



# MATABONITE REPORT

An occasional newsletter to the Friends of the Catholic Young Adult Association of Matabonite, Haiti, and the contributors to the David A. Goy Memorial Fund. Also available on the Internet: [www.richmonddiocese.org/hajel](http://www.richmonddiocese.org/hajel)

April 2008

## NEWS FROM GABRIEL THÉLUS

Dearest friends of HaitiCSR,

This new name (HaitiCSR) is becoming so popular in our community of Jacsonville, and the name Jacsonville itself is also a new concept that our people around are learning to become familiar with. Over here, we all like this change. Two years now since we have named the village, we are getting ready to make it official. One thing you need to understand: Matabonite is bigger than what you think. It represents 1/6 of the whole Pignon area, which counts about 40,000 people. I want you to know a little bit of our geographical divisions: Haiti politically is divided into ten departments, 35 districts, 141 communes like Pignon, and 555 rural sections. As there is no center in Matabonite, we are trying to create one with Jacsonville.

Life in this community is hard today. The entire country is experiencing an inflation of no comparison. We are asking where we are going. Can we stand this? Hunger is problem number one today. The people are so skinny and become sick. Three have died already. In The town of Pignon every day someone dies. That is a reality of the entire Haiti. I realize we have to do something to give a response. What if we start the mission house even though we are not ready? At least we will do the foundation and give a chance to the people in need.

What is going on with the projects?

St ROSE SCHOOL is still the largest project we are handling. We had a good celebration of David Day on January 7<sup>th</sup>. We did also celebrated carnival at St. Rose on February 1<sup>st</sup>. I was not there, but Berteau Zephir did his best. We are looking forward to Flag Day on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Another big event will be the sixth graders' official exams in June. We have over 20 kids registered, and we are optimistic. We also want to start a clinic in the school. We are excited as the room in the office building is ready. We will put a couple of beds for the kids to rest while waiting for the parents to be picked when they get sick. We will provide first aid until we can hire a nurse.

WOODSHOP and WELDINGSHOP are two of the projects we think will help the community to develop. We are beginning to see the difference. Not only are we building on site what we need, but we are forming more heads. One of the three apprentices is able to do some basic woodwork such as repairing doors and benches. We are ready to open the welding section on February 11<sup>th</sup>. This is very important as we are living in a sugar cane growing area and we will be able to fix the cane mill. We want the shops to be self-sufficient.

ZANMI DAVID (Friends of David) is the term we use today to mention an association we formed with the graduate from the sixth grade of St. Rose School. We did so not only because we want to continue David Goy's goal in Haiti to improve people's living condition, but more important for us we want to motivate our young folks to realize that there is no development without their contribution—and they have to contribute as we have invested a lot of money for their education.

We meet on Sunday afternoons at 3:00 p.m. We are trying to enhance communication, and we are creating activities to entertain the community and to clean the village. We want each of them to learn a skill, so two are having training to learn basic skills to work in a health clinic. We have 24 members now.

KONVANSYON ANYEL JEN YO (Annual Young Adult Convention) is a practical activity we have been doing for ten years now. In the convention we discuss all kinds of issues (religious, political, social, cultural, agricultural, sexual, etc.) pertaining to young adults. This year we will discuss three major topics: Youth of Today: Hope of Tomorrow, Zoonotic Diseases, and the Structure of the Catholic Church. We are all excited as this will happen early this year, the first week of March. We decided to hold it in the central church in Pignon this time, since in previous years we covered all the six rural chapels. .

Our COORDINATING COMMITTEE structure was revised by adding new members to the different branches of our NGO, HaitiCSR. Father Alphonse Adius, Berteau Zephir, Moussanto Dantil and Milçois Petit-Homme agreed to join us. Fr Adius (also called Fr Carlo) and Moussanto will meet with us three or four times a year. Financially, we plan for each coordinator to be responsible for keeping track of his branch's expenses. The administrator will supervise that. We also opened two different accounts in FONKOZE under the HaitiCSR name, one in US dollars, the second in Haitian gourdes. We have three people to take care of these accounts (Berteau Zephir, Nelson Celicourt, and myself). As you may need the US account number, it is 71-1-340224-01. FONKOZE said transfers can be made into it.

