



## Haiti Trip 2016



It was a dream come true; it was all that we hoped for and so much more! Even as we were still in Haiti our youth were asking to be part of our team when we do this again.

It was only a few months ahead of time when we started planning our Education and Exposure Trip with our partners Friends of Haiti, HAPI (Haitian Artisans for Peace International), and the Methodist Church in Haiti. We were committed to embrace and empower the people of Haiti, building our relationship by hiring tradespeople and working alongside Haitian youth on several projects requested to meet the needs of the community in Mizak.

It was a whirlwind of activity in a short period of time: gathering documents, researching, attending orientation sessions and fundraising. Our team had its first taste of working together at a bowling and silent auction fundraiser, plus several BBQ and carwash events. We received funds from the United Church of Canada, Middlesex Presbytery and a Vision Fund Seed Grant for New Initiatives in Youth

### SAVE THE DATE

#### Christmas Share

Nov. 2016    Donate Gift cards or Gifts for Christmas Share Program .

#### Cinnamon Buns

March/  
Apr. 2017    Cinnamon bun sales will take place before Easter. Contact the ELUCO representative at your church to purchase these delicious buns.

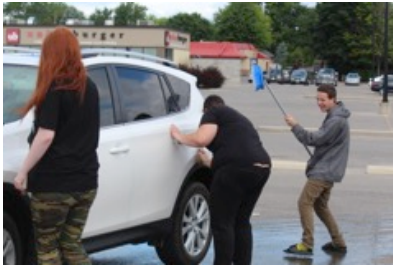
#### Choir Concert

March 5,  
2017    The Voices of Broadway Choir concert will be held again this year at Siloam United Church

### Contact ELUCO

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## Haiti Trip (Cont'd)



and Young Adult Ministry. With heartfelt appreciation we give thanks to all the congregations, organizations,

businesses and individuals who believed in our purpose and generously supported us both financially and with tangible donations of vegetable seeds, project supplies, dental hygiene items and school supplies. Your contributions made our trip project a reality. **No money came out of the general ELUCO budget, and over half of the cost raised was money that stayed in Haiti.**

As ELUCO Community Worker, I was the co-leader and mother figure for our group, supposedly working but feeling like I was on the vacation of my lifetime! Our team leader Don Langford exuded confidence with his continued relationship and project experience with our partners since the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Granddaughter Nikki Langford, our youth mentor, shared insights from her previous experiences and introduced us to her friends. Rev. Cheryl Bolton joined our team for a return trip and provided some leadership in the worship service. Our youth team of seven ranging from 14-19 years old was selected from the community ELUCO serves. What an eye-opening experience to witness a whole other level of poverty and how resilient and strong the Haitians are at facing their challenges. You'll never meet any more hard-working, loving, generous, or happier people living in community. "I can't believe they have to walk so far every day just to get their water. Even little kids carry big jugs on their heads." "Everything is done with hand tools and they work so hard all the time." "They would see us working and just come over to help. That doesn't happen at home." "Everyone would smile and say 'Bonjou'; you don't get that in London." "They don't have anything and they are so happy. My friends have so much and none of them are happy."

"Everything is not always what it seems."

It was a lot of memorable firsts: the first time outside of our small Marconi community, away from family, leaving Canada, staying in a motel, flying in an airplane, going to a beach, swimming in the ocean, jumping off a rock cliff, experiencing another culture, speaking a new language (créyol), volunteering to do work projects, being part of a team. It was a life changing experience that will filter to our community at home.

