

The Banquet featured food from the islands.



Reflections on Caribbean Partnership

by Sara Mansbach

Rotary Zone 33-34's Caribbean Partnership Celebration held in Reston, Virginia, July 21 -23 beckoned me, so I flew up from Greenville seeking clubs to partner with our Upstate South Carolinians in District 7750's Haiti Literacy project adding books to a village library, 19 schools, and homes in Cange.

As a newcomer, I went with trepidations and a few questions —Will I learn anything new? What exactly happens here? Will any of these strangers lend a hand to our Haiti project?

And here's what happened--

- The first evening, Guy Theodore, one of the most famous Haitians in that country, graciously invited me to dinner. Brief bio: The current District Governor of Haiti, a legendary humanitarian, grew up in relative poverty leaving Haiti for the New York area where he became a colonel in the army and a medical doctor. In the mid-80s, he returned



RI Director John Smarge brought RI greetings.

home and has been responsible for numerous projects including a building a hospital, installing water systems, working in education reform and recently providing leadership to rebuild from the earthquake. He has agreed to assist District 7750 in seeking a solution to our district's need to find a Haitian Rotary Club to partner for a matching grant for a library, school, and family literacy in Cange and

the Central Plateau.

- The sessions on all days featured dynamic speakers on important issues such as HIV/AIDS coordination throughout the region, the Rotary Jaipur Limb Project now underway to provide artificial limbs for Haitian earthquake victims, and the formation of a new Rotary Action Group to function as an informational resource for disaster relief and assistance.

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Guy Theodore, governor of district 7020 that includes Haiti, and JV Vlass, chair of the Carribbean Partnership for zone 33, chatted at a break.

Caribbean Partnership—

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progressing as they should. The funding has come from over 60 countries and hundreds of Rotary clubs and districts around the world. About \$1.3 million of the funding has passed through the Caribbean Partnership as a 501 (c) 3 from the Donor Advised Fund within The Rotary Foundation and other sources. 100% of those funds have been used in Haiti with no administrative costs.

friendships and many times begin with Group Study Exchanges; they build rapport between countries and strengthen ability to share ideas between clubs and districts.

Some districts have designated members as Caribbean Partnership representatives and these attend all CP events! In fact, each District is asked to have a chair for the Caribbean Partnership who will be responsible for the promotion efforts.

I reunited with some folks I'd seen at the Caribbean Partnership Booth at the RI Convention in New Orleans. Then we were acquaintances, now we are friends.

Oh—and hospitality, the Jamaican rum punch was delicious, plantains will now grace my Greenville table, and I hope to hear the high school steel band that entertained us playing next at the RI Convention in Bangkok. I should also mention a dynamite picnic at our host club's home that served as a terrific finale!

For anyone who wants to know what makes Zone 33-34 truly unique, coming to a Caribbean Partnership meeting is a must. It was my privilege to attend.

And there were numerous reports on terrific partner club projects being done between Zones 33-34 clubs on the mainland and clubs on each of the islands in the Caribbean.

(An especially exciting literacy project is taking place at a learning center on the island of La Gonave in the bay of Port Au Prince where children are writing language experience-based stories translated in their first language as booklets that are published and swapped with stories from Puerto Rico and Massachusetts's children.)

These partner clubs provide cultural exchange and develop Rotary relationships and



A Steel Band played dinner and dance music.

The most memorable presentation occurred after a delicious Caribbean Banquet with tropical pork roast, plantains and beans. PRI Director Barry Rassin presented a video with many images of the 53 schools, clinics, and orphanages that have been or are being restored with more than \$5.7 million in funding. The images were collected by the four Account Holders of the Donor Advised Fund who visited Haiti last week to ensure that the projects were

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This meeting is held once a year and alternates between the mainland and one of the islands.