THE BISHOP F. WALTER SULLIVAN MISSION HOUSE is an old project we wanted to do about four years ago. Since Matabonite was under pressure in 2004, we stopped work on it to do other things. We are thinking about starting again—it is needed. We have to have not only more space for our visitors, but since economically life has been so degraded, we need to do an activity to create ways for our people to live. Starting this construction will bring money in. As I have mentioned before, inflation is the major problem. Last August I bought a bag of rice for \$260 HT, now it cost \$350. Everything costs more. We are not ready, and we are afraid that the house will be so big that will never get enough money to do what we planned, but we will proceed the same way we always do, going step by step. We will begin with the foundation and we will break ground when the Hokies come in their spring break trip in March. I am counting on your support!

THE WATER PROJECT is an important one for the school. When I was in Covington last summer, I met a man at Sacred Heart Church, Mr. Leo Mulcahy, an engineer who is willing to help us in our need for drinking water at the school. He found another important man in Raleigh, North Carolina, Mr. Steve Metzler, who knows well the job. Both men came to Jacsonville last Christmas. We met, we talked, we visited, we took measures, and we set plans. Let's say we began the project. We figured out providing good water only at the school will not solve the kids' health problems in the community. We need to get water for the rest of the people, especially for the kids when they are released from school. It is simple: we need to fix the four well pumps in the

community. The complication is that the population has to take care of the finances. In this area the average person doesn't have one US dollar to eat daily. Anyway we fixed it at 50 US cents per month per family, and we made arrangements with HAITI OUTREACH, a local NGO, to fix our pumps continually, as long as the entire population pays and also meets the requirement for having an outhouse per family. We are doing one already, and we will help the population to do all of them. We will appreciate your collaboration with Leo and Steve on this project.

## FOUNDATION UPDATE

Work continues on establishing the David A. Goy Memorial Foundation as a not-for-profit organization in support of the Matabonite community. We are thankful to the Justice and Peace Committee of St. Jude Catholic Church in the Radford/Christiansburg area of Virginia who have agreed to provide start-up funds for the foundation.

The Board is also grateful for the supporters from other areas throughout Virginia and Indiana, David's home state. In Haiti, Gabriel is doing his part (as you read above), establishing a committee to determine priorities, develop projects, and a method for accounting for the funding.

Anyone interested in finding out more information please contact Karen Melendez at: catholic@radford.edu.

## A VISIT TO MATABONITE

*David Burr, a parishioner of St. Mary's, Blacksburg, Virginia, reports on his visit to Matabonite in December. You can contact David at [olivi@vt.edu](mailto:olivi@vt.edu) or 434-951-3194.*

While in Pignon with the group from St. Mary, Blacksburg, I visited Gabriel Thélus at Matabonite or Jacsonville (a clarification: Matabonite is a chapel within the parish of Pignon, and Jacsonville is a district or neighborhood within the chapel of Matabonite--so you're linked to a chapel within a parish, and we at St. Mary are twinned with the parish.)

Gabriel is doing remarkable things. The classrooms at the school are largely built and the auditorium, which has been coming along slowly since I first saw it in 2003, will soon be done. When I was there they were about to put in the stage floor. In addition, he continues work on another building which will be a combination administration building, clinic and library.

All of this adds up to a school that runs from preschool to sixth grade, with a present total of 268 students. The parents pay 10% of the total tuition, which is \$100. He tries to get the other \$90 from the government. If the parents cannot pay the \$10, they provide 40 hours of work to the school building roads, painting, etc.

Gabriel is currently putting a great deal of effort into a vocational training program. He paid for a carpenter/furniture maker to train in Cap-Haitien for two years, and that man is now employed by Gabriel to train three apprentices. He also paid for the training of a mechanic at Cap-Haitien, and this man is now working for him. He also has a welding shop, and in the future he hopes to add sewing, embroidery, electricity, masonry and agriculture (the goat project currently underway could be regarded as a first stage in the agriculture program).

