



HAITIAN CONNECTIONS — While Rev. Herb Codington of Clinton typically leads trips to Haiti for teacher and pastor seminars, this spring break he led a group which exposed Haitian children to music and art and developed friendships. Assisted by an interpreter, center back, Clinton team members included, from left, musician Sesonya Nfor, artist Anne Lane, Ruth Henderson, Natili Perrin, Hannah Frazier and Rev. Codington.

Under the same stars

Music and art develop connections in Haiti

By Judith Brown
Staff Writer

The use of music and art might not provide typical ministry opportunities in Haiti, but that was among the ways that a team of adults and teenagers from Clinton connected with school children in several Mission Possible schools in the western part of the island country.

Teens Natili Perrin, Ruth Henderson and Rebekah Frazier joined District 56 art teacher Anne Lane, singer and musician Sesonya Nfor and Rev. Herb Codington to bring friendship and exposure to art and music that is unusual in the small mountain schools of Haiti.

"At each of the schools that we traveled to, we worked as a team, and as Anne Lane was doing her art lessons of 'The Starry Night' by Vincent Van Gogh for the students, I would sing and then play the violin," Nfor said. Though the group had an interpreter working with them, Nfor's French language training was helpful in navigating the country's French-based creole.

The concepts of Van Gogh's

famous painting were not completely new to some of the teachers and students in Haiti because they had received drawings and paintings from Clinton Elementary School second- and third-grade visual art students in December when Codington led a pastors conference and delivered drawings from Clinton Elementary and Clinton Middle schools to students there.

For the spring-break trip, Clinton Elementary School Principal Melodie Edwards sent letters to the school administrators there, offering more encouragement in their common goals of teaching children in their respective countries.

"We believe that all of us - the school and the community - must work together in an extended family environment to ensure success for all our students," Edwards said in a letter to the Haitian administrators in the Mission Possible schools. "We believe it is everyone's responsibility to empower our children with the creative, intellectual, and decision-making skills necessary for them to become academically, socially, physically and emotionally suc-

cessful and responsible.

As an educator, Edwards said she believes it's important to develop a relationship with the small Haitian schools and hopes to do some fundraisers to assure more of the children in Haiti get a chance to attend them.

That small but growing connection between the elementary school in Clinton, and the few schools in Haiti, was among the reasons that Lane, the visual arts teacher at Clinton Elementary, wanted to present Van Gogh's famous work.

"As far as I could gather, they had not been exposed to Van Gogh, or at least not to his Starry Night," she said. "Our children had already sent drawings of themselves under a Starry Night sky to the children there, and after they watched me paint, they used the donated markers and paper and made their own drawings."

Meanwhile the teens on the trip spent time interacting with the children, sharing their faith and taking pictures with them, and each said they returned impacted by the hardships of Haiti, the joy of the children and the friendships they formed.

Alumni Spotlight: Lisa Laird

The district invites you each week to meet a Laurens Alumni who has joined as faculty and staff in Laurens County School District 55. The alumni has taken some time to look back on memories from high school, favorite teachers and faculty, and give us an opportunity to learn more about them and their accomplishments thus far.

The dedication and loyalty of Laurens alumni in the school district are legendary. Laurens alumni make extraordinary things happen in the classrooms and schools. If you see any alumni in the hallways or grocery stores, please stop and thank them for coming back to make a difference. This week's "Alumni Spotlight" shines on Lisa Laird.

What year did you graduate? I graduated in 1981.

What is your overriding memory from high school? Reflecting on the overriding memories that I have from high school, I am thankful for educators who served as role models and encouraged me to pursue my career in education.

Who was your favorite teacher/faculty member at the high school? My favorite teacher was Ann Howell who taught me



Lisa Laird

12th grade English. She was a motivator who took a personal interest in all of her students. Mrs. Howell never accepted less than our best.

What activities were you involved in at the high school? I was a member of the French Club, Scorekeeper for Varsity Basketball teams and Co-Editor of the Yearbook Staff.

Details of further / higher education (e.g. place of study and qualifications gained): I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from

Winthrop College and a Masters of Education degree in Guidance and Counseling from the University of South Carolina.

Where do you teach? What subject and grade level do you teach? Throughout my 32-year career as an educator in Laurens 55, I have had the opportunity to teach first graders and serve as a school counselor in Pre-K - 12th grade. I currently am the District Testing Coordinator for Laurens 55.

Tell us about yourself, your family, where you live, etc. I am proud to be a life-long Laurens resident. I am the youngest of four daughters whose father served on the school board for 20 years. He was a major influence in my becoming an educator to serve the students and parents in Laurens 55. My husband and I have three children and one grandchild.

What do you think your greatest accomplishment is thus far? Caring for each of the students that I have met along the way is one of my greatest accomplishments so far. My goal has been to nurture and guide them towards academic success while encouraging them to become productive adults.



Photo by Judith Brown

REMEMBERING 'BIT' — The family of the late Lois 'Bit' King, a beloved and longtime employee of Joanna-Woodson Elementary, donated two benches to the elementary school Monday afternoon in memory of the woman who loved her work with the children at Joanna-Woodson. See the full story on the remarkable woman and her legacy in the Wednesday, May 1 issue of *The Laurens County Advertiser*.



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