



Friends of SJF, Inc.

P.O. Box 317
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Friends of SJF partners with established grassroots organizations in the Caribbean that minister to disadvantaged populations.

www.friendsofsjf.org

*A 501(c) non-profit organization,
incorporated in 2015 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa*

Fall 2020 Newsletter

Reasons to celebrate, Challenges to face

Every day in Haiti brings new challenges, but despite those, the St. Joseph Family still has many reasons to celebrate moving forward.

Thanks to the many mitigation techniques taken in the early days of the pandemic, we are happy to report that the St. Joseph Family has managed to avoid outbreaks of COVID-19. This is especially significant for Wings of Hope, whose residents already have compromised health situations. The SJF is remaining cautious and keeping the mitigation techniques as part of the new normal. Masks, frequent handwashing, health checks and social distancing are all now a part of the routine at Wings. But after months of suspension of regular programs and activities, the academic, therapy and recreational programs are back at Wings and everyone is thrilled by that.



**Give NOW online:
www.friendsofsjf.org**

All schools in Haiti closed in March when the pandemic hit. This included Lekòl Sen Trinite. With the students also missing much of the fall semester in 2019 because of civil unrest, this meant that they only had classes for about three months before closing in March. In August the Haitian Ministry of Education allowed schools to open to finish the 2019-2020 school year. Classes to finish the past school year took place for two months, with “year-end” tests in mid-October. During that same time the administration of LST registered students for the 2020-2021 school year. The new school year starts in early November. This year LST will add seventh grade and increase the number of students served. LST has also implemented

COVID-19 protocols, with all students and staff required to participate in wearing masks, daily health checks, hand washing and social distancing.

On October 1 Wings of Hope gained another angel. Fabiola, who had been a part of the Wings family since 2003, passed away. She had been in declining health for some time and her body just had enough and let her spirit be free. The Wings



family mourns her loss, but celebrates her life.

Life in Haiti continues to get more challenging. While there is still fear about the coronavirus, the two main challenges are now



Fabiola

the continuing civil unrest and the economy. Civil unrest upsets daily life because the protests in the streets make travel hazardous. Kidnappings, robberies and violence are increasing at an alarming rate.

The economy in Haiti is crashing. In early September the value of the Haitian Gourde against the US dollar dropped dramatically. In a matter of days the exchange rate went from approximately 120 Haitian Gourdes for every \$1 US to approximately 60 Haitian Gourdes for every \$1 US. That has affected the SJF and their employees greatly. It now takes twice as much in US funds than it did in early September to be able to purchase items in Haiti — like food, medicine, diapers, water, fuel — to keep the missions functioning at the same level. For our employees, their wages have about half the buying power now as they did two months ago, making it harder for them to care for their own families. The Friends of SJF has stepped in and given the SJF some emergency funds as a short-term help, but more donations are needed to be made so we can continue to help during this economic crisis.

Connect with Friends of SJF online for the latest updates

Website: www.friendsofsjf.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofsjf/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/friends-of-sjf-inc/>

Holiday Gift Guide ~ Shop with a Purpose and Give Hope

Etsy

Friends of SJF and the St. Joseph Family have set up a store on Etsy to offer unique handmade items that celebrate the beauty of Haiti and the talented artists of the St. Joseph Family.

Shoppers can choose from photographs by the Wings of Hope photo students, paintings by the young artists from Wings of Hope and Lekòl Sen Trinite, jewelry from Walnes and his artists, books, note cards, Christmas cards, and metal work from Haiti.

There is something for everyone on your Christmas list!

After paying the artists for their work, all proceeds go to help support the mission of the St. Joseph Family.

Shop our Etsy store:

www.etsy.com/shop/majHaiti



One Mission™



Friends of SJF has partnered with One Mission to offer two custom designs on several articles of apparel, coffee mugs and canvas totes. One design features the Haitian proverb "Hope Makes Us Live", the other features the motto "Peace Love Haiti". Get yourself some gear and show your Haiti pride!

