

St. Edward Haitian Twinning Program

St. Edward Parish of Waterloo, Iowa and St. Therese Parish of Grison-Garde, Haiti, have worked in close association with each other since 1998. This partnership was coordinated by the National Haitian Twinning Program, a non-profit organization with facilitating and supporting linkages of parishes in the United States and Canada with parishes and projects in Haiti. The Twinning Program's goal is to support the religious, educational, medical and economic development of one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Grison-Garde is a parish of 30,000 people located approximately 15 miles from Cap-Haitien, the second largest city in Haiti. It is a rural area, and like many Haitian villages, its people have historically lacked many of the basic necessities of living. Much of the life of this community revolves around its parish church. Since government-run schools and clinics are often closed for long periods of time, the people of Grison-Garde rely upon the parish to provide educational and medical services.



In 1998, Grison-Garde was in poor condition. It owned one small generator to provide intermittent electricity to the church and rectory and had no dependable supply of clean water. The primary church of Grison-Garde, St. Therese, was literally falling apart. The medical clinic in Grison-Garde lacked staff, medications, and proper equipment. Since 1990, St. Edward has sponsored five medical missions to Grison Garde, providing medical care to thousands of Haitians, many who travel several days to be evaluated. Generous donations from St. Edward parishioners have resulted in the purchase and installation of additional generators, wells for clean water, significant repairs to the church and school and many more improvements impacting the health and safety of our friends in Grison Garde.

St. Edward has been instrumental in developing an economic infrastructure with the goal of providing a means for the parish community to become self sufficient. A chicken farm and a spaghetti factory were started in recent years via funds from the International Foundation and St. Edward Parish; both the farm and factory realized significant successes. Unfortunately, due to the political turmoil of recent years which destroyed what minimal transportation and economic systems were operational, the farm was unable to obtain chicken feed and necessary poultry immunizations from the supplier in the Dominican Republic. Without an ongoing supply of chicken eggs, the pasta factory is unable to produce its product.

Prior to the twinning relationship, the children in Grison-Garde attended its schools sporadically and often were forced to quit school because families could not afford the tuition; once the children quit school for the year, they would seldom return. Through our parish's Adopt-A-Student program, parishioners can provide a complete year of education for a student for \$90/year. The generosity of our parishioners has resulted in hundreds of students continuing on with their education.

For a short history of Haiti, please see the following:

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/01/14/the_unluckiest_country?page=full