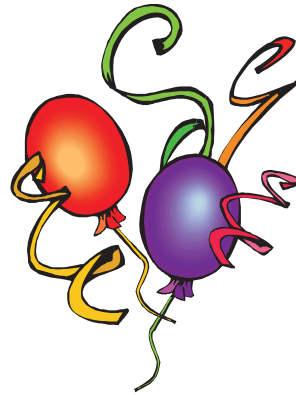




# SHARE CARE RAYJON

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY RAYJON!



The RAYJON community is now celebrating its 20th year anniversary! January 23th, 1986 marks the actual day when the RAYJON organization became a reality. Who would have thought two decades ago that this small team of volunteers would lay the foundation for a thriving, successful organization? In the beginning, John Barnfield and Ray Wyrzykowski could never have imagined that things would have turned out the way they have. This year, we stand back and salute those who made it possible with their dedication, commitment and love.

Here's an update on the many ways we plan to commemorate this special year...

**Anniversary Dinner Gala:** This exciting community event is scheduled for Saturday, June 10, 2006 at 6 pm at the Sarnia Golf & Curling Club. Tickets are \$50 each and will be available on March 1st. Please contact Maggy Barnfield (519-337-0338) for more information.

**Gift Card Fundraiser:** This gift idea bestows monies for projects in Haiti. Your gift investment, which will support a number of life-supporting projects, will keep on giving for those in need.

**Anniversary Trip:** An anniversary trip to Haiti, with a unique itinerary, is planned for April.

**Tree planting:** RAYJON has begun the process of establishing 3 tree nurseries in the Project area, involving members of the communities and students from the RAYJON schools. Participates in the anniversary trip will also be "digging in" to help with the planting.

**Media Stories:** RAYJON will have a special insert issued by The Observer, as well as coverage in various other media outlets. Stay tuned for feature articles and stories.

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# Coming Events

## RAYJON SHARE CARE

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### Our Vision

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

### Board of Directors

#### Executive Committee

<b>Chairperson</b>	<i>John Barnfield</i>
<b>Vice-chairperson</b>	<i>Peter Westfall</i>
<b>Financial Dir. - Treasurer</b>	<i>Armando Notte</i>
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<b>Secretary</b>	<i>Maureen Morkin Debbie Austin</i>

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**Work Groups** *Jim Leliveld*

**Eyeglass Program** *Joanne Atkinson*

**Community Dev't Project** *Armando Notte*

**Urban Dev't Project** *Jennifer Vansteenkiste*

**Education** *Elizabeth Soltis*

**Member & Public Engagement** *Dianne McKillican  
Maggy Barnfield*

**Medical** *Dr. Glen Maddison*

**Spiritual** *Br. Anthony  
Fr. Tom Lever*

#### Members at Large

*Ryan Devries, Kathy Smith, Bob Topliffe  
Colleen Rapaich & Mike Voisey*

### Newsletter Editorial Board

*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 meetings

Friday, February 24th 7.30pm  
at Sacred Heart Church meeting room  
Drs. Glen & Monique Dostaler/Maddison will share their experiences of working in the slums of Port-au-Prince with Fr./Dr. Rick Frechette.  
Come join us & hear some amazing stories.  
*Everyone welcome.*

Friday April 21st 7.30 pm  
at Sacred Heart Church meeting room

### RAYJON Board meeting

Thursday, March 30th 7.00pm  
Community Living offices, Exmouth St., Sarnia.  
Non Board members wishing to attend the meeting can call John Barnfield at 337-0337 for approval.

### Trips

#### Awareness trip to the D.R.

March 10th - 17th  
Leaders: Ben McKillican & Theresa Van Koeverden  
**Awareness trip to Haiti**

March 13th - 20th  
Leaders: Dianne McKillican & Maggy Barnfield  
**Lambton College Student Nurses' trip to the D.R.**

March 5th - 13th  
Leader: Marilyn Couture  
**Georgian College Student Nurses' trip to the D.R.**  
April 19th - 27th & April 27th - May 6th  
Leader: Sylvia Vanderweg

#### Eyeglass Clinic to RAYJON Project, Haiti, in May

Leader: Joanne Atkinson  
Work Group to RAYJON Project, Haiti in May  
Leaders: Jim Leliveld & Bob Topliffe

