

Sarah's Emails from Haiti

By Kim Smith

Dear Friends,

So many have called and written in regard to my friend Sarah Hackett and the non-profit organization she founded, Haiti Projects. For friends who do not personally know Sarah, she is a woman of great vision and courage (and in her mid-80s!). Sarah divides her time between running the foundation from both Gloucester and from Haiti. Haiti Projects is based in the rural mountainous area called Fond des Blancs, which is about 65 miles southwest from the epicenter of the earthquake. Sarah and the Haitian staff at Haiti Projects are fortunate that no loss of life was incurred in Fond des Blanc. However, many families have suffered greatly with many relatives injured and lost in Port au Prince. Read Sarah's emails, from Haiti, further below. The goal of Sarah's Haiti Projects is to help people help themselves. To do so, Haiti Projects developed five "arms" of self-help projects:

- 1) Cooperative d'Artisanat: A sewing and knitting cooperative that provides work and much needed cash for women.
- 2) Education Initiative: A tuition program to help poor families send their children to school.
- 3) Family Health Clinic: A clinic that offers planning services to those who wish to control their family's size.
- 4) Library: A community library to encourage reading skills among local citizens.
- 5) RATRAP: (Rassemblement Travailleurs Paysan): A micro-lending program to help farmers borrow money for tools and raising animals.

My involvement with Haiti Projects began several years ago when Sarah hired me to design new linens and garments for the artisan co-operative. I was planning to travel to Haiti on January 29th through the 7th to work with the tailor and help with production of the new designs. And I was also traveling on assignment for a feature story about Sarah and Haiti Projects. Of course all that is temporarily on hold. Many have asked what can they do to help. I urge you to go the Haiti Projects website at <http://www.haitiprojects.org/> to learn more about this truly worthwhile organization. Donations* can be made through paypal (look for the Donate icon on their website) or sent to:

Haiti Projects Inc.
31 Leonard Street
Gloucester, MA 01930 USA

Please donate not only for the immediate crisis, but in order to support the long-term goals of Haiti Project's mission. Any amount is helpful and greatly appreciated.

Thank you on behalf of Sarah and Haiti Projects for your concern and help. I will keep you updated on any future emails from Sarah.

Sincerely, Kim

Sarah's email from the first night after the earthquake: "It was quite an event. Never experienced anything like it before. I was walking down to my house and had not gone very far when the whole earth began to shake. All the motorcycles fell over, the gate shook and the ground just kept moving like jelly. We all threw ourselves on the ground and there were smaller tremors. Tison gave me a ride on his motorcycle to my house. There have been three after shocks. Everyone is shaken. The center of the damage seems to be in Port au Prince. We are fine here lots of aftershocks but the group (that was coming from Port au Prince) has just arrived safely, for which we are grateful. We hear that Port au Prince is terrible. The phones are not working but the Internet is. So while it is, I write to assure you all that I am safe and well. Love, Sarah"

Sarah, the following day: "I am fine just still jittery. The artisanat is closed. Please say that when people ask what they can do, tell them to call their congressperson and tell them to get aid here right away. All they have to do is imagine if their house fell down in Boston and they just got out with the clothes on their back, what would such people need? Everything and right away!!!! We are quite cut off here as the phones don't work but two people on motorcycles got through today so tomorrow a car is going to try. In the afternoon tomorrow there is a funeral for our driver's 3 year old who was crushed in the rubble when the house collapsed in Port au Prince. And as I write the 8 students that St Boniface houses in a student house in Port au Prince have just arrived just with the clothes on their backs, having escaped as the house was collapsing. We here in the backcountry have not suffered except for the continuous news of loss and for the feelings of helplessness. Mostly we have the jitters still even after 24 hours and that is because the aftershocks have been frightening-strong and continuous. They say there have been as many as 40. Still a few. Sarah"

*Haiti Projects is a 501-(C)-(3) and all donations are tax deductible.