.

Srs. Renee & Maurine

The Urban Community Project (Cap Haitien) committee is looking for a volunteer/volunteers who would be willing to look after the collection & shipping of goods to Haiti from their new facility at 373 S. Vidal St. Unit 4. If you are interested in helping in this way, please call Jan Leckie-Fraser at 519-542-7880 or Marjorie Paisley at 519-344-9190.

Do you have any scraps of opaque material you don't need? Old tablecloths, drapery, upholstery, scraps from dress making? As long as they are at least 12 inches by 12 inches, we can use them.

Would you like to do some **simple sewing** of Christmas bags for RAYJON? If you're interested, please e-mail Colleen Rapaich at colleen.rapaich@st-clair.net for more information.

Cuba Party

On Saturday, March 1st, the Sarnia Riding Club will be hosting "Cuba Night", a Cuban themed evening of music, dancing and food. For the second year in a row, the Riding Club will partner with RAYJON to raise money for RAYJON projects. There will be a Raffle Table set up with various prizes (last year there were 35 plus prizes), tickets to be purchased by those in attendance. All monies from this raffle will be donated to RAYJON. Last year funds raised went to the Eyeglass Program, this year the Haiti Community Development Project will benefit. Those of us who attended last year had a blast; Pam Tourigny at the Riding Club really knows how to throw a party! Tickets are at a premium, as the event is well supported by Riding Club members, but RAYJON members and friends are more than welcome! For tickets or more information, Call Dianne McKillican at 519-862-1963 or Maggy Barnfield at 519-337-0338.

This event comes the day after the RAYJON Membership meeting on Friday February 29th. Don't miss out!!

Dianne McKillican

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppresses go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, ... Here I am ...

Isaiah 58: 6 - 9

Green Living 2007 A Year in Review:

“Living green” at home is a continuation of our desire to support sustainable development. We know that sustainable development is contingent on a healthy environment. We must all be stewards of the environment at a global level. Let's review the year 2007's efforts to live & think green at home

- **Are you reducing your carbon footprint?** Although developing nations have been responsible for only 13% of the world's greenhouse gases, they are predicted to bear up to 29% of the costs of climate change - measured in expected impacts on agriculture, water resources, ecosystem disruption, & catastrophic weather risks.



November 2007 - Haiti also is making strides to help the environment

- **Tis the season please don't idle.** Idling for more than 10 seconds wastes more fuel than turning off & restarting your engine. Have you stopped idling even while chatting in a car? Still using drive throughs?
- **Have you looked into purchasing green electricity?** Check out Bullfrog Power's website www.bullfrogpower.com an Ontario Energy Board licensed, WWF partnered electricity vendor selling electricity generated from wind & low impact hydro sources. Two of the windmills outside of Forest Ontario exist to meet Bullfrog Power customers' demand - this is getting exciting!
- **How does your dinner plate look?** Are you eating locally? seasonally? organically? meat free?
- **How goes your adventure in sustainable transportation?** This is a tough one! Try being car free one day a week. Trips of less than 5 km don't allow an engine to reach its peak operating temperature, meaning that fuel consumption & exhaust emissions are significantly higher on these trips especially in the winter!
- **Have you joined the carbon neutral movement?** Check out Planetair (<http://planetair.ca/>), Canada's first gold standard carbon offset vendor. All monies are directed to sustainable community development projects related to renewable energy & energy efficiency (i.e. electricity from biomass in India, micro hydropower in Indonesia).
- **Are you 'greening' your gift giving practices?** Do your gifts make the planet a better place?

Debra McGill

Guest Speaker at our membership meeting on February 29th

I have two daughters, both of whom were privileged to go on RAYJON Awareness trips, Jamie to the Dominican and Violet to Haiti.

I have been the student minister at the Courtright and the Sixth Line Pastoral Charge for almost ten years now, 8 years of which I was attending school while working full time. For four years I have commuted to Toronto to attend Emmanuel Theological College. I will receive my Masters of Divinity on May 15th, 2008 and on May 24th I will be ordained as a United Church minister.

I spent my 8-month internship in Botswana where I was attached to three separate, though related places: Kgolagano College, a “wall-less” theological College, going out into the villages and prisons to teach, Trinity Church, and Tscholefelong, a street children's recovery program run by the Botswana Council of Churches

RAYJON has been a pivotal part of my faith journey. I got involved with RAYJON by participating in two Habitat for Humanity/RAYJON working trips to Nicaragua. As a result of those trips and the people I met, RAYJON provided me the opportunity for a life changing experience and was very much a part of my call into ministry. Though I have always supported and worked for the needs of those “in my own backyard”, I am an advocate for those who suffer around the world; both of my churches have a Canadian Foodgrains Bank growing project, and I was privileged to go to India and Bangladesh with Canadian Foodgrains Bank.