**RAYJON Annual Retreat:** April 4th - 11th  
Call John Barnfield at 337-0338 for information

#### RAYJON 20th Anniversary trip to Haiti

April 4th - 11th  
Leaders: John & Maggy Barnfield

## Congratulations, Marilyn Couture!

As stated on the front page of the Sarnia Observer on December 30th, 2005, RAYJON's very own Marilyn Couture, has made Mayor Mike Bradley's 2005 Honour List. Congratulations Marilyn! The honour list is a tribute to local individuals who are creating better communities and societies for all. Marilyn has been instrumental in organizing and leading RAYJON trips for student nurses for the past eight years. She has introduced many student nurses to the needs of those in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica. Marilyn is a nursing professor at Lambton College.

I recently had a chance to talk to Marilyn about her involvement with RAYJON and her many trip experiences. It all began when Marilyn visited a booth at the volunteer fair at the Lambton Mall in 1993 where she gathered some information about RAYJON. At that time, Marilyn had been interested in possibly participating on a trip similar to those RAYJON had to offer. Marilyn's inaugural trip was in 1994 and since that time, she has been to Jamaica once, Haiti once and the Dominican Republic eight times. The first RAYJON trip that Marilyn led was in 1998 and the participants were mostly student nurses. She has organized and guided trips for one hundred and twenty nine individuals for which sixty-seven have been student nurses. Participants over the years have included diploma students from the United States, registered nurses, registered practical nurses, Bachelor of Science student nurses and other health care professionals. Marilyn is an advocate for RAYJON and is actively sharing her stories through presentations at Lambton College. Her most recent presentation was targeted to a group of early childhood education program students at the college.

It was my pleasure talking to Marilyn about some of her experiences. I asked her to tell me her favourite story. For anyone who has travelled, you will agree, that this question is a particularly difficult one to answer. Marilyn told me that she has many, many wonderful experiences and rather than telling me about a specific one, she wanted to share with me the details of a friendship that she has established over the years. "Fernando is a Haitian gentleman living in the Dominican Republic who looks forward to seeing us each time we travel to the Bateys in the Dominican. I also look forward to seeing him, and I am emotional each time we meet." The Bateys are one of the sites where the group sets up their open air clinics. In addition to the joy of meeting up with her friend, Marilyn took the time to describe to me in great detail the hard work that greeted Fernando each and every day. Fernando cuts down sugar cane, prepares it for market and is paid according to the weight of the sugar cane. It is most evident that Marilyn has great enthusiasm, passion and genuine concern for each person she travels with and meets along the way.

Marilyn will return to the Dominican Republic in March with a group of student nurses & staff, to visit with her friend Fernando and make many new friends. A heartfelt 'Thank You' goes out to Marilyn Couture for all the quality of life improvements that she and the nurses' groups have made to all the individuals they have encountered over the years.

*"There is a light in this world... a healing spirit much stronger than any darkness we may encounter. We sometimes lose sight of this force... where there is suffering, too much pain. And suddenly a spirit will emerge.... through the lives of ordinary people and answer in extraordinary ways."* Mother Teresa.

Ryan DeVries



Marilyn Couture

## **RAYJON Eyeglass Clinic in Corozal, Belize - November 2005**

For over 50 years I have taken my glasses for granted. I had my eyes checked, received a prescription and went to the store to choose a new pair of glasses. Medical insurance even paid for the test. Thus my eyesight was corrected. As a member of the eyeglass clinic I also had my eyes opened.

With a team of 24 we had a chance to see over 1200 patients and dispense almost 1000 pairs of glasses, plus sun and safety glasses; all of this in a matter of 5 days. As rookie on the team I made myself available for whatever job I could do. I also wanted to learn as much as possible. Everyone was willing to teach me and I appreciate all the help I received.

The clinic ran like a well-oiled machine. Everything found its place, even though the quarters were somewhat cramped. I especially have great admiration for the fitters who were outside in the heat all week doing a very challenging job.

