



Share Care RAYJON

Redbud Success!

It all started with a dream, and the desire and need to share it. John DeGroot, co-owner of DeGroot's Nurseries, has wanted for years to blanket the Sarnia-Lambton area with the Redbud tree, which blooms spectacularly in May. The Sarnia-Lambton area is the northernmost area where this tree grows and John felt that large numbers of these trees would put us "on the map" in many ways. To this end, he had 8,000 Redbud seedlings planted by his growers - 8000! - that he planned to give away. But he wanted more than simple beauty - he wanted to work in conjunction with a local group or organization; he would supply the year old trees and the group could use it as a fund raiser. He then approached RAYJON in the Fall of 2007 and asked us if this could be of any benefit to us? The answer was a resounding YES! RAYJON's Community Development Project in St. Marc Haiti has made a concerted effort in the past three years with reforestation and many trip participants have seen for themselves the three tree nurseries there and the areas where special efforts have been initiated. Our goal - a bold one - is to plant one million trees in our area of concern - one million trees! Deforestation in Haiti is a leading environmental problem and has been for centuries. Compounding the problem is the heartbreaking fact that any remaining trees of any consequence are harvested when they are mere saplings to make charcoal for cooking purposes. Obviously, John's offer was a stupendous one for RAYJON.

The plan was simple - John would supply the trees, one per household, waiving the growing costs, RAYJON would cover the cost of mailing out the promotional Redbud post card delivered to most of the Sarnia Lambton area and our volunteers would be in charge of handing out the trees at the Nursery. The time frame was set for early June - 6th to the 14th - and RAYJON formed a committee to run the event. The committee had two main focuses - volunteers and promotion/education about RAYJON's tree program in Haiti. The local paper, the Sarnia Observer, and the Blackburn Radio Station were incredibly supportive in helping to get the story out about this joint venture. Everyone was made aware of the opportunity to not only help beautify the Sarnia Lambton area, but also to help out RAYJON's efforts in Haiti with a donation.

The results are staggering - almost 4800 trees were handed out and over \$28,000 was raised for RAYJON. None of us could have ever predicted this kind of response. Many people worked hard for this event, both in the front lines and behind the scenes, for months before the event. But special mention must go to both Dianne Visser at DeGroot's for her expertise in marketing skills and advice and to our own Ryan DeVries, who was in charge of volunteers. Ryan spent every waking, working hour at DeGroot's during the event organizing all the volunteers and being the constant face of RAYJON to the Sarnia-Lambton community. Ryan has at least a hundred stories to tell about the people who donated to RAYJON in the 9 days of the event, but this one's a classic. Our display boards told everyone that \$10 would plant 10 trees in Haiti, using this example to show how far the money would go. One elderly woman came up to Ryan with both fists clenched - in both of her

hands she had a hundred dollar bill. She asked "Is this enough to plant a tree in Haiti?"

Thank you, John DeGroot. Thank you, the Sarnia-Lambton community who supported the event far beyond our wildest expectations. Here's an excerpt from an email from John to the Redbud committee, two days after it was finished. I think it says it all.

".....Without getting emotional, which is pretty tough to express over email, I must say, this joint venture has been one of the most significant "feel good" events of my life. I have said earlier that everyone benefits with this unique endeavor. Haiti gets more trees, Lambton County gets pinker, and all the folks associated with RAYJON get broader smiles. Halleluiah. John"

Dianne McKillican

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Coming Events

RAYJON SHARE CARE

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Our Vision

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

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Maggy Barnfield
Dianne McKillican
Jim Newton

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.



Canadian International
Development Agency Agence canadienne de
développement international

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Membership meeting and A.G.M.

Friday, September 26th 7.30pm

at Sacred Heart Church meeting room.

Chairperson's annual report, Financial Director's report,
Election of officers for the next 12 months and

Guest Speaker

Everyone welcome

Information meeting for 2009 RAYJON Awareness trips

Sunday, October 5th 2 – 4pm

at Sacred Heart Church meeting room.

For anyone interested in participating in a
RAYJON Awareness trip in 2009.

All your questions will be answered,

and all the information you'll need to make a decision will be
given.

NO commitment is required at this meeting!

Interviews for trip participants (by appointment)

Saturday & Sunday 18th & 19th October

For those who have committed to participate in an Awareness
trip, a deposit will be required at this time.



*Mary Anne & Ryan crossing one of the rivers on the way to RAYJON's clinic
in Gilbert during the 2008 Awareness trip to Haiti*

RAYJON Fall Fair

Saturday, September 20, 2008

Sacred Heart School

Lecaron off Cathcart

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

RAFFLE - FOUR EXCELLENT PRIZES
including a 10ct gold necklace worth \$1400

**Third World crafts- Home Accents - Den for Men
Books - Card Shop - RAYJON Gift Cards
"Green Table" - Baking & Preserves - Frozen Soups
"Take a Chance Table" - "Tombola"**

Stuff for Kids!

