



# RAYJONSHARECARE

FEBRUARY (2018 #01)

## Building Capacity through Microcredit

A small village banking program in St. Marc provides a mechanism for women to lend and borrow from a fund they built with Rayjon's help. The repayment rate is well over 90% among the lenders and borrowers in the program. The program is about empowering women and helping them increase their self-esteem, financial situation, and ability to provide for their families.



There is a need to expand and better support this program to enable more women to access micro-finance loans and to integrate other training (including literacy, basic finances, business development, sustainable agriculture and vocational skills).

Grassroots "Women's Federation" groups are active in 7 distinct villages in the region, and Rayjon seeks to partner with them to focus future energy on economic development and women's microcredit programming, especially those that include the above areas of training that have proven effective in helping beneficiaries increase their capacity to support themselves, improve farming outcomes, and participate in the local market economy.



Women's Federation leaders from 4 zones

## Pinson School Update

Pinson is situated in a mountainous region about 25 km south of Cap-Haitien. The Pinson school provides quality education for 200+ students from preschool to grade 8, and is home to 10 dedicated teachers who live on site during the week. The school is very far from the nearest city, way up the top of a mountain. Life is hard in this rural community plagued by a near constant shortage of water, poor soil conditions, few job opportunities, and poor access to health care.

It is a well accepted belief that education is key to ending the cycle of poverty. Yet 50% of children in Haiti still do not attend school, and of the children that do attend school, 60% will abandon school before sixth grade. Gender discrimination is prevalent, and girls are often left behind without the opportunity to pursue an education. We are very proud that over half (56%) of students at the Pinson school are girls! In 2018 we have plans to support additional gender equality initiatives in the community.

Secondary school begins at Grade 7 in Haiti, and until 2016 most children from Pinson were forced to abandon their studies after Grade 6 (as the closest secondary school was simply too far away and too expensive for their parents to send them). In partnership with the community, Rayjon began adding secondary grade levels in 2016, with plans to add one level each year. The community contributes approximately 33% of

the operating costs of the school!



Construction is ongoing (though seriously impeded by lack of transportation). To accommodate the higher grades two additional classrooms are being built. Additional upgrades are needed to improve the living conditions for teachers (who currently have little electricity and zero clean water). Rayjon plans to work with the community to install solar panels and to improve rainwater collection systems in 2018.

Many thanks again to everyone who supported the Curling Event in November. Proceeds from the event will support rural education at the Pinson school and will help us to work with the community in meeting many of these goals in 2018.



## A Tribute to Haitians

Occasionally this newsletter will include a synopsis of an article garnered from the NY Times or Washington Post. Recently, CNN's host Anderson Cooper offered an emotional rejoinder and defence of Haiti after the US President's derogatory remarks while referring to Haiti and other developing nations. The following comments have been condensed.

"Let me be clear, the people of Haiti have been through more, withstood more, fought back against more injustice than our President ever has," Cooper said.

Cooper commented on his travels to Haiti and about the strength and resilience of the Haitian people. "In 2010 my team from CNN was the first international team of journalists on the ground after the earthquake struck. Like all countries, Haiti is a collection of people - rich and poor, well educated and not, good and bad." "I have never met a Haitian who isn't strong," Cooper said. "You have to be to survive in a place where the government has often abandoned its people, where opportunities are few and where Mother Nature has punished the people far more than anyone should ever be punished."

Cooper reflected on the enormity of the magnitude-7.0 earthquake's that killed more than 200,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands from the already poverty-stricken nation. "For days and weeks without help from their government or police, the people of Haiti dug through rubble with their bare and bloodied hands to save complete strangers - guided only by the cries of the wounded and the dying," Cooper said. "I was there when a young girl named Bee who'd been trapped in rubble for nearly a day was rescued by people who had no heavy equipment ... they just had their God-given strength and their determination ... and their courage."

Cooper became emotional as he tried to continue to share rescue stories from the devastating earthquake. "I was there when a 5-year-old boy named Monley was rescued after being buried for more than seven days. Do you know what strength it takes to survive on rainwater buried under concrete - a 5-year-old boy?"

Cooper concluded his tribute by remarking about the dignity expressed by Haitian people. "Haitians slap your hand hard when they shake it," Cooper said. "They look you

in the eye, they do not blink. They stand tall. They have dignity. A dignity <others> could learn from.”<sup>1</sup>

You can view the complete video here:

<https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2018/01/12/cooper-hearts-with-haiti-anniversary-ac.cnn> Warning: this report contains explicit subject matter.

Note: The above word collage was created as a tribute to Haiti and Haitians, using words gathered from Rayjon trip participants and supporters – words that describe what they have seen and experienced in Haiti.

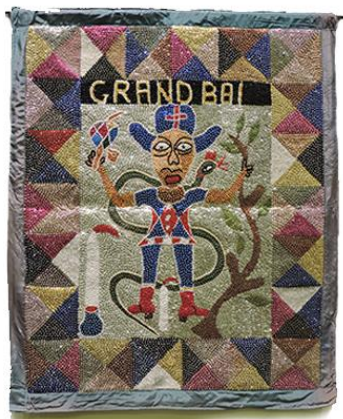
## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### Haitian Art Show

A dear Rayjon friend and art-lover, Sylvia Foreman, has discovered that there is a small Haitian Art show on at the Charles H. Wright Museum of Black American History in Detroit - a fabulous museum, which not many people know about. The exhibition is called ***Spirits and Symbols: The Art of Haiti***.

We are considering a bus trip on **Saturday, March 3**. It would include a tour of the Black American Experience / Underground Railway and Haitian Art show - both realistic depictions and influence of Voodoo religion/mythology. The museum is close to the Detroit Institute of Art where we could have lunch.

Visit <http://www.thewright.org/index.php/explore/exhibitions/current-exhibitions?id=737> to learn a little more about the show.



The trip would include transportation entry fee & guide at \$75- \$80 (with proceeds to Rayjon projects). Lunch would be on your own, but not expensive.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience if you would like to come! We need 30 people to make the trip a go. [hsmith.rayjon@cogeco.ca](mailto:hsmith.rayjon@cogeco.ca) or 519-381-5929.

Feel free to share this information with your friends and family.

## **Save the Date**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rayjon Pickleball tournament is set for Sunday, April 8<sup>th</sup>. Beginners are welcome!

## **Volunteer Needed**

Rayjon would like to extend a huge *Thank You* to Ben McKillican. Ben has been a dedicated supporter since the earliest days of Rayjon and he continues to help out in countless ways. For many years he has been the Trip Account Coordinator, handling the accounting and tax receipts for Rayjon trips. We are seeking one or more individuals interested in being involved in coordinating trip finances, to work as part of a team. Hours would be limited and training provided. Please contact rayjonsc@gmail.com if you are interested in this opportunity.

## **Thank You!**

To our many donors, we must say again a tremendous thank you. With your donation you make a lasting change to the lives of people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic

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