After setting up the clinic we started work on Monday morning. When we arrived at 7.30am there was already a long line-up of people waiting to have their eyes checked. Many of them were elderly, and they had been standing there since 5.00am. Not a word of complaint was heard and no one jumped the line. People who did not know each other were happy to help explain to others what was expected of them. This went on for 5 consecutive days. We worked hard to try and see as many people as possible. In the end we still had to send many of them away, and this was heartbreaking.



*Br Patrick with boxes of eyeglasses*



*Dr Bruce Andrews and patient*



*Sheila Tierney & Sheila Andrews fitting & testing patients with new glasses.*

Older people were so happy with the reading glasses they received. "I can now read my Bible again" some of them said. When I tested the long range vision of one young man he had no idea that I was pointing at the chart on the wall just 10 ft. away. That's how bad his eyesight was. After he was fitted with glasses he could see his wife for the very first time! Students were happy that they could see and learn better in school. And, of course, teenagers are the same the world over; they want to be 'in style'.

There were also sad outcomes. People who came in the hope that they would be able to see better, only to be told after their examination that they could not be helped with glasses to improve their vision. Many farmers were found to have cataracts from working in the sun all day.

I have been on work trips before, but this was my first experience with the eyeglass clinic. I am always humbled by the courage and stamina of people who live in such harsh environments. Their needs are many and yet they always find a smile and a hug to make us feel better. These people are also 'dangerous' ... they steal your heart.

Then I arrive home again, and I appreciate once more what I have often taken for granted. I feel privileged to have been part of this great team, and I hope to join them again.

*Monique VanderSchot*



*Fr. Tom Lever testing a patient's near vision.*



*Patient with glasses*

*JOHN and RAY  
on their first visit to Haiti  
in 1985.*



## **RAYJON's New & Exciting Initiative**

As a way of commemorating RAYJON's 20th Anniversary, we began with the idea of planting some much needed trees in the Community Development Project area of Haiti and to incorporate environmental classes for the students attending the RAYJON schools. Once we shared this idea with Dieudonne and her staff, they were very excited and expanded on it. Our small commemorative idea has now exploded into the building of three - yes three - tree nurseries! The ground work is already underway in Barbe, Pinson and Gilbert. RSCH (RAYJON Share Care Haiti) has a nursery technician and environmental team already in place, who Dieudonne describes as "a great group of young people who are ready and eager to participate." The project has the overwhelming support of the local communities. They are off to a fabulous start with 5,000 seed bags. The nurseries first 'babies' will be mangoes, chadeques (grapefruit), nimes (forest trees), cachiman (fruit tree), flamboyant, gommier, lemon and bread fruit trees. These varieties were chosen because they are of most interest and value to the children and adults. We are hoping some of the faster growing varieties will be ready for planting when the Awareness and 20th Anniversary Groups are there in March and April. One of the main focuses for the Anniversary Trip will be tree planting with the students. We can hardly wait to dig in!

*Kathy Smith - Member of RAYJON Board & 20th Anniversary Committee*

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## **Urban Development Project News**

"What does it mean to do sustainable development and witness to God's all consuming love for us? Sustainable development is change in a situation which is lasting and which reproduces itself. As for witnessing to God's love for us, it is the Haitian people who do it best. Every description of some seemingly insurmountable difficulty, such as paying the rent, is followed by the expression 'Bondie kone' ... 'God knows' or 'it is God's hands'.

So, what sustainable development has your donation to our work produced in Cap-Haitien in the last year? My moments of frustration and discouragement have made me reflect long and hard on this. The nutrition centre continues to feed and medically care for between 120 and 150 children at any given time, until they are healthy and have reached the stage of growth and development for their age. After this, they come to the centre each month to be weighed and to receive a supplement to insure that they continue to stay healthy. This year we have been using a method of treating malnutrition which has been used extensively with success in Malawi. It is a mixture of peanut butter, milk powder, sugar, oil & vitamin powder in set amounts according to the child's weight. It is very good for children who live far from the centre or for those who have no one to bring them each day. Children who are healthy in the early years of life will be stronger and be able to learn in school, enabling them to contribute more to their society later in life.

This year we helped 165 children start or return to school. They range from pre-schoolers to the last year in secondary school. Most of the children are the first in their family to receive an education. Some of the young people we've helped have already gone on to study carpentry, electricity, plumbing, computers, secretarial science and sewing. One has entered a religious community.

