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**Breaking News** from Florida's International Volunteer Agency

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**EFFECTIVE EDUCATION FOR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN DOMINICA**

A [World Bank report](#) on education and inclusion stated that 40 million of the 115 million children out of school have some form of impairment, mostly moderate, ranging from emotional to learning disabilities. Over 95% of these children will never meet the [UNESCO](#) lead Education for All movement's goal of primary education completion. The island nation of Dominica is on the front lines of the movement for inclusion in the Caribbean. One obstacle faced is the presence of only one



person on the island with the expertise to diagnose students with learning disabilities. To aid the selfless teachers on the island, the Ministry of Education and [Peace Corps](#) volunteer Jennifer Helton turned to FAVACA for help in finding several volunteers who would be able to train teachers in diagnosing and treating students with learning disabilities. First time volunteers Nancy Anastasio, Helen Nelson and Kathleen Elaine Brock, all from Panama City, Florida traveled to Castle Bruce, Dominica July 7-21,

*“People are still talking about it daily and there are already many new projects and policy changes occurring because of their visit.”*

2007. All three volunteers specialize in teaching students with learning disabilities for [Bay County Public Schools](#). During their two week training sessions, the volunteers spent the morning hours instructing teachers on how to identify different learning disabilities and how to effectively teach students according to their specific type of disability. During their afternoons, Brock, Anastasio and Nelson traveled throughout the North and Northeast region of Dominica to work with many of the parents who have children with learning disabilities. The

volunteers were able to teach the parents how to help their children with their school work and the struggles of everyday life. Ms. Helton informed, “People are still talking about it daily and there are already many new projects and policy changes occurring because of their visit.”

### **HAITIAN WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURIAL GROUP RECEIVES PROMOTIONAL BOOST**



Long after her volunteer travel to Haiti in June, Dr. Donna Goldstein has continued to provide her time and expertise to work with Femmes en Democratie to build on their successful 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Art Expose in Haiti. Affectionately known as *Dr. Donna*, Goldstein encouraged the group to participate in the 51<sup>st</sup> [Annual International Sister Cities Convention](#) in Ft. Lauderdale held July 17-21, 2007.

Recognizing that this event would serve Femmes en Democratie’s goal of creating greater international awareness of outstanding Haitian products they identified two women vendors to join the more than 3,000 exhibitors from around the world who participated in the conference. FAVACA sponsored Simone Ambriose, owner of The Artisans Place, a market clearinghouse for artists from all over Haiti, and Murielle Leconte, designer, artist and owner of [PDG Murielle Creations](#), to showcase their products, services and promote their organization.

Another example of Dr. Donna’s long standing commitment to the women entrepreneurs is her work with fellow Femmes en Democratie member and ongoing FAVACA partner Roberte Laurent, owner and creator of Bel Zeb which produces beautifully presented natural products including teas, lotions, massage oils, and soaps. The pair has completed six consulting and “coaching” sessions since the FAVACA mission in May 2007 and due to Dr. Donna’s guidance, Roberte has applied to be a minority vendor for Macy’s, enrolled in short business classes and her prepared her vendor application and Public Relations packet. Bel Zeb participated in the Sister Cities Convention drawing the attention of Homestead’s [Fruit and Spice Park](#), a major tourist attraction in south Florida, who was so impressed with the products that they recently picked up the line which will be featured by their bed and breakfast.

### **SMALL BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT: FOCUS OF EXPERT TRAINING IN HAITI**

With the average time to start a business in Haiti over 200 days, and the average seed money needed amounting to over 150% of the per capita GNI, the challenges faced by aspiring entrepreneurs in Haiti are plenty. One place they can turn is [l’Universite Centre de Formation et de Développement Economique \(CFDE\)](#) – Center for Training and Economic Development. The university provides management and technical assistance services to economic development and governance programs for domestic and international, public and private sector clients. In order to further enhance their already strong curriculum, CFDE President and Dean, George Brunet requested a FAVACA volunteer that could provide a week long seminar on the essentials of entrepreneurship for students and interested persons in the business sector. The objective of the training was to help the participants understand the best ways to start new businesses in response to identified opportunities and to manage their businesses properly in order to create increased employment possibilities in Haiti. First time volunteer Dr. Aaron Rose from Seattle, Washington seized the opportunity to travel to Port-au-Prince, Haiti from July 25-August 1, 2007. Dr. Rose has served as president and CEO of [Rose Consulting](#), and advises businesses of all sizes in global strategic expansion