Things were different in Haiti. "It seemed strange that everything was pitch black at 6PM." "The stars were amazing. I loved that." "We needed flashlights because the electricity went off by 10PM; usually we just went to bed early because we were so tired." "The roosters and goats wouldn't shut up. Eventually I would fall back to sleep." "It was hard having only two meals a day, especially because I don't usually eat when I just wake up." "It was really weird when we sometimes had spaghetti or soup for breakfast" "I never want to eat beans or rice again!" "I was so proud of myself. I didn't take a shower for three days and it wasn't even so bad." "I thought I was going to die in the back of the pickup truck. I was so scared. The driving was crazy. Everyone was honking their horns. The roads were so narrow and we had to go so fast up steep hills. We were bouncing around on huge bumps in the road. I nearly fell out of the back of the truck." "We had to walk far to get to the gardens. I was always watching the ground because there were so many rocks sticking up. It was really hard climbing up the hills." "I got so tired and thirsty working in the heat and my water got hot." The Haitian youth no doubt wondered why we stopped to rest so many times. This is their way of life.

Employment opportunities are extremely limited in Haiti. To host our team and meet the requirements for our projects we provided

employment for the guest house staff, drivers and welders. These individuals quickly became a part of our team as they invested genuine interest in us and their jovial personalities drew us to them. Their teachings



and friendship deepened our experience in Haiti.

We participated in several work initiatives. Working alongside Haitian youth we prepared vegetable gardens for families with a member having a disability. Through donations of seeds and the continued support of the 4 H Club in Mizak, hopefully these gardens will assist families to rise above a subsistence level of farming. The salt laden sea air takes its toll so we were asked to provide repairs and paint the pavilion, gates and playground equipment at Shalom Zone, a safe haven community meeting space. Our fingers didn't escape blisters as we learned several methods to remove kernels from the corncob to store for future meal preparations. Under an extremely critical eye and with a lot of laughter we learned proper hand washing laundry techniques. "Sometimes we didn't know what the other was saying, but we worked well together. They would laugh at us as we tried to figure out how to do things. It was so funny!" It was incredible how individuals came out of nowhere and jumped in beside us to lend a helping hand and get to know us. It made all of the work projects fun. Parents might raise the expectations at home had they witnessed our youth team in action.

Don has many connections which meant broadening our experience. Pastor Paul and his wife Aimable of Faith in Action Methodist Church were our hosts at the Peace Inn. We were welcomed as family. Aimable is the principal of the National School of Mizak. We had a tour and discussed some of the challenges of education in Haiti. We visited several of the newly constructed wells with Vanite from Water for Life Haiti. She spoke passionately about the importance of water in our lives and of



water conservation. That's a lesson we hope resonates in our youth's minds and actions. With a shared interest in farming it's no surprise Don connected with Mackenzie ('Zyzy') of La Valle de Demain. He conducted a tour at the farm and we were able to assist with the cost to replace the motor on the grinding mill to allow the operation to get back up and running for the benefit of the community.

We rewarded ourselves with a trip to the beach in Jacmel with our host family and a youth group from a Methodist Church in Port au Prince. Another day we went to Bassin Bleu in Valle de Jacmel, swam and jumped off the rocks at the waterfall. In our spare time we joined kids at the playground, played soccer and basketball, cards and arm wrestling. We hung out together and practiced each other's language. Asked what the most memorable part of the trip was, the response was "the people." We developed friendships that will last our lifetime.

The pastor got it right in his message." You don't have to accomplish great things to make a huge difference. It's not so much about doing; it's more about being one together. It's about being." He asked that when we got home we made sure to let everyone know how very much they appreciate all of your support, realizing some will never make the trip to Haiti but your partnership is important and makes wonderful things happen. by Nancy Howard



## Hurricane Matthew Update

*Thanks for the continued outpouring of prayers and concern! This afternoon was still too windy to safely be out to assess damage. The physical damage is the 'tip' of the iceberg: the economic impact to purchase food, pay tuition, repair homes and seek medical attention is what will be felt for months to come. We are in conversation about crisis intervention measures which will be shared soon; thanks in advance for your support!*

The areas west of Mizak, extending out the peninsula toward Les Cayes and Jeremie were more severely impacted with flooding and loss of life. The bridge that connects that region of Haiti to Port au Prince was washed away. Reports from friends and family in both Jacmel and Port au Prince were safe and well!