Toys & Games
Fish Pond - catch a fish & win a prize!
Candy Floss
Popcorn

Something for all ages!

Fair Trade Coffee & Barbecue

Redbud Week



Almost 5000 Redbud saplings distributed

RAYJON's annual barbecue in June



Many thanks to our hosts: Dave, Linda & Meagan

RAYJON's Eyeglass Program Report

Bayside Mall Workshop – We have just completed our 13th eyeglass workshop and the first at our new location in Bayside Mall, Sarnia. Our thanks to the management and staff of the Mall for accommodating us in many ways. Our group of 70 volunteers processed 5232 pairs of eyeglasses to be added to our inventory. These glasses had already been washed & sorted by volunteers who meet on alternate Mondays from September until June, under the direction of Br. Patrick. Charlie Oxley continues pick-up of donated glasses from collection points around Sarnia. Other glasses arrive from various points around Canada & the USA. Swee Concisom & Trudy Kennedy finish the preparation by reading the lenses. Then they are ready for the workshop. Special thanks to the Sydenham Lions Club who sent us 1000 pairs, already cleaned & with the RX read.

Haiti – We had our 9th clinic in Haiti in April and had no problems at Customs this year! Our team of 7 performed 416 vision tests and dispensed a record 370 pairs of glasses. Our team donated funds to arrange a consultation with a doctor for 5 patients. RAYJON's Field Director, Dieudonne, and her staff assisted & looked after all our needs. One afternoon at the close of the clinic, we travelled to Gilbert to see the newly renovated clinic and laboratory. It is the only medical facility in the area and serves 30, 000 people. Funds for some of the equipment was supplied by Sarnia Rotary and lab equipment was donated by Bluewater Health in Sarnia.

Guatemala – A team of 23 conducted a clinic in Mixco, Guatemala in November 2007. On the first day our clinic was held in a tented area in the central park as the building we were to use was not available. It was a great way to advertise the clinic and by noon we had to close registration as over 200 were in line. The next day, we moved into a school, which had its own challenges. We examined 869 patients, dispensed 671 pairs of glasses, had 76 pairs made on our return and made 54 referrals for treatment. Special thanks to Al Holland of Holland Accu-Optical, Dianne Chevalier of Essilor Canada for assisting with glasses that were made up, Drs. Chris & Darrel Stewart of Chatham, Dr. Gail Tanner and staff of Petrolia, Dr. Bruce & Sheila Andrews of St. Mary's, all loyal supporters for several years. Alcon Canada continues to supply drops for all our clinics.

In 2004, we held an Eyeglass Clinic in Puerta Cabenza, Nicaragua. When the community was hit by Hurricane Felix in September 2007, we were concerned. Theresa van Koeverden, a member of the 2004 team, approached St. Christopher's Church Mission Committee, and thanks to their generosity, we were able to send funds for re-building.

Our thanks to all who donate funds, collect glasses, travel on teams or help in any way. It takes many hands and much energy to make this program work. The dedication of our volunteers is truly amazing. Some of our patients pat our heads and say, "Bless you" and so I pass on their blessing to you because without you we couldn't make these blessings of better vision possible.

Joanne Atkinson, Director of the RAYJON Eyeglass Program

*Reed, Martha, Sheila,
Den & Bro. Patrick
at the Bayside Mall workshop.*



RAYJON's Development Thinking

RAYJON first became interested in "Development" 20 years ago. At that time, we supported small projects in primary education and rudimentary health care in the rural area of Haut de St Marc, Haiti which had been identified by the women's groups of the region.

Today, those fledgling initiatives have blossomed into 2 major CIDA-funded projects in the Haut de St Marc region covering a comprehensive range of initiatives: Education of children (pre-school – Grade 13) and adults; Preventative & Curative Health Care for the whole region; Good Governance (including Social Justice & Gender Equity); Agricultural Development; Micro-finance; Reforestation; Alternative Energy; and Organizational Development. In addition, our Urban Community Project in Cap-Haitien is shaping into a major undertaking. Those involved in taking groups to the Dominican Republic have been talking about the prospects of initiating a project there.

As reported in the February 2008 edition of the RAYJON newsletter, a small group of us visited Save A Family Plan (SAFP) Community Development projects in India in January 2008. It was an eye-opening trip for me, realizing there is much more to be learned about "Development".

On returning to Canada, I asked the RAYJON Board the same questions I pondered in India – How serious are we about "Development"? How serious do we want to be? If we are truly serious as an organization about "Development" then we need to be willing to invest in resources to help sustain us on this journey for the next 10 years and beyond.

By hiring Jen Lajoie as our first Project Coordinator in April, the RAYJON Board was making a commitment to provide a dedicated full-time, knowledgeable resource.

Then in May, the Board agreed to dedicate our Annual Retreat to the topic of "Development". We invited Lesley Porter (SAFP's Executive Director) and Dieudonne Batrville (RAYJON's Field Director in Haiti) to be the key note presenters. They inspired those on the Retreat with their insights and stories and helped us to a deeper understanding of "Development". We clearly have a way to go as an organization here in Sarnia, learning how better to inter-relate with our partners in Haiti.