One Mission has set up our own shop for these designs and will donate 40% of all sales of our designs to Friends of SJF to help support the St. Joseph Family.

One Mission also has many more great designs and products available on their website. You can choose Friends of SJF as your designated fund when you are buying those products and we will also receive 40% of those purchases.

Shop our One Mission store:

<https://onemission.fund/support/friends-of-sjf/?shopfor=222007>

Shop the main One Mission store:

<https://onemission.fund>

RAYGUN



The motto of Wings of Hope is "POSSIBILITIES NOT DISABILITIES". To celebrate and promote that philosophy, Friends of SJF has partnered with Raygun to offer t-shirts and a variety of other apparel and products.

The adult size t-shirts and masks will be available on the main Raygun website through the end of the year as a fundraiser with FoSJF receiving part of the proceeds from the t-shirt sales.

Raygun has also set up a special website for us so we can offer the motto on several other apparel items — hoodies, long-sleeve t-shirts, kids t-shirts. Other products available on the dedicated site are mugs, magnets, stickers and notebooks. A portion of the proceeds from sales on our dedicated site will benefit Friends of SJF.

Shop our Raygun store:

<https://friendsofsjf.myshopify.com/>

Shop the main Raygun store for the t-shirts & masks:

<https://www.raygunsite.com>

Gifting donations to benefit the SJF

Christmas gifts come in all shapes and sizes, and while everyone likes to see their name on bright shiny packages under the tree on Christmas morning, we are also called to share gifts with deeper meaning and with longer lasting impact. Gifts from the heart are at the center of the Christmas message. In that spirit, Friends of SJF wants to offer you the opportunity to give you a way to honor your friends and family and support the SJF this holiday season.

— A donation of **\$75 provides for one day of food** at Wings of Hope. That's breakfast, lunch and dinner for 34 residents.

— The Wings of Hope residents have numerous and varied medical needs. The cost of **one day of medicine for all the Wings residents is \$40.**

— Wings of Hope is a home that cares for 34 children and adults with physical and mental challenges. The average **cost of maintaining Wings of Hope for one day is \$500.**

— Because of their disabilities, many of the Wings of Hope residents wear diapers. The **cost for one day of diapers at Wings is \$30.**

— Wings of Hope has a large and caring staff that provide everything to the Wings residents. The **average salary for an employee at Wings of Hope is \$125 every two weeks.**

— In Haiti keeping the lights on and the water flowing is sometimes a complicated and expensive challenge. The water for bathing has to be bought by the truckload and stored in underground cisterns. The water for drinking is bought by the five-gallon jug. City power is sporadic and unreliable, so a generator is used to provide power most nights, and the generator needs to be filled with fuel. **The cost for ten 5-gallon jugs of drinking water is \$15. The cost of one night of fuel for the generator is \$15. The cost of one truck of water for bathing and cleaning is \$25.**

— Lekòl Sen Trinite will be adding seventh, eighth and ninth grades over the next 2 years. New desks are needed for these classrooms. **One desk is \$35.**

— The SJ Community Outreach Center supports several young men with their education and living expenses, as they live with their parents or with other guardians. It costs approximately **\$100 a month for the education and foster care expenses for one of these young men.**

Giving Tuesday ~ December 1

We are participating in the **GIVING TUESDAY** movement again this year. This worldwide day of giving is the Tuesday after Thanksgiving — December 1.

We will have special posts and information on our Facebook page all day on Giving Tuesday to spark your generous spirit.

All online donors to Friends of SJF on that day will be eligible for a drawing for an original Christmas painting by Vilner, a resident at Wings of Hope and a gifted artist, which will be used by FoSJF for our Christmas card this year.



As you go online for your holiday shopping, please be sure to use the AmazonSmile program and designate Friends of

SJF, Inc. as your charity. Then a small portion of the purchase price of your items will be donated to FoSJF to support the work of the St. Joseph Family.

