

Coronavirus, Challenges & Changes

Life for everyone all over the world has changed drastically in the past several weeks, and our friends at the St. Joseph Family in Haiti are no exception.

In mid-March, after the first COVID-19 death in Haiti, all schools were ordered to close. This included Lekòl Sen Trinite. It is not known if the schools will be able to open back up for the rest of this school year. This comes after schools were closed for several months earlier this school year because of widespread protests in Haiti. In all, the students of LST and most other Haitian schools have only had classes for approximately three months since September. Unlike in the US, distance learning is not possible in Haiti.

Because the residents of Wings of Hope are particularly vulnerable to the Coronavirus, drastic measures have been taken there to help protect them. In mid-March classes and the therapy program were suspended to reduce the number of staff members who came into Wings every day. All staff members, including the teachers and therapists, are now considered care-givers and rotate their schedules so a minimum number of staff is present each day to take care of the residents' personal needs, to make sure everyone is fed their meals, to keep the facility clean and safe, and to do other necessary tasks.

Even though the LST teachers are no longer teaching, and the Wings staff is on shorter modified schedules, all employees are receiving their full pay so they may take care of their own families during this time of crisis. That is part of the social justice values of the St. Joseph Family.

The St. Joseph Family is doing all it can to help protect the Wings residents, the LST students, the young men supported by St. Joseph's and its employees. Special handwashing stations are set up at Wings of Hope. These consist of a five-gallon bucket that holds a water and bleach mix. Both the employees and residents use these to frequently wash their hands. All Wings employees have been given face masks to wear while they are at Wings to try and reduce the exposure of the Wings residents to the virus. The SJF has purchased and distributed 200 of the handwashing stations to all employees, all LST students and staff, and the boys supported by St. Joseph's. LST is planning a food give-away in late April for all the students and staff using the funds they would normally use for the school feeding program.

While the official numbers of infected and dead from

COVID-19 in Haiti are cited as very low, that is mainly due to the fact that very little testing for the virus has taken place in Haiti. As of mid-April, fewer than 500 people out of a population of more than 11 million had been tested. In all of Haiti, the number of ICU beds available is approximately 100-125, with possibly 60 ventilators, a third of which are said to be broken. Mitigation actions like those encouraged in the US and elsewhere around the world — social distancing, frequent handwashing, working from home, etc. — are a practical impossibility for most Haitians, who live in small homes with extended family members, who don't have access to running water and who must go out and work daily in order to survive. Haiti has a potential for having an uncontrollable outbreak, most of which will not be recorded officially because of the lack of medical care available.



Hand-washing stations have been set up around Wings of Hope to try and stop the spread of the Coronavirus.

Besides the medical crisis brought by the Coronavirus, Haiti continues to suffer economically and politically. This has impacted the SJF in many ways. Over the past approximately 15 months, the number of visitors to the SJF has declined sharply because of political problems in Haiti. Now that the Coronavirus has stopped all travel and Haiti has closed its borders, all reservations for the foreseeable future have been cancelled. This impacts the SJF in many ways. First of all, the SJF counts on funds earned by the guest houses to help pay for the daily expenses of the missions, including the care of the residents of Wings of Hope. Second, visitors often bring down donations that either aren't available in Haiti or

are very expensive to purchase in Haiti. But, most importantly, the SJF values the power of relationships and misses having our friends come to visit us and experience the great things happening in Haiti. At the same time the SJF is experiencing an economic loss, prices in Haiti are continuing to increase. The cost of food staples have at least doubled and sometimes tripled in the past year, which affects the purchasing ability of the SJF.

During this difficult time of sickness, uncertainty, fear and economic crisis, please keep all of Haiti, and especially the St. Joseph Family, in your prayers.

NOTE: The information in this report was current as of its writing in mid-April. Because the situation is constantly changing, please become a fan of Hearts with Haiti and The St. Joseph Family, Haiti on Facebook to keep up with the latest updates.

LST prepares for expansion with new classrooms

In an effort to offer more opportunities for the students at Lekòl Sen Trinite, and prompted by a mandate from the Haitian Ministry of Education, construction of three additional classrooms resumed in February. Three new classrooms are being added on the top floor of the Lekòl Sen Trinite/Wings Welcome Center building. These classrooms will allow LST to expand with seventh, eighth and ninth grades. Also included in the project is an office for the LST administration.

Lekòl Sen Trinite anticipates construction to be

completed before the new school year starts in the fall. The addition of the three new classes will be rolled out over the next three years, adding one class per year. This will allow the current class of sixth-graders to continue their education through ninth grade, and additional students can be included as the grades are added.

Everyone at LST is excited about this development and all of the great opportunities it will give the students.



The bucket brigade moving the concrete for the roof up three stories.



Preparing the columns for the pouring of the roof.



Pouring the roof.



The walls of the classrooms going up.



Wings of Hope celebrates Easter



Special giving opportunities during COVID-19

Give a Little Extra to Hearts with Haiti and Get a Tax Benefit!

Did you know recent federal legislation will allow every U.S. taxpayer to claim an above-the-line charitable income tax deduction up to \$300 (up to \$600 for couples filing jointly) for donations made to Hearts with Haiti in 2020? You will receive the deduction even if you do not itemize on your tax filing!

It's the perfect time to make an additional gift, to increase your annual gift, or to make a first-time gift to aid the St. Joseph Family in Haiti.

The inability of visitors and volunteers to travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic has already had a detrimental effect on the SJF by decreasing resources, and, most importantly, preventing our friends from experiencing first-hand the great things happening in Haiti.

We are grateful for your commitment to these vulnerable children and adults and we ask you to consider making a gift during this financially challenging time so that we

may continue to provide them with continued daily care, education, therapy, recreation, nutrition and health care.

If you haven't already done so, this is a great opportunity to tell your friends and family about your passion for Hearts with Haiti and encourage them to join you in support and tax relief.

Please contact your tax advisor for further details.

Donate from the comfort and safety of your home

In accordance with stay-at-home orders and social distancing recommendations, the HWH staff members have reduced their office hours, are working from home and are only picking up mail at the office every two weeks. If you have sent in a donation by check, you may see a delay in it being cashed and receiving your gift acknowledgment. We are encouraging all donors who feel comfortable in doing so to consider online donations to allow donations to be processed more quickly and to reduce the need for donors and HWH staff to leave their homes. Give at: www.heartswithhaiti.org



As you increase your online shopping while you shelter at home, please be sure to use the AmazonSmile program and designate Hearts with Haiti as your charity. Then a small portion of the purchase price of your items will be donated to HWH to support the work of the St. Joseph Family.

<https://smile.amazon.com>

Stay in touch and encourage the St. Joseph Family

Sending cards is a way to keep in touch and connected to the St. Joseph Family during this time of crisis. With the time you have now, consider writing a card of encouragement and support to the SJF — either to specific friends you have made there, or to the staff or residents in general. You can mail them to the Hearts with Haiti office — **27 Horne Street, Raleigh, NC 27607** — and we will get them to Haiti as soon as we can.