In the future he wants students in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades to come to the vocational arts training center every week to familiarize them with the various trades. Then in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> years they'll specialize in a trade.



The auditorium/chapel in Matabonite

Gabriel is also building houses for those who work for him. He plans to build ten, and he's already on number five. He's trying to build them for \$5000 each using materials from the immediate area.



One of the new Jacsonville houses

For the woodworking shop, Gabriel needs the following tools: belt sander, grinder, drill, router, clamps--we're talking about substantial-sized tools here: big clamps, a heavy grinder, a substantial drill and router. They already have small power tools like a small circular sander, drill and router. I would write Gabriel and ask for clarification. They need a great deal.

In addition, although Gabriel didn't specifically request this, it was clear that at his house Gabriel needs a 12-volt submersible pump that will raise water 23 feet from his cistern up to his roof. I can think of no better investment in all of Haiti than Gabriel's projects. If you haven't checked out his site at <http://haiticsr.instantspot.com/index.cfm/show/Gabriel-Thelus>, do so; it's well worth your time.

# WATER PROJECT REPORT

*Sacred Heart parish in Covington, Virginia, is twinned with the Matabonite community. Here is a report from Leo Mulcahy, the retired engineer mentioned in Gaby's letter above.*

In June Gabriel Thélus visited Covington to talk about the need for clean water at their community school, St. Rose of Lima. I was recently retired and interested in working on a water project, so I proposed that we work together on this project. Gabriel agreed and we began working out next steps via email. I mentioned to Gabriel that I had a friend, Steve Metzler, a mechanical engineer who had experience with water projects in Africa and Haiti and who might be willing to help (he has also recently been to Haiti twice working on a water projects in La Gonave). Steve agreed to help and we began planning our trip to Jacsonville. We also learned that Rotary International was planning a Water Summit in Haiti for mid-December. We thought this would be a good opportunity to get a concise overview of the water situation in Haiti and also make useful contacts with government agencies and NGOs working on water projects in Haiti.

At the Summit we made what would prove to be a very important connection with Neil Van Dine of Haiti Outreach ([www.HaitiOutreach.org](http://www.HaitiOutreach.org)) and arranged to meet Neil in Cap-Haitien after our visit to Jacsonville to discuss how we might collaborate on the Jacsonville water project.

After the 1½ day Water Summit,\* we headed up to Jacsonville and spend a few days developing for the water supply project.

Our first day began with breakfast before sunrise and a walking tour of Jacsonville. We saw key community structures such as the school and shops. We also met a lot of nice folks as we made our way around the village. The area around Jacsonville is quite lush and attractive. We noted that of several public wells in the area only one was operational. We continued our walk-about and began to construct a rough map of the area noting the location of roads, wells and key buildings. We had agreed to focus on water supply to the school as the most pressing need in the community and so we spent most of the afternoon taking measurements, noting elevation differences and discussing water uses, needs and supply options.

The school has no well or other source of clean water. Any water used by the 268 students and 16 person staff at the school must be carried back in five gallon buckets from the nearest well, approximately a quarter mile away.

One of the points emphasized at the Water Summit was the importance of getting community involvement and ownership if a water project is to be successful. Therefore we asked Gabriel to call a meeting at the school to get community input to the school water project. Twelve people attended, including the school's principal, several teachers, cooks, watchmen, several parents and a few other interested members of the Jacsonville community.

Gabriel opened the meeting with comments about the importance of clean water for the health and well-being of the students. He introduced Steve and me and talked of our interest in trying to work with the community to get water to the school. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to get their advice and input on topics related to the project. Steve was able to speak to the group in French which was very helpful. We stressed that if this project was to go forward, it would be as a community project and our role would be to provide technical help and some financial and material resources. The community would decide where and how the water would be used, how the system would be managed, and provide labor for construction of the storage cistern and lines from the well to storage and from storage to the distribution points at the school. We

explained that funds would need to be raised in the US to make this project a reality and that we could not guarantee success.

