

# COMMUNIQUE



FAVACA

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THE FLORIDA  
ASSOCIATION FOR  
VOLUNTEER ACTION  
IN THE CARIBBEAN  
AND THE AMERICAS

## IN BRIEF

•FAVACA joins the State's My Safe Florida Home Program. Contact us for information on how we can help fortify your home and save you money on your insurance premium.

•Welcome to the newest Board Member Robert Maguire of Washington, D.C.

•Contact Us: email [favaca@favaca.org](mailto:favaca@favaca.org) to be added to our distribution list.

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## Graham Praises FAVACA Anniversary

Bringing out the good silver to celebrate Florida's premier international volunteer organization.

"It's hard to believe it's been that many years," says former U.S. Senator Bob Graham of 25 years of FAVACA, the nonprofit organization that he founded in 1982 while Florida's governor. He recalls its creation as "a means by which we could organize the volunteer spirit of Floridians and put that spirit to the service of our neighbors in all kinds of ways."

Graham was the guest of honor at FAVACA's silver anniversary celebration, which took place November 16<sup>th</sup> onboard the new Norwegian Pearl cruise ship at the Port of Miami.

Over the years, FAVACA has sent hundreds of volunteers with expertise into 34 nations across the Caribbean and Central America, and these volunteers have trained over 35,000 individuals. The only program of its



Bob Graham envisioned that Florida's experts could enrich the region through volunteerism.

kind in the U.S., FAVACA has received a state appropriation since 1986.

Graham sees the regional reach of FAVACA as a natural fit with Florida's geography. "Florida for most purposes is a Caribbean state. God created us as a finger that pointed towards the Caribbean," says

Graham. "Our history is in large measure derived from the Caribbean, and today much of our economic, political and cultural life continues to be influenced by the Caribbean."

Graham is also quick to praise the volunteers who carry out FAVACA's mission. "You've been there after hurricanes to help respond. You've been there to inoculate children. You've been there to deliver books and help to educate youth in our neighboring countries to the south."

The anniversary event was a chance to honor Graham's foresight in creating the organization, review its accomplishments, and look to the future.

"I congratulate this organization for 25 years of service," observes Graham, "and the spirit, will, and commitment to another 25 years of close relationships between the people of Florida and the people of the Caribbean — one people."

## Florida Haiti Initiative Florida Funds Initiative for Collaboration

Although the difficulties in Haiti may seem overwhelming, Haitians and Floridians are looking past all obstacles and creating hope by investing in people. Late in 2006, FAVACA won a \$1 million grant, awarded by the State Legislature, to inaugurate the Florida Haiti Initiative (FHI).

In less than a year of operation, FHI has become a force for change. It sent over 70 volunteers to Haiti, awarded over 15 grants and 10 academic scholarships, and provided 50 small business loans of between \$1,300 to \$1,600 to Haitian women in rural areas.

In the medical arena, FHI trained 30 nurses on HIV/AIDS and preventative care, taught CPR to 70 nursing students, and performed life-saving operations on 20 children with hydrocephalus, a dangerous accumulation of

fluid on the brain.

This initiative came to be following a series of pivotal events, starting with the resignation of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004 and followed by Governor Jeb Bush visiting Haiti that June. Gov. Bush then assembled prominent Haitian-Americans in the Haiti Advisory Group, which led to the creation of the Florida Haiti Initiative.

"We hope that this money will be leveraged to generate lots of volunteer support and lots of private sector support, hopefully drawing down additional support from Washington," said Bush.

Haiti's Ministry of Tourism has benefited from collaboration with FHI in the development of a regional master plan, and

other assistance has included computer training to teachers, beekeeping training to farmers, and the production of 13 Public Service Announcements on major security and delinquency issues.

FAVACA and FHI will continue to target the three priority areas identified by the Florida Haiti Advisory Group: security, economic development, and disaster preparedness. Specific programs are addressing higher education, micro-credit, and customs issues of high relevance to Haiti and Florida.

Haiti's close ties to Florida include a population of over 500,000 Haitian-Americans and status as one of the state's largest trading partners.

Learn more at [www.floridahaiti.org](http://www.floridahaiti.org)

**"The essence of volunteering is planting a seed and watching it grow."- Maude Heuterlou, Volunteer**



Lisa Green gathers with some of the loan recipients she trained.

# Sisters Help Sisters Take Charge

## Volunteer Vet Gives Credit in Honduras

A little credit goes a long way. When it comes to the second-poorest country in the Americas, Honduras, even a loan of \$30 can jump-start new businesses.

FAVACA volunteer Lisa Green witnessed this growth during her four-month volunteer service with the Adelante Foundation, a micro-credit lending organization that has helped nearly 4,000 rural poor in Honduras. FAVACA provided

for her travel expenses. Green was recruited to start a training program that will create a local cadre of mentors and business teachers. From February to June 2006, she shared her knowledge as a retail broker and teacher of financial literacy.

"We served the poorest of the poor, the women, in remote rural villages without access to a bank," says Green, a resident of West Palm Beach. "Their only access

to credit was through the black market and at exorbitant rates, setting up an almost assured failure."

Green has done similar work with FAVACA over a five-year period, and it inspired her to create a pilot program, Financial Literacy Skills, for newly arrived refugees in Florida. She helps new arrivals in Florida to become informed, successful entrepreneurs.

## Crafty and Sleepless in Haiti

Haiti is well-known for its arts and crafts, but getting them from the impoverished nation into U.S. department stores is a journey that demands huge amounts of tenacity and paperwork. FAVACA has teamed up for the fifth time with a Haitian women's advocacy group, Femmes en Democratie, to help artisans to navigate the system and promote their products to large, international markets.