Since 1994 we have started 212 women in small businesses with the help of an organization in New York called 'Trickle Up'. One hundred and six of these businesses are still active, and we have recently received a grant to start another 50 women in business. An integral part of the 'Trickle Up' program is the learning of business skills and the participation in a community bank focused on paying the rent and helping to send the children to school. The cost of living is broken down into small units so that the woman is aware of how much rent she is paying each week and how much she must save each week in order to receive a subsidy to help with the children's schooling.

When I listen to the international news I occasionally hear reports that such and such a country has given so many millions of dollars in aid to Haiti. I always wonder what has been done with it! When I am discouraged by the situation in the country, all I have to think of a particular woman I have talked to that day, or a child I have held and then set free to run, laughing, across the room, and I am no longer discouraged. With your help we are doing sustainable development in Haiti one woman and one child at a time."

*Sister Rosemary in Cap-Haitien*

## Members' Messages

"Thank you most warmly for your (news) letters that keep me connected to your wonderful work for God's kingdom. I am now living in our retirement house which is on the property of our Halifax school. At 84, I suppose I belong here, but I actually moved here to be nearer the school where I do some tutoring. I am also nearer Hope Cottage, a place where people in need can come for meals. I work there once a week.

Today I read a little word that I send you as my Christmas prayer: "To have faith in God is to have faith that God is with us. I pray that God may be with you all this Christmas wherever you are."

*Sr. Margaret Connolly - Halifax.*

"I continue to marvel at all your group has accomplished. Twenty years of most fruitful efforts. Every RAYJON Share Care report is a joy to receive and read. God is surely blessing your works. Peace and a joy filled Christmas."

*Conrad Wyrzykowski - brother of co-founder, Ray - Manitoba.*

"To all the dedicated workers of RAYJON, Christmas blessings & peace to all human kind"

*Al Churchill - Sarnia.*

"I wish you all a very blessed Christmas and good wishes for your projects in 2006."

*Marie Buchanan - Hamilton, ON.*

"RAYJON ... God bless and merry Christmas. Keep up the good work."

*Tom Francis - London, ON.*

"Thank you so much for the frequent updates on the work in Haiti. Even though I haven't been able to attend meetings, my interest and prayers are always with you."

*Eileen Wilson - Sarnia.*

"To our friends at RAYJON, we wish you all blessings for all the amazing work you do. I know how important this labour of love is as I have participated in 2 amazing journeys to Haiti in 1987 & 1993. Keep up all the beautiful work you do here and beyond. RAYJON has such a wonderful spirit and it is a gift to be a part of such a great organization."

*Marianne VanWerde Bailly & Tim Bailly - Oakville, ON*



**Condolences** to Carol Ann (Work Group to Peru in 1988) & Gary Wright on the death of Carol Ann's mother, Lorraine Case on January 4th, 2006.

**Condolences** to Sheila & John Tiernay on the death of Sheila's sister, Laura, on January 18th, 2006. Sheila & John are members of the RAYJON Eyeglass Team.

**Condolences** to Edna & U.B. Weber on the death of Edna's sister, Melinda Sauder, on January 21st, 2006. The Webers are supporters of Hope for Haiti.

**Condolences** to the family & friends on the death of Fr. Mike Langan, retired pastor of St. Mary's Church in Tillsonburg. Fr. Mike was a long time supporter of RAYJON.

**Condolences** to the Klauke family on the death of their daughter & sister, Elizabeth. (Awareness Trip to Haiti 1989)

## **A Medical Mission in Yemen**

In November 2005, I had an amazing opportunity to participate in a three week humanitarian trip to Yemen, a country located south of Saudi Arabia. Along with three other Canadians, I traveled to the Middle East to provide training to groups of doctors throughout the country. While a nurse and midwife offered neo-natal workshops, I had the pleasure of co-facilitating leadership development workshops for over 100 health care professionals. The trip was organized by Bridges, a small NGO based in Calgary which has cultivated long-standing partnerships within the Yemeni medical community. Logistical support and financial sponsorship were generously donated by Nexen, a Canadian oil and gas company with a strong presence in Yemen.

