



## Our Project in a Nutshell— Partners in Haiti Literacy: Our First Year

by Sara Mansbach

Rotary District 7750 began this project after a visit to Cange in 2009. A Rotary group visited the library and 6 pre-schools. Several Cange leaders requested that we undertake a project contributing books to the library and schools. The Literacy Chair then presented the project to District 7750 leaders who adopted it. January 2010's earthquake delayed progress by a year.

The First Year Plan adopted in January 2011 will carry out 3 goals: 1) To begin to establish a functioning community library with a paid part-time librarian.

2) To provide 50 Creole and French books in 19 preschool classroom library book bins. 3) To give all four year olds, 520 children total, their very first book (Brian Wildsmith's L'Abecedaire). In the spring District Leadership and several active partners voted to create Partners for Haiti Literacy.

- A steering committee will serve as an informal decision-making board. Volunteers will be sought for these roles:
- **STATESIDE:** Administrative, fundraising, marketing, finance, and volunteers committee members.
- **HAITI:** Work teams in the Central Plateau.
- **ROTARY CLUBS:** worldwide Caribbean Partnership, French speaking countries as partners.

### Partners in Haiti Literacy Journal Entry #1, July 26, 2011

*PDG Becky Faulkner and husband Tom just returned from our district's first Work Visit. This is an excerpt from their first report. Go to our district website at Projects/Literacy for the full report.*

We took hundreds of 1952-1977 reference books off the shelves along with many equally ancient magazines. Never fear, we put them outside the library door and they were all gone in two hours. Lucien, the principal in charge, said that the Haitians were so hungry for books in their homes that copyright dates mattered little to them.

Dada, our librarian in Cange, is a delight. She speaks French, but can speak enough Creole to communicate with the little ones. She speaks very little English. She helped me with my French and I helped her with her English.

Between the two of us we were able to communicate very well. Lucien speaks English very well. . . .

We must find some way to air-condition the library for a number of reasons. First of all, because of the library's location on the corner, every car, truck or motorcycle going by stirs up a huge cloud of dirt. Occasionally helicopters land out in front. Imagine that cloud of dirt. Because the library is open at the top on two sides and because the door must be kept open to allow for ventilation when folks are in the library, you can only imagine how much dirt accumulates on the books, shelves and computers. There are five working computers in there. The computers need to be kept cool for optimal performance.

Imagine that small library space with 20 children, a teacher and a librarian, dirt from the road outside and 5-8 computers running. Jackie Williams—our Haiti liaison—estimates that it could take \$5000 to air condition the space.

While cleaning out the closets we found one jigsaw puzzle. Lucien's three children were visiting that day. They had never seen a jigsaw puzzle and went wild for that one. It was missing four pieces. I would like for us to put some additional puzzles in the library as well.

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**Note: Your club can apply to become a Leader Team. Overview of the Project and other information is on the website. The Leader Club Application Packet can be found at our district website at Projects/Literacy.**