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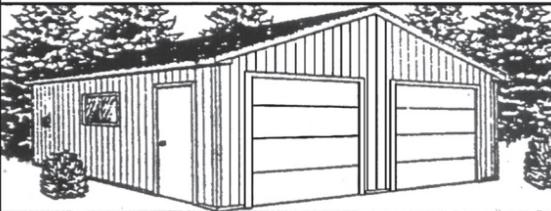
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My Haiti trip

By Wendi Cooper

(This is a portion of an email that Wendi Cooper sent to her family on returning from Haiti in March.)

I wanted to send you all a snippet about my mission trip to Haiti.

My outlook on life has forever been changed and it's hard to explain what I experienced. I know some of you will be gone and are focused on spring break, so I wanted to send you a note before you leave.

When we got off the plane and started heading through the big city of Port-Au-Prince, it appeared as though the earthquake wasn't two years ago, but two weeks ago. All the buildings are leaning or crumbled; there is garbage everywhere; mass humanity everywhere; tents everywhere; children and skinny dogs walking everywhere. The scene was kind of like the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*. The few brown rivers we passed were filled with garbage. Women were washing clothes in it and that is the water they also drink. The people all have a look of hopelessness on their faces until you walk by and smile with a "bonjour," then they smile and are pleased to even be addressed. We never felt frightened as they are, for the most part, very kind people. They're just extremely beat down by the corrupt government, lack of any jobs, and no hope.

We drove an hour up into the mountains to another city called Kenscoff where a couple from our church is building their second orphanage. One example of the corrupt government is that the orphanage is now at a standstill as there is a container (which is like an enormous dumpster) that they shipped with building supplies that is "stuck" at the docks. You have to pay off the port authority for the container to be released or have connections.

So this couple from our church sold their company six years ago and did really well. They had no kids and decided to start an early retirement and golfed in Scottsdale, and had a place in Aspen to ski, traveled, you name it. When that all got old and meaningless after two years, they went on a missions trip to Haiti. They ended up adopting three kids, sold their "stuff" and committed to saving some of the children of Haiti — which is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. The lady is back and forth to Haiti and the husband is working on legislation that would expedite international adoption, as it takes two years and \$25,000 to adopt one kid. There are 350,000 kids that need to be adopted in Haiti.

The kids we saw are not in the new orphanage yet (with a community center going up next to it to teach the kids a trade). They are in an old abandoned, half-crumbled from the earthquake home with 40 kids, no running water, a hole for a bathroom, cribs and cots stacked side by side. They eat noodles for breakfast and rice with black beans late afternoon. The water they have has E-Coli in it. They wear the same clothes every day and wear a coat, which they won't part with on a 90-degree day because it is their covers at night. The few women who watch over them now make them cook, take care of the little kids, and don't love on them at all. Kathi Juntunen, who is the lady I spoke of, is working on legal documents to get the kids qualified to move them into the new orphanage. She has new

staff ready to work once it's opened.

We worked on the site every morning, walked a half-mile up the road to pick up the kids and bring them back to the site for an afternoon of play, snacks and Vacation Bible School. It was so awesome. No matter what age (3 to 14) the kids all just wanted to be held, hugged, hands held, anything. We really couldn't speak much to them as the language is Creole. Physically and emotionally they are all about three years behind from the neglect. They are all so lean, and the boys are so ripped from working and playing soccer. We had an interpreter who would interpret as we read each small group a Bible story. Those kids all ages sat absolutely riveted. Never moving, never blinking, never talking. They were so hungry for the hope they heard of.

When it was time for snack, we gave them two cookies and a drink. They waited to be told they could eat it, sat quietly and never — not one of them — ever asked for more. On one occasion the bigger boys were outside playing soccer and all sweaty with their long sleeves and coats on. I went and gave them each a big glass of our water, and they downed it in two seconds.



We each had our buddies and I had three boys who stuck with me (imagine that). The 10, 12 and 13 year olds were more like 6, 8, and 9 year olds. They ran up to me every day, carried my backpack, and held my hand or hugged me most of the time. Whenever we were walking down the road and a motorcycle would start coming, they'd pull me to the side of the road. They were so sweet. They weren't even in the system to be adopted, so it's not like they were working me over. They were just hungry for lovin'.

So leaving them the last day broke my hardened heart. Everyone cried. I want to go back and take Bill and the girls, as it's so hard to explain the experience. I'd love everyone to go as a big group — maybe spring break next year. Our kids would forever be changed after seeing that.

I'm having a hard time trying to re-acclimate here. So many things just don't matter any more, and I think about the Haitian kids every time I'm making the girls a meal or tucking them into bed, or when they're bickering over nothing. I'm praying for patience ... and so thankful that God allowed us to be born in the U.S.

Send up your prayers of thanks for all we've been blessed with.

This amazing Christian organization, with absolutely no "middle man" to take a percentage of donations is: www.chances4children.org.

August Primary filing deadline in May

By FAN staff

The August Primary Election is scheduled to be held on August 7, 2012.

The last day to register to vote in that election is July 9, 2012.

Candidates who wish to run in that election for township positions including Township Clerk, Secretary, Supervisor, or Trustee (partisan or nonpartisan), must file nominating petitions and Affidavit of Identity no later than 4 p.m. on May 15, 2012.

For more information, call Clerk Carol Hulka at the Fruitport Township Hall, (231) 865-3151.

Bethel Baptist Church to hold special celebration

By Mary Weimer

Forty years ago, Bethel Baptist Church began an outreach to a group of often isolated and overlooked individuals. This special ministry — signing to the deaf — continues to this day, and is growing as the need continues.

For each Sunday morning church service, Bethel Baptist provides interpreters who communicate the message of the gospel to the deaf community.

In celebration of this special 40th anniversary, Bethel is hosting a July 1, 2012 dinner and program from noon to 2 p.m. The meal will be "picnic" style food items, salads, hot dogs, chips, etc.

If you would like to be a part of this special celebration, please contact Floyd Dodd at (231) 777-3188 or text message June Crothers at (231) 955-4570.

Those who wish to attend the church service that day as well are welcome at 10:30 a.m. on the corner of Sixth and Oak streets, across from Fruitport High School.

Harbor Hospice seeks community support for Regatta

(Submitted by Harbor Hospice)

Harbor Hospice knows what it is like to be a part of the Western Michigan lakeshore community. For more than 30 years, the organization has provided hospice services to those within the community. Now, Harbor Hospice is seeking sponsorship support from the community for the annual Harbor Hospice Chronicle Regatta, which first began in 2008. The event will take place on Saturday, July 7 at the Muskegon Yacht Club.

"Harbor Hospice is grateful for the community's past support of the Regatta," said Ammy Johnson, Harbor Hospice director of development. "As a nonprofit provider of hospice care and support, this event helps make it possible to ensure all residents have access to care at the end of life, regardless of ability to pay."

Local businesses and individuals are encouraged to participate in the Regatta by becoming a sponsor for the event. There are multiple sponsorship levels from \$100 to \$10,000. Depending on the level of sponsorship, sponsors will receive promotional opportunities, race registration, tickets to the picnic and gift bags.

Silent auction items are also being requested, including vacation home stays, tickets to sporting and cultural events, art and home accessories and gift baskets.

Harbor Hospice is a member of the National Hospice Regatta Alliance, a non-profit 501 c 3 association of hospice regattas, which independently raises money and awareness for local hospices.



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Next to Word of Hope Church