We then asked about the current water supply situation and water uses at the school. We also asked the group to explain how an improved water supply could benefit the students and the school. We learned that the two cooks were responsible for hauling the 50 gallons of water used in the kitchen each day. They each made five trips to the well each morning, hauling back water in five gallon plastic pails balanced on their heads. All of the other water available to the students (total of 35 gallons per day for 268 students) was provided by the day watchman who carried the water in five gallon plastic pails, sometimes using a wheelbarrow. These 35 gallons gave the students a bit of water to drink during the day but did not allow for hand washing after using the toilet or before lunch. [Aside: at the Water Summit it was mentioned that hand washing was the single most effective means to improve public health in Haiti.]

It was emphasized by the school staff that more drinking water was needed by the students and that water for hand washing water was important, but with the school population having grown from around 50 a few years ago to 268 today, it took more time than school personnel had available to haul the water from the distant well. Therefore they were forced to cut back and make hard choices about where to use the small amount of water practically available. Other needs for water at the school that were brought out were for a shower for cleaning up children and their clothes after an "accident"; and for the construction projects that are often underway at the school. In addition, the students used to keep a garden at the school to teach them about agriculture and also to provide vegetables for the cafeteria. This had been discontinued because of lack of water. Based on this community input we estimated the required water supply volume at approximately 1000 gallons/day.

We then polled the group on where on the water taps should be located to meet these needs. We came up with six locations: a hand washing station in the vicinity of the latrines, a drinking water station outside of the cafeteria, a water tap inside the kitchen, a water tap outside the auditorium entrance, a water tap in the teachers' meeting room, and water taps in the new school office building for a sink, toilet and shower.

We also talked about possible designs for the hand-washing and drinking water stations. It was proposed by one of the group that a long pipe with a valve on the end and multiple holes for drinking (on top) or washing (on bottom) might serve the purpose of allowing access for 10 or 12 students at a time so that a single class could move through each station in a reasonable amount of time. It was affirmed by the group that this system would be dedicated to the school rather than open to general community use. Security was discussed regarding both unauthorized use of school water as well as protection of system components from theft or damage. It was decided to install a lockable master valve where the distribution line exits the cistern. This valve would be open during school hours and locked at other times. Regarding system component security, the group was confident that this would not be a problem in the small community. The group then went outside to discuss exact locations for each tap. During the walk-around it was decided to eliminate the teachers' room and auditorium taps due to their proximity to the cafeteria drinking station. We also decided to add a tap on the outside wall of the kitchen which could supply construction, gardening and any other need for outside water.

Steve, Gabriel and I then spent the rest of the day discussing potential system designs and component locations. Gabriel explained that an earlier attempt to drill a well on the school grounds had failed to yield water at a depth of more than 200 feet. Therefore we discussed alternatives to an onsite well. The first was capturing rain-water off of the school buildings' roofs and storing it in a cistern I

large enough to supply water throughout the dry season. However, this would require a very large cistern and after preliminary calculations, this alternative appeared to be impractical. In addition, long storage of water could also present water quality concerns. Next we discussed drilling a well in an outlying area with known groundwater and pumping the water to a smaller cistern on the hill behind the school. The cistern would provide pressure for the distribution system as well as some storage. Steve had worked recently in La Gonave to install a water system that had a very reliable Grundfos pump that was powered by 14 solar panels--a very reliable system that does not require gas or diesel fuels which can be difficult for the community to obtain and afford on an ongoing basis. The negative to such a system is higher up-front costs. A very rough estimate for a full system, based on the costs at La Gonave, is \$15,000 - \$20,000. This is the alternative that Steve and I recommend. The technical issues involved in system design, budget estimation and system installation are straight forward. The key challenge: raising the needed funds.

We began our return trip to Cap-Haitien by stopping first at the rectory of Notre Dame du Bon Secours church in Pignon to meet the pastor, Fr. Alphonse. (Jacsonville is part of the Pignon parish and Gabriel recommended that we discuss the school water project with Fr. Alphonse and get his approval.) We had a good discussion, and Fr. Alphonse was very supportive. On the way out of Pignon we noticed a sign for a local Rotary club. Gabriel said that the Pignon Rotary president is Dr. Ginn, a physician at the Pignon hospital. It would have been good to meet with Dr. Ginn, as the support of the local Rotary club is a necessary prerequisite to obtaining Rotary International funding for water projects. We asked Gabriel to make contact with Dr. Ginn and we will also talk to Neil Van Dine who lives in Pignon and may know Dr. Ginn.

