

# Bringing Hope to Haiti – Update

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Three Texas Rotary Clubs are working to help an orphanage in Haiti to have better food and an improved shelter. Clubs in Conroe, The Woodlands and Nacogdoches each have pledged \$5,000 per year to the efforts to fix the roof of the dormitory and add classrooms, said former Rotary District 5910 president John Germany.

“This project began in 2000 when I was looking for a new international project,” Germany said. At that time, Germany discovered Hunger Plus, a Rotary program designed to feed hungry people around the world and make them self-sufficient. As a result of finding this program, the district project became to feed hungry people”, Germany said. “What really convinced me that we needed to do this was reading that 35,000 children under the age of 5 die each day from starvation or hunger related diseases.”

Haiti was chosen because of its proximity to the District. “Haiti is the most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere,” Germany said. “We wanted somewhere where we could go with ease.”

The District then contacted an eligible Rotary club in Port au Prince, Haiti, the Delmas/Aeroport club, to see whether it was interested in assistance. District 5910 wanted to make sure food went to children who were in schools. “We felt education is going to be one or maybe the only way to break the cycle of poverty in that country”, Germany said. The particular orphanage was chosen because it had little visible support. The founder of the orphanage, Florence Thybulle, was very receptive to the group’s efforts.

While visiting, other issues were identified in addition to the lack of food. The roof of the dormitory had holes, and Thybulle wanted to build extra classrooms and a larger dormitory for the children. “I came back [to Texas] with a mission”, he said. “I went to three of the larger clubs, which I thought could afford this type of expenditure and asked them to commit \$5,000 per year for the next three years.

Money raised during the first year is going toward repairing the roof. The next two years will pay for redoing the dormitory, while the group continues to provide food to this and other groups in Haiti, Germany said. Germany was also able to quickly raise enough funding to get the roof patched and add screens to windows and doors. “It’s as bug-proof as you can get in Haiti”, he said.

Germany said he has the time to spend on this project and other Hunger Plus projects because his wife died several years ago and his children are all grown up. “It’s very satisfying work. I’ve got no reason not to go.” With these types of efforts, “You’ve got to have a dream and go from there”, he said.

The food and upgraded living conditions have improved the children’s lives, Germany said. They are learning better, have full stomachs and are healthier. This project represents the ‘plus’ side of what Hunger Plus does, said Germany, a vice president for the program. “This is an example of Rotarians improving people’s lives and helping people.” If it wasn’t for Hunger Plus, the clubs wouldn’t be doing this, he said. Germany said he was glad to see Rotarians respond the way they have to the call for assistance. “People will help if you can show them a need.” “If you show a need and have a solution, they’ll help you with the solution.”

Germany is tentatively scheduling a return trip to Haiti in December to view the progress on the project. "This is a dream that will come true", said Germany.