

Diocesan Convention 2018- WTHP report

St Vincent's Center for Children with Disabilities in Haiti continues to thrive under the direction of their Governing Board, with Chairman Bill Craddock and school administrator Aurelie Fievre.

St. Vincent's is the only school in Haiti offering education **and** healthcare to children with all varieties of physical disabilities. We are a one-of-a-kind school for 200 children who are deaf, blind and/or physically-disabled.

Education

Since last year, the school has hired a new principal, Irvika Francois. Irvika holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and is fluent in five languages: Creole, French, English, Spanish, and Japanese. She has over 20 years of teaching primary and secondary students and over 14 years of experience in curriculum and materials development for Haitian students. Under Irvika's leadership, the teachers at St Vincent's are expanding and improving their daily lesson plans and educational methods for working with the disabled students of St Vincent's. We have raised the teacher salaries in the past 2 years which helps us attract and retain qualified teachers.

Buildings and Grounds

Our 8.6 acre campus requires a lot of attention, not to mention the dorms for boarding students and the kitchen facilities and classrooms. We have a new Buildings and Grounds supervisor, Dolphin Mentor. Mr. Mentor has built a new gate for the school, new drainage facilities for the kitchen, and started planting crops like spinach to help the children learn about agriculture as well as support their ongoing nutritional needs.

Nutrition

The children receive a hot meal every day for lunch. For many of these students, this is the only nutritious meal they receive daily. A healthy lunch is one benefit of the tuition paid by the parents and is a huge draw for the children to stay in school. This year we received notice that the government program BND (Bureau of Nutritional Development) would no longer be able to provide these meals for the school. We are working hard to find alternative partners to help us continue to provide meals for the children. Food for the Poor helps us with beans and rice, and we are looking for other sources as well.

HealthCare

Until recently, the only regular medical and dental care for the students, other than emergencies, was provided by volunteer teams visiting from the US, primarily organized by the West Tennessee Haiti Partnership. St Vincent's operates a medical clinic in downtown Port au Prince, staffed by Haitian doctors and nurses. Because of the improving stability of the school and new administration, plans are now underway to have our students get regular checkups at this medical clinic. Dental care and checkups are being coordinated with Klinik San Esprit, a Catholic organization close to the new school location.

Service Teams

WTHP still organizes and sends teams to work at St Vincent's School twice a year. Other teams visit from parishes around the US to see this remarkable school and contribute expertise in playground or facility construction and design, education, music and the arts. If your parish is interested in joining a team, contact Bill Craddock at wscraddock@icloud.com We would also be happy to come to your parish and share stories and photos about our work in Haiti.

Tuition Gap Program

Our children at St Vincent's come from families who are very poor, many of them living on less than \$2 per day. These families struggle to pay the annual tuition. With the new staff we have hired, the salary raises, and the ongoing costs to maintain our facilities and feed the children every day, our cost to educate and care for one student is \$780 per year. We have developed the Tuition Gap Program, to offset these costs. Your \$650 annual donation pays the difference in cost between the \$130 which a Haitian family pays, and the \$780 full cost of tuition. Please consider whether your parish could support one or more children on an annual basis.

We would also be happy to come to your parish and share stories and photos about our work in Haiti. Contact Bill Craddock at wscraddock@icloud.com if you are interested in a parish partnership opportunity.

Submitted by Susan Nelson, MD
on behalf of St Vincent's Haiti and the West Tennessee Haiti Partnership
www.stvincentshaiti.org