<https://smile.amazon.com>



Helping Haitians on the other side of the border

Friends of SJF is committed to helping those who need assistance, focused primarily on the island of Hispaniola. While the organization's premier mission partner is the St. Joseph Family and their work in Haiti, Friends of SJF has also partnered with Casa De Los Dos Rios for their work on the other side of the island in the Dominican Republic.

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti an estimated 200,000 undocumented Haitian migrants entered the Dominican Republic, many of them children. A person in the DR with no documents is not entitled to a passport, a bank account, a driver's license or a work permit. All of that makes it difficult for Haitians to find meaningful work in the DR. When they do find work it is mostly in construction, sugar cane harvesting or as house maids, all of which pay around US \$5 to \$10 per day.

Casa De Los Dos Rios was founded in the Dominican Republic town of Higüey on April 3, 2017 and is staffed by three former residents of the St. Joseph Family — Brunel, Francique and Marky. Casa De Los Dos Rios is translated: The House of Two Rivers. Those two rivers are Divine Love and Mercy. The mission of Casa is accompaniment — to walk alongside the poor, being the heart, hands and feet of Jesus for them. Some of the ways this is accomplished is in assisting with the education of the poorest children in the area, visiting the elderly, helping with rent and food costs for struggling single mother families, home repairs, setting up a community garden, family visits, a big brother program and prayer walks.

The undocumented Haitian children living in the Dominican Republic are among the most vulnerable Haitians living in the DR. Casa is currently partnered with two schools for undocumented Haitian children. Neither school receives much financial assistance outside of what Casa provides. The



Francique with Maybrens, Malta and Charles. Francique is the one who found the family sitting on the curb, homeless and hopeless. He goes to visit them twice a day to make sure they are alright.

parents of the students are asked to pay from US \$5 to \$7 a month to help cover the cost of education for their children.

Most of those families can't afford that, choosing to put food in the bellies of their family members as their top priority. Living in dire poverty, with no academic education, often results in girls earning money through prostitution or boys resorting to stealing and/or drug dealing. The schools helped by Casa are keeping a fortunate few from falling into the darkness caused by degrading deprivation. In addition to academic classes the children are also given spiritual guidance, haircuts and an experience of being valued.

Helping single Haitian mothers and their children is a foremost focus of Casa. The work centers on making sure the children are in school and healthy, ensuring that their housing is



Working in the garden at Casa De Los Dos Rios.

adequate, that the rent is paid, making necessary home repairs, and assisting with food and clothing. Casa becomes family with them. One such family is Malta and her four children. Francique found Malta and her children sitting on a curb crying. Francique did not walk past them, but, like the Good Samaritan, he went over to the suffering woman and asked her why she was crying. Malta told Francique her husband had recently died of Covid-19 and she and her children had been evicted from the single room they had called home. They had no food, no money, and did not have anyone they could turn to for help. They were originally from Cap-Haitien in northern Haiti and were homeless in a foreign land. Casa rented them a place to live, furnished it, and purchased food and a cook stove for them. Casa's next challenge is helping Malta find employment.

The family at Casa De Los Dos Rios has a saying they often use, "Open your mind to listen and your eyes to see, and the angels will guide you to where you should be." Casa De Los Dos Rios continues to be open to however they can best accompany and assist the poor they are being led to.

Donations to support the work at Casa De Los Dos Rios need to be accompanied by a note stating that designation for the work in the Dominican Republic.

Be a Sponsor, Change a Life

One way to be connected to the St. Joseph Family on a deeper basis is to become a Wings of Hope sponsor.

Sponsorship is \$30 a month (or \$360 per year) per resident. In addition to the knowledge that your contribution is having a direct impact on the life of a young person in Haiti, sponsors get to know their sponsored resident through crafts, letters,

pictures, school reports, and biographies thoughtfully and regularly prepared by the St. Joseph Family and sent to them throughout the year.

Sponsorships can be done by individuals, families, church groups, civic groups, etc.

Donate online to sign up for regular monthly sponsorship payments, or give the yearly amount.

www.friendsofsjf.org