Since the Retreat in May, Jen Lajoie and I have visited the ICDP project area in Haiti and witnessed the introduction by Dieudonne of some of the development tools we saw in India. It was wonderful to see the enthusiasm of the Haitian men & women as they learned the new techniques.

Then in June, Denise Labelle (RAYJON's CIDA officer) visited Sarnia. Not only was it an opportunity to tell her about the excellent progress being made in the St Marc region, but it was also a chance to talk about our future hopes. It was agreed to request CIDA to conduct an institutional assessment of our organization here in Canada and in Haiti. We believe this assessment is going to be a definitive step in our "Development" journey. Watch this space!!!

John Barnfield – President & Project Director in Canada



*Dieudonne Batrville & Lesley Porter
at the 2008 RAYJON Retreat*

Struggle for Justice

She smiled shyly as she said it. “You seem like a nice guy, but you’re just like all the others. They come up here, say they’re interested in us, then they go away and we never see them again.” It was spoken with gentleness and respect, but it stung me to the heart. I was one of a handful of whites (Kabluna) in the Inuit community of Arviat, in Nunavut – a young priest filled with enthusiasm and idealism. What hit me was the hurt and betrayal her words bespoke, however gentle of feeling that she and her people were mere objects in someone else’s plan, pawns in a bigger game. “But surely you don’t mean me,” I thought. “I’m not like that . . . I won’t leave and forget.” And I began to realize that maybe it wasn’t about me; I represented something bigger and uglier, and I was a part of it. I represented the people who had broken promises over and over again, whose interest was short-term, sometimes selfish, and often quickly forgotten, people who moved on and left people like Susan behind, convinced that they had little real value for the outsiders who flew up from the South to study their culture and work in their institutions. It was a brutal and heart-breaking realization, even when I came back again and saw the surprise in their eyes that I had returned, if only for a little while. And it taught me that solidarity cannot be a “flash in the pan” kind of interest, must be more than the faddish “issue of the week” we all know so well from newspapers and TV. To be real, solidarity implies a relationship, a desire to really walk with, to get to know, to understand, to suffer alongside. It involves a compassion deeper than a campaign or a petition drive. True solidarity must touch us on the level of the heart, must challenge us to love justice for the long haul, must help us change and be different, must lead us to embrace, not just issues and ideas, but the real, concrete people whose lives are intertwined with ours, because we are a single family . . . and that commitment is not optional.

Fr. Murray Watson

Taken from the “Save a Family Plan” book, “Struggle for Justice... Voices I Don’t Want to Hear?”

Condolences Fran Barker’s family on the occasion of her death on May 18th. Fran was an Awareness trip participant in 2004 and had hoped to return to Haiti to volunteer at the Nos Petits Frères et Sœurs orphanage until ill health prevented it.

Congratulations to Ange and Kris Coté on the birth of their first child, Evan François on June 23rd. Both Ange and Kris participated in the 2006 Awareness trip to Haiti.

Condolences to Jan and Trevor Jordan on the tragic death in July of their two and a half year old grand daughter, Reilly Grace, after a short and courageous battle with leukemia.

Condolences to Therese St.Jules, Clem and Paul Germain and their families on the death of their sister, Marie Claire Bernard, in Ottawa in July. They have been participants in Eyeglass Clinics for several years.

Congratulations to playwright Denyse Regan, whose play, “The Thirteenth One” is to be produced at the Manitoba Theatre Centre in the 2009/10 season. Denyse and Larry were participants in the 2002 Awareness trip to Haiti. In 2005, after 16 years of work, Denyse’s play was performed at the Blythe Festival.

Happy Birthday and many thanks to Jerry O’Neill. Jerry recently celebrated a significant birthday, and instead of the traditional party with family, he and Pat invited immediate family members to fries in Hamilton (the equivalent to fries under the bridge here in Sarnia) and in lieu of gifts, to make a donation to RAYJON. And Jerry proudly gave a cheque for \$345 to RAYJON's work in Haiti. Thanks Jerry!

Book Recommendation

In November 2003, Dr. James Orbinski came to Sarnia at the invitation of RAYJON and the Y International Development committee, to speak to us about his work. Dr. Orbinski helped establish the Canadian chapter of Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) and was the organization’s president when it was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1999. Dr. Orbinski has now written a book, “An Imperfect Offering” (Doubleday, Canada) in which he relates his incredible experiences as a doctor and a humanitarian working in a number of war torn countries including Somalia, Afganistan, Sudan, Kosovo and Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. I have read a number of accounts of the genocide in Rwanda but never one filled with so much humility, courage, compassion and empathy. Dr. Orbinski is an exceptional human being! His book is well worth reading and will fill you with faith in the human spirit. I feel privileged to have met him and to have shaken his hand.

Maggy Barnfield