Later we were able to meet again with Neil Van Dine who was in Cap-Haitien to make a presentation to the local Rotary club on his water supply activities on behalf of Haiti Outreach. We discussed our observations and thoughts from our time in Jacsonville with Neil and got his input based on his 17 years of experience with water projects in Haiti. One concern we had was making sure that any water system that we work on would be sustainable after we left—a concern heightened by the fact that of three public wells in Jacsonville (drilled by Neil approximately 15 years ago) only one was currently operable and the hand pump on that well had bad bearings and was in need of major repair. Neil said that this was not unusual and that his organization, recognizing that this is often the case, now has a program to work with the community to provide ongoing maintenance for wells and pumps they install. They require the community to show support by organizing a water committee to manage each well. An important part of this management is securing broad-based community support to fund ongoing maintenance of the well. The community water committee must raise 200 gourdes (\$5.71) per month from individuals who use the well. This money is deposited in a bank account and can only be used for future well maintenance and only withdrawn with the joint approval of the community committee and Haiti Outreach. This provides for ongoing well maintenance by Haiti Outreach.

Once a community commits to this program, Haiti Outreach will retrofit the well with a new pump, cylinder, and riser pipe at HO's expense. The HO approach balances generosity with practicality: though a community is given a new pump when they start the program, the use of that pump is conditional upon the users of a well making their monthly maintenance deposit in a dependable fashion--otherwise, HO reserves the right to remove the pump.

Gabriel has agreed to work with the community to establish water committees around the public wells in Jacsonville with the goal of getting these wells into the Haiti Outreach program and operational, assuring an ongoing supply of clean water for the general Jacsonville

community and also demonstrating that the community can come together around a water supply project. We suggested that once the community had the existing wells retrofitted and operational and a maintenance agreement with Haiti Outreach, we would proceed with the installation of the new well for the school (assuming funds are available). Gabriel agreed that this was a logical approach and has subsequently told me (by email) that they are establishing water committees and preparing for their meeting with Haiti Outreach.

Although Haiti Outreach works throughout Haiti, it is a fortunate circumstance that they are headquartered in Pignon, only about three miles from Jacsonville. We discussed with Neil having Haiti Outreach drill the school well when we reach that point. He has three drilling rigs in Haiti and two available in the Pignon area and agreed that they would be able to do this (fee: approximately \$2000 depending on depth). We will also discuss the possibility of HO maintaining the Grundfos pump.

Here is where we propose to go from this point:

1. Refine project cost based on initial assumptions, for fund-raising purposes.
2. Make presentations, assess feasibility of funding project, and begin fundraising.
3. Develop a project contract between Jacsonville school water committee (JSWC) and our US water project group (WPG).
4. Collaborate with JSWC on design and layout of the cistern and distribution system from cistern to and including school water taps as well as on the water line from pump discharge to cistern [1¼ inch PVC, valves/taps, trench depth, line routes, etc.].
5. Establish a plan and schedule for the community to construct the cistern, distribution system and line from the well to the cistern (WPG to provide materials and tech support).
6. When existing wells are in the Haiti Outreach maintenance program, WPG will commission HO to drill the new school well.
7. When cistern, distribution system and line to the cistern are nearing completion, WPG will commission Phillip Wilson, Solar Energy Products, to finalize the design and then install the pump and solar panel system.
8. Connect the pump to the line to the cistern.
9. Put the system into service.

\* For more on the Water Summit, see [www.lekol.com](http://www.lekol.com) and select "Clean Water."

*[Editor's note: If you should be moved to contribute financially to this project, please use the cut-off form and envelope provided with this newsletter. Leo may be contacted directly at [leo.mulcahy@gmail.com](mailto:leo.mulcahy@gmail.com)]*

**DAVID A. GOY MEMORIAL FUND FOR MATABONITE  
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