- Valerie (Haitian Artisans for Peace Intl, HAPI)

HAPI has now donated \$9000 (US) for rebuilding.

Our hearts ache and we ask for your continued prayers and support for our friends and all the people in Haiti. Very close to our hearts... The roof of the National School of Mizak is a total loss and classes will not be able to resume until the roof is replaced. Two homes were totally destroyed including the family home of our dear friend Mackendy Damis who was a team leader in all of our projects. The family is staying in the Merlet Centre for safety. Crops and livestock, "the currency" of the rural community of Mizak were hard hit and so many homes lost their steel roof.



Hurricane Matthew strikes Mizak taking the roof off the local school, destroying people's homes and gardens.



Financial donations for relief efforts will be gratefully accepted and can be dispersed through:

Friends of Haiti  
c/o Don Langford  
27071 Kerwood Rd.  
Kerwood, ON  
N0M 2B0

The Friends of Haiti have now raised over \$1820.00 Cdn.







### July Farm Trip

On July 19<sup>th</sup> 60 folks from the Marconi community travelled to the farm of Carol and Don Langford near Kerwood. We had beautiful weather to enjoy the out of doors, a barbeque lunch and traditional picnic games. The day included swimming in the Langford pool, games such as three legged race, potato sack and egg on a spoon. Many of the children loved watching their moms participate in the races. The playground equipment and the space to run around in a novel setting helped to make the day memorable for the children. It's always fun to hear the children's stories in the car returning to the city as they describe what they most enjoyed about the day. The fun in the pool is high on the list for many of the young people. It likely won't be long before some of the children are asking when the next trip to the farm will be happening.





## Nancy's Notes



Summer breezes and sunshine, even the heat during outdoor activities leave a smile on my face, but autumn will always be my favourite time of year. At ELUCO it's a new season of programs and often of new faces to meet. We design our programs at the request of and to meet the current needs of our families, to teach life skills and build community.

Our families were overwhelmed and grateful for the assistance they received with back-to-school. Thank you to Rowntree Memorial Outreach, the children of Dundas Centre United Church and individuals for organizing backpacks and school supplies for our children. At the end of August our youngest children walk around proudly displaying their new backpacks. Some mothers report that their child is still emptying their bag and excitedly showing off their supplies, while youth continue to say "Thanks again" each time we greet each other at the complex.

Richard's Memorial Outreach team provided over \$500 in lunch school snacks donations. Their UCW September roll call topped that with snacks from the ladies. Wow! Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Back-to-school costs exceed an already strapped budget and our families appreciate more than you can imagine this support.

Our Lunch Ladies don't waste any time getting back into the swing of things. Our first lunch was served the very first Wednesday of School. Our volunteers can't wait to reconnect with familiar participants and meet the new children who join us. Already we have exceeded last

year's number of participants. We received very generous funding from the May Court Club of London to support this and other ELUCO Nutrition Programs. It is inspiring to annually meet with these ladies and other recipients of their funding to network and learn about other valuable programs. We are grateful for our partnership.

"Community and social justice ministries in The United Church of Canada, are called to work at the margins of society (the edge); and, at times, we find ourselves at the edge of the life of the church. We share with our communities a sense of uncertainty about the future in a time of major transition and socio-economic-political change. Yet we persevere" It was both a humbling and exhilarating experience to travel to the Loyal House at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph to participate in the Energy From the Edges: "Living on the Edge" Event.

Representatives from Community and Social Ministries from across Canada with staff from the head office of the United Church of Canada worshiped together and shared in exploration of what sustains and challenges life on the edge. I was elected as one of two Ontario reps for the Community and Social Ministries Reference Group. Thank you to the ELUCO Board of Directors for their support in sending me to this event. Our ministry is generously supported by a Mission and Service Grant from the United Church of Canada.