In spite of the translation challenges, the workshops were well-received. Participants seemed genuinely eager, if not hungry for information, support and a chance to connect with their colleagues. Many of the doctors and directors reciprocated their gratitude by giving us tours of their hospitals and community health clinics. While the conditions reveal scarcity in most cases, the staff deliver effective patient care with uncanny creativity. As our hosts often said; "They have learned to create miracles; making something out of nothing." Overall, I found the Yemeni people to be dedicated, kind, open-minded, generous and incredibly hospitable.

Yemen, I discovered, is well-known for many things. Not only is this country the originator of the Arabic language, but also the home of coffee. For hundreds of years, the infamous silk route weaved itself throughout the land, bridging the Far East with Africa. The markets or "souks" still house many of the goods that were traded long ago; items such as brightly coloured cloth, spices, honey, semi-precious stones, jewelry, perfume, hand-woven carpets and silver. The experience was a feast for the senses! And, the landscape is breathtakingly beautiful. Dotted throughout the country are wadi's or lush green valleys, draped by mountains of desert stone carved throughout the millennia. It reminded me of the majestic Grand Canyon.

As I anticipated, men and women seem to live separate lives. We even attended a wedding celebration - with one party for only women and one for only men! The women I befriended spoke often of their suffering in being restricted in many ways. They talked openly to us about their frustration in not being able to leave their homes after 6 pm, their indignation in not being allowed to work in some professions or run for certain government positions and their struggle in balancing work and family needs. The latter issue was especially evident since many Yemeni families have 8 - 14 children.

Yemen seems to be burgeoning forth into modernity and I think the West will be hearing more about this fascinating culture in the years to come.

*Elizabeth Soltis*

## **A Man is Not a Man until .....**

Winston Churchill once said, "Uganda is the Pearl of Africa". This same Uganda was our Hope for Haiti/RAYJON Share Care's group destination to do a build for Habitat for Humanity in November of 2005.

We were 15 Canadians and 2 Americans: we met the 4 other team members in the Entebbe, Uganda airport. These last 4 had been in Malawi the previous 3 weeks, monitoring the Hope for Haiti's previously built feeding centres, checking the water wells, building a Community Centre, making arrangements for a home for Aids victims and visiting friends. They found Malawi facing yet another drought season where the ever-present hunger would lead quickly to starvation. We were met at the airport by Habitat employees and our first stop was the bank to change US dollars into Ugandan Shillings. We felt like instant millionaires as one US dollar equaled 1800 shillings. It took a while getting used to all those zeros! We were then on our way for an 8 hour drive to Bungokho, an area just outside the good-sized city of Mbale, and just off the main highway that runs all the way from Egypt to S. Africa. Here we all stayed in a guest house and traveled daily to the 2 houses that we were building. Three women did the cooking for all 25 of us over charcoal fires. The food was typical for the region: fish, chicken or goat, fried cabbage, rice, boiled banana/plantain, peas and chapatti. The chapattis (like fried tortillas) were excellent with Stuart's maple syrup. They also treated us to a special BBQ feast with goat kabobs and grilled corn on the cob.

This was a Habitat for Humanity trip. Our mission was to build 2 houses, with the home owners as working partners. Both of them were teachers. One had saved for 10 years to buy the land and bricks. The bricks were so overgrown with weeds, we had to dig them out, and a lot of them crumbled in our hands. Working "chain gang style" as we did building the Feeding Centre in Malawi, we passed the bricks from hand to hand from the pile to the house. Many hands DO make light work - the house was completed in 10 days.

The Ugandan people are very friendly and polite. Some are quite tall and they all have excellent posture. Little girls would curtsy when meeting us. Most people spoke English, and the majority are very poor.

Martin, "our" home owner and his wife worked in Kampala and came home with their children on weekends to live with their parents. He explained Ugandan life was this way. All 18 year old boys became men through a tribal circumcision ceremony in the town square. But, he said a man is not REALLY a man until he can provide a home for his family. On the dedication day for the new houses, Martin was the spokesperson chosen to thank all of us who helped with the build. But he was most pleased to say that now, as a home owner himself, he was a REAL man!

*Marilyn Beaubien. This was her 16th RAYJON trip.*