Volunteer Donna Goldstein of Plantation, director of the nonprofit World Arts Now, and 10 other volunteers from Florida and New York went in May 2007 to a special

event in Haiti called "Women, Creation & Production." There she met and began mentoring Ms. Roberte Laurente, a vendor of fine oils. Goldstein coached her in marketing and enrolled her in some necessary business classes. She is also helping Laurente to clear licensing hurdles in Miami-Dade County and at Macy's stores.

*"I am so excited about this that I haven't slept in days,"* exclaims Laurente. *"Dr. Donna has been great! She has been coaching me and she is exactly what I need."*

Volunteers were able to educate 60 women vendors at the three-day event in Petion-Ville, Haiti. They explored topics related to American and other international markets, e-commerce, and how to improve products.

As follow-up to the exposition in Haiti, FAVACA sponsored two Haitian vendors to showcase their products at the Annual International Sister Cities Convention in Fort Lauderdale in July. This project was made



Traditional Haitian dress; Various hand-made artisan crafts on display at expose.



## Fighting Domestic Violence in Nicaragua

Latina sisters are learning to stand up to the "machos."

Domestic abuse is widespread in Latin America, and physical violence ranges as high as 35 percent of women, according to World Vision a large international Christian non-governmental organization. To support the women of Nicaragua, two Tallahassee women visited Managua in June 2007 to spread the gospel of violence prevention.

First-time FAVACA volunteers Minerva Figueroa and Grace Frances conducted training workshops in collaboration with the Association for the Defense of Women and Children in Nicaragua. Meetings covered the dynamics of sexual and domestic violence, the legal system, and how to implement and manage rape crisis and domestic violence programs.

"The women were relieved to know they were not the only ones going through

these problems," said Frances, who is a director at the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence. "They feel very committed to solving this issue."

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## Support FAVACA

FAVACA receives more requests for assistance than we are able to support. Please help us by investing in FAVACA and the region's future by making your tax-deductible contribution today! You can mail your check in the accompanying envelope or visit [www.favaca.org](http://www.favaca.org) to make a secure donation by clicking the "Donate" button.

*Donate Today at [www.favaca.org](http://www.favaca.org)*



Volunteers Grace Frances and Minerva Figueroa, middle, with Nicaraguan partners

## President Welcomes Year Two

All systems have been set on “go” since Carolyn Rose-Avila became president of FAVACA in September 2006, and she plans to keep it that way.

She is leading the organization into the new territories of fundraising, Florida based programming, and a Haiti volunteers in education corps while maintaining its traditional focus on volunteers.

“We didn’t take a breather all year,” says Rose-Avila of year one, which saw a record number of volunteers placed by FAVACA. “The first year felt like a roller coaster. Within the first weeks I was accepting the Florida Haiti Initiative contract.”

The new \$1 million contract was a surprise during her first official visit to Tallahassee. “We had no idea we would get the contract,” she says. “It was unexpected support from the governor’s office, and it put us on a fast track.” FAVACA had only seven months to use the new funds.

The contract was renewed by the state legislature this year, but it died under a veto from Governor Crist. Even so, Rose-Avila looks on the bright side.

“We were successful in what we set out to do. I’m so proud that the legislature was willing to commit another \$1 million to us for FHI,” she says.

Although a relative newcomer to FAVACA, Carolyn Rose-Avila carries experience that matches the organization’s broad reach.

She came from World Vision where she had been a Senior Policy Advisor for the Americas and the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Director for Humanitarian and Emergency Assistance, responding to disasters across the region.

She came to Florida as the Regional Director of Latin America and the Caribbean for Save the Children in 1998. She managed the organization’s relief operations in Nicaragua during Hurricane Mitch and was Interim country director for Save the Children in El Salvador. She was

Peace Corps director in Guatemala. As a Peace Corps volunteer, she lived in the Amazon territory of Venezuela.

More recently, she was an independent election observer in Haiti and consultant to the U.N. regarding Haitian security.

At FAVACA, she has overseen an expansion into new areas such as grants management, educational scholarships, micro lending support, and public relations.

She beams when recalling the opportunity to start working for FAVACA. “It seemed like a dream come true. I love the organization.”



**Carolyn Rose-Avila  
President FAVACA**

## Curtailing Caribbean Drug Use

The best way to reduce drug abuse is to prevent it from occurring in the first place, but many Caribbean islands are struggling in their attempts. Lending a hand through FAVACA is John Daigle of Tallahassee, the past executive director of the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, who traveled to six countries from June 11 to 22, 2007.

Daigle put his 30-plus years of experience to work in consulting with the National Drug Councils of St. Lucia, Grenada, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Dominica.

Because these islands also serve as gateways to Florida, dealing with the drug problem there could have an effect on drug trafficking in the U.S.

When asked about their most pressing issue, Daigle replies: “Clearly, resources to expand their treatment and train additional staff.”

Daigle spent time assessing current substance abuse prevention and treatment programs and identifying needs. The DARE prevention program for young people was one resource he advocated for strongly. He also addressed

public messaging, after-school programs, tourism, and workplace policies. The training resulted in a series of post-trip resources sent to each Drug Council, including CDs on drug abuse, and educational materials.

*“Doing this work you meet some good people,” says Daigle. “I am certainly excited about the possibility of doing more work in the region.”*

## Still Going Green: FAVACA builds on long environmental record

FAVACA was green when green wasn’t cool. The organization has supported many environmental projects since the beginning of its 25 year history, ranging from pollution control to tree grafting seminars to wind energy, and requests for assistance are on the rise.

**Alternative Energy:** Requests for expertise in alternative energy have doubled in recent years, and FAVACA is working closely with the