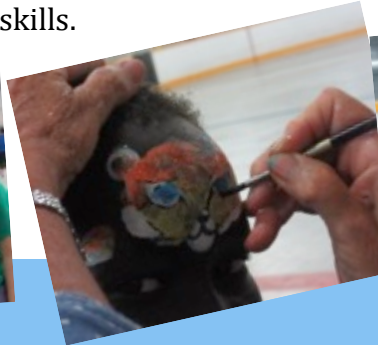
To all who support the ELUCO Ministry we offer heartfelt thanks on behalf of the community we serve. Many blessings as we celebrate autumn harvest with thanksgiving and praise.

## Social Skills Camp

Nancy is currently the chair of the Steering Committee that works all year making preparations to host a month long Social Skills Camp at six different sites in London. The program is designed to provide children with the social skills they are lacking but require to be successful in recreational activities and school settings. This is a joint effort of the City of London, London Middlesex Housing, Merrymount Children's Services, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre, London Community Chaplaincy and ELUCO.

Twelve children ages 7-9 years are selected at each site by the community workers who provide support for their camp. Three post-secondary students and one Jr. Leader provide teaching and opportunities to practice social skills in a fun setting of cooperative games and activities, swimming, nature camp, and field trips. A highlight is the graduation celebration where children and parents hear from the staff positive comments about their participation and growth at camp. We were fortunate to receive funding from the Lucas McConnell Bursary to enhance our graduation day to include carnival activities and also add an extra field trip experience for our campers.

Thank you to Carol Langford for stepping in to oversee the first week of the Marconi Skills Camp so that I could go to Haiti with the Youth Mission Team. As usual the families were not fully prepared and committed so there was a lot of running around to organize the group. Living in the community, Michelle was a great assistant for Carol in making the connections to some of the families. Our group of campers presented many challenges and certainly kept us busy, but I am proud of their accomplishments in learning necessary social skills.



## Summer Camps

Each year we are able to send children to Stevenson Children's Camp or Camp Kee-Mo-Kee for a week of outdoor recreation and fellowship. You can not only hear but feel the nervous excitement of the children squished into the back seat of the car on the way to camp. Many fall asleep on the way home after regurgitating animated recounts of their favourite activities including songs around the campfire, night time games in the woods, swimming, sleeping in cabins, out trips and clay masks. It's a bitter sweet goodbye as they leave behind their favourite councillors and new friends made at camp. "Can I go again next week?" many ask with high hopes. It's a testament to how much this experience means to children whose families cannot afford these types of opportunities, and for some it is the only brief escape from stresses at home they have and a chance to just be a kid again.

This year we sent 30 children to Stevenson Children's Camp, and another 25 to Camp Kee-Mo-Kee, including two young ladies who attended for three weeks in the Councillor in Training Program. We are grateful for the generous donations we receive to sponsor children at overnight camps. Middlesex London Optimist Club, East London Optimists, UCW groups of Richard's Memorial, First-St. Andrew's, Rowntree Memorial, Siloam and Presbyterial, plus several individuals contribute to make this dream come true. We are also indebted to the volunteer drivers who assist with transportation. Many Thanks <3

## Volunteer Recognition

It was our pleasure to give recognition to some of our unsung but well-deserved heroes at our AGM in April, 2016. Ladies of the ELUCO Food Cupboard Wednesday Team, Gladys Beaton, Mary Ella Pettigrew and Anne Donkervoort, your ties to ELUCO are not your first or only efforts in Social Justice Ministry and we are thrilled that you chose to support the ELUCO Ministry.

Wow; you have endured some trials and tribulations with all the changes of our Food Cupboard since you began. We remember the painful decision to close Gethsemane United Church in June 2009 and the negotiations to build affordable housing on site. That fall, the ELUCO Food Cupboard was reopened in the basement of the vacant church where you served our neighbourhood community with caring and respect. You packed up everything and prepared our families for the transition relocation to the basement of Rowntree Memorial United Church in the summer of 2011. You were able to set up a new work space, and just when clients were comfortable with the change, in the fall of 2013, you once again had to pack up everything and prepare them for another move to the now permanent location at Gethsemane Gardens.

