



# Haitian Project News

The Louverture Cleary Schools Network, Transforming Haiti through Education

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## Sorrow and Hope: Reflections on the 10th Anniversary of the 2010 Earthquake

*This special edition of Haitian Project News features personal accounts from members of the Volunteer community on the 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti at 4:53 pm on Tuesday, January 12, 2010. It is dedicated to everyone who was lost on that fateful day and to those who lost family and friends.*

### Betsy Bowman (THP Volunteer '09-'10)

The real work began the morning after the earthquake.

On January 13, 2010, the sun rose over the soccer field at Louverture Cleary School (LCS) where hundreds of scared children and adults had huddled throughout that bewildering night while the earth rolled. At day-break, as every day, there were songs to sing, prayers to pray, work to do. I watched the *Philo* (US Grade 12 + 1) students stand before the younger kids to lead them. And what song did they choose for that morning? They sang “*Mesi Bondye pou tout ou bay nou*” (Thank you, God, for all you give us). I stood to the side with tears in my eyes, profoundly humbled by their faith.

In so many ways, even in those first terrifying hours, the strength of the LCS and broader community of The Haitian Project (THP) was evident. THP board member and Haitian private sector leader Patrick Brun arrived at the school within hours after the earthquake, before even returning to check on his own home, and his presence was immediately

stabilizing. To his trained eye, the terrifying cracks that slashed across walls were evidence that the buildings had performed exactly as they were supposed to, and many were safe. He

helped us make decisions and—most importantly—he promised to come back in the morning.

It was clear that the US Volunteers needed to act. We made pot after pot of spaghetti on our small stove. We rallied the kids to help with cleanup. We never ran out of food, and whenever we could, we did what Christina Moynihan (former head of LCS outreach) had taught us to do—we fed our neighbors. We led games for those who needed a distraction. And within 48 hours, we began to organize cleanup groups.

After a few days, Deacon Patrick Moynihan (THP President 1996-2019) arrived back at the school along with former Volunteers and close friends of the Project. I recall feeling so grateful for their arrival. Deacon Moynihan rallied and organized everyone. Christina Crow appeared and began to figure out how to get critical supplies and navigate the new normal of the shattered Port-au-Prince. Adam Osielski arrived with a friend who was also a trained electrician and led



Louverture Cleary students camped out on the back soccer field until the campus buildings were deemed safe again.

demolition work. John DiTillo arrived to stay, joining the team of Volunteers. Eventually, Christina Moynihan returned with the Moynihan children and things almost felt normal again as we organized basketball games with US troops stationed nearby and resumed a “para-curricular” school schedule.

While the support from the THP community in the United States was a great blessing, the ways LCS students, staff, alumni and community members cared for each other and their neighbors was a beautiful witness to the power of community. I watched 17-year-olds translate between English, Spanish and Kreyòl for foreign doctors. I watched men from our Santo 5 neighborhood sift through the rubble of the destroyed Cathedral and celebrated with them as they rescued precious artifacts. I marveled at children who answered the question, “how are you since the earthquake?” with responses like, “my family’s house is ruined and everything is lost, but we are safe and God is good.”

I was present for one of the darkest moments in the history of modern Haiti. What I learned in those months is just another expression of what the THP community has always known: with education and the support of a loving community, Haitians already have done—and will continue to do—big and beautiful things.

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**Christina Crow Cruz**  
*(THP Volunteer '05, THP Director of Projects & External Affairs '06-'08)*

On January 12, 2010, I received a text message at work from Mary Jo (Dunne) Francois, a friend and colleague from my years of service as the Director of Projects and External Affairs for THP. “Did you see what happened in Haiti?” she asked.

Over the next few days I watched the news unfold and was asked countless times by family and friends, “Are you going back?” The answer came on January 18<sup>th</sup>.

Deacon Patrick Moynihan (THP President 1996-2019) called and asked if I could come to Haiti to assist with coordination with relief organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the military. The next day I found myself in Miami connecting with Elizabeth (O’Connell) Cross, also a former THP Volunteer and staff member. There were still no commercial flights scheduled to Haiti, but we received a tip from Rachel Madhere, the head of American Airlines in Haiti and an avid THP supporter, that a plane was chartered and scheduled to leave Miami that morning. We found ourselves landing on cracked tarmac a few hours later, greeted by Deacon Moynihan who had made his way through the heavy traffic.

LCS Santo 5 was a whirlwind of activity. The guest house at LCS had become a safe haven to many international journalists, engineers and architects called in by the United Nations, along with LCS alumni who

had returned to the school to assist. The first night of my arrival I spent several hours listening to alumni, Volunteers, students and staff recount their stories of the earthquake. What struck me that night, and over the time that I spent there, were the stories of action and service to the community.

I heard how the LCS community service groups had removed fallen rubble from the roads. I learned how alumni had connected with each other and supported each other’s families through the aftermath. Soon I watched as students persisted in their education and support of the Santo 5 neighborhood, offering meals, water, and shelter as needed. I worked with alumni who wanted to serve the arriving NGOs as translators and guides. Minel Lofficial from LCS’s Office of External Affairs (now the Dulcich Center for Career Advancement) and I worked together to ensure a continued supply of food to the school and community. I had the opportunity to meet with THP board member and Haitian private sector leader Patrick Brun and see the



*THP board member and Haitian private sector leader Patrick Brun secures the doors at the entrance of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Port-au-Prince.*

Mobile Max Pure Water filter that he, THP community member Mickey Ingles and I had written a grant for and collaborated with the US military to fly into Haiti to supply clean water to Cite Soleil and the surrounding area.

Although I was only able to be in Haiti for one week, I was struck by the community that LCS and THP had created, and the strength and resilience of the staff, students, and supporters on the ground. Many donors, supporters, alumni, staff, and of course, the Moynihan family were all standing up for Haiti.

As the Project moves forward to continue in their mission, the question remains... will you?



**The Haitian Project, Inc.**

P.O. Box 6891  
Providence RI 02940

**Phone:** (401) 351-3624

**Email:** [development@haitianproject.org](mailto:development@haitianproject.org)

**Web:** [www.haitianproject.org](http://www.haitianproject.org)

**To donate, visit [haitianproject.org/donate](http://haitianproject.org/donate) or mail checks payable to The Haitian Project.**

**Haitian Project News Staff**

**Editor-in-Chief**

Reese Grondin

**Managing Editor**

Angela Mascena

**Production Manager/Layout**

Sandy Whewell

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