and business development, international growth and knowledge management. Dr. Rose's expertise is evaluating barriers to entry in foreign markets, creating strategic alignment between business operations and business strategy, assessing existing corporate, financial and operational plans, improving business performance to gain operational efficiencies and more effective resource allocation, and developing short and long-range operating plans with specific goals for measurement. He has consulted clients at all levels ranging from small business to heads of state, and his experience was a tremendous asset in the training. Thirty entrepreneurs benefited from the week-long training.

### **MICRO-CREDIT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM DRAWS ATTENTION IN HAITI**



The micro-lending model has proven to be very successful in most regions, with default rates running as low as 4 %. Given the improving situation in Haiti, indicators were prime for local micro-lender, [FONKOZE](#), the Alternative Bank for the Organized Poor, to team up with FAVACA in creating a program aimed to provide a select group of 50 past loan recipients that have a proven track record with the organization, an additional loan of at least \$1,300.00 and specialized training intended to help them move their business from the informal sector to the formal sector of the economy. These 50 “graduates”, from all 10 departments, started in FONKOZE with a \$70.00 three-month loan and have built their businesses and consistently repaid their increasing loans on time over the years. In honor of these 50 women entrepreneurs, a celebration was held on August 24, 2007 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti where media and dignitaries from all over heard their stories. Since its inception in 1996, FONKOZE has grown to serve over 120,000 clients in 30 branches in all of Haiti's departments. Funding for this micro-credit business development program was substantially aided by funds from the State of Florida's [Florida-Haiti Initiative](#).

### **COMPUTERS FOR MUNICIPALITIES THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE**

Haiti's municipal elections in December of 2006 filled local government positions for the first time in over a decade. With such a lengthy gap in local governance, some municipalities are in need of basic infrastructural improvements in order to govern and administrate effectively. To this end Executive Director of [Ayiti Gouvenans](#), Jackson



*“What a computer and just a sheet of paper mean for us in the USA are totally different for local government officials in the Northwest; a luxury for some, a miracle for others. ”*

Voltaire requested the assistance of FAVACA to help with the purchase of computers and office supplies for four mayors' offices

in the Northwest Department of Haiti. Ayiti Gouvenans is a nonprofit organization with members in both Florida and Haiti who have come together to promote sustainable development and good governance throughout Haiti via education and training. Ayiti Gouvenans' training covers high-priority areas of learning and expertise that are indispensable for community development and are provided to local elected officials and community leaders of Jean Rabel, Mole St. Nicolas, Bais de Henne, and Bombardopolis. These high-priority areas include: municipal budgeting; good governance; fiscal discipline; rural development and sustainable development; civic engagement and governmental responsibilities; urban planning and management of municipalities; environmental and agricultural management; and reforestation. According to Voltaire, without the equipment that was provided by FAVACA, many of the much needed trainings for the municipal authorities would not be possible. By providing computers, office supplies, and generators, municipal authorities will now have the resources

available to begin documenting much of the history, financial records, and development of the areas in which they preside over. The mayors trained expressed their gratitude in a collective sentiment, “What a computer and just a sheet of paper mean for us in the USA are totally different for local government officials in the Northwest; a luxury for some, a miracle for others.” The training was provided to over 50 government officials from the Northwest department. This grant and project was funded in large part by the [Florida-Haiti Initiative](#).

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The Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas (FAVACA) is a non-profit organization established in 1982. FAVACA was founded in the belief that Florida's future is interwoven with that of our Caribbean neighbors. The organization's mission is the improvement of social and economic conditions in the Caribbean and Central America through volunteer service. FAVACA provides technical assistance and training through a diverse combination of federal, private and State of Florida funding sources. To date, more than 1,200 volunteer missions to 29 nations and territories of the region have been completed. A wide variety of training is offered in health and social issues, agriculture, education, environment, disaster mitigation, women's leadership, capacity building and more.

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