Gladys, you played a fundamental role in discussions and decisions about our new space with London Affordable Housing at Gethsemane Gardens, and with pride and knowledge you conducted informative tours of our operation. When folks come to the Food Cupboard, they are greeted by Anne with her cheerful welcoming smile and pleasant conversation. Mary Ella is known for her compassion in pastoral care with our visitors. If secrets be told, Ladies, you are also known to occasionally provide extra items or treats for our families. Your love shines!

Your support doesn't stop with the countless hours you spend at the Food Cupboard. You support all of our fundraising efforts. Gladys you spearheaded a campaign at Siloam for Sponsoring Children to attend Camp Kee-Mo-Kee.

Mary Ella you request an annual grant from the Bank of Nova Scotia dedicated to retired employees engaged in community service. For sure each of you has shown interest and supported me personally as the Community Outreach Worker. More than that, you educate and inform, giving witness to ELUCO in the broader community. Ladies, we owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude and we surely do not say thank you enough for all that you do for us. We are blessed to have you on our Ministry team.





**MICHELLE BLOOMFIELD**

Michelle, you were on the top of the list of people I absolutely had to meet when Carol was showing me the ropes in the Marconi Community. You have always been the go-to-person in our community, a true leader. You have such a huge heart. No matter what personal trials you were managing, you always greeted and welcomed others with a genuine smile. People come to you for advice, for help with paperwork, to find out who to contact to get things done, just to vent and especially to hang out. You have an

uncompromising sense of fairness instilling trust in others. You are a role model in the community. As a single parent you rose above your struggles and did everything in your power to protect and provide a loving home for your children. The love and values you taught to them shines through in both Richard and Samantha. On top of all that you organized, did all the shopping and ran programs including Christmas parties, lunch and after school programs. You've endured two Community Workers and taught us a thing or two. Carol and I could always count on you. Our lives are richer with your friendship and ELUCO is blessed to have you as part of our ministry team.

We also welcome Michelle from the Marconi Community to our Board of Directors. She will provide insights into the community as she shares her gifts in this new role.

**Current Needs :**

- No Frills Grocery Gift Cards for use in our Christmas Share program, Marconi Unit Programs and the Food Cupboard
- Gift cards for Bath and Body Works, Old Navy, Winners, Canadian Tire, Toys R Us or Chapters for Christmas Share program
- If there is a group wishing to sponsor a family, please contact Nancy at [eluco@bellnet.ca](mailto:eluco@bellnet.ca)

**Many thanks for your  
generosity!**

***News Flash!!!***

***The ELUCO Website has been totally  
updated, reorganized and renovated!***

***Check it out at:***

***[www.eluco.ca](http://www.eluco.ca)***

***for information about ELUCO.***

***Thank you Jim Silcox,***

***Our talented and patient webmaster!***

## Backpack Donations From Rowntree Memorial United Church

In August, we asked the congregation for donations of school Back Packs and school supplies again this summer. Our congregation is always very generous whenever we ask for help.

Forty-one school back packs and lots of school supplies were given to the ELUCO representative, Nancy, for distribution to the families.

Nancy said the kids were so excited when they received them.



### ELUCO Annual Walk and Roll for Families

What a fabulous day for a walk at the scenic Springbank Park! I was sad to miss the comradery as family support meant I had to do a separate walk in Windsor. Each year I look forward to making connections and the enjoyment of a brisk fall walk in the park.

ELUCO is most appreciative of all of our friends who join us in our walk. We had members of Strathroy, Arva, Siloam, Richard's Memorial, Rowntree Memorial, First-St. Andrew's and Wesley Knox United Churches. It's their second year joining us, and we are thrilled to have Brian MacKinnon and seven exuberant youth from Wesley Knox on the path with us. Next year I will extend a challenge to our ELUCO Youth Mission Team to Haiti and First-St. Andrew's youth to participate as well.

We give thanks to all of the sponsors who make this a successful fundraiser for the Ministry of ELUCO. We would be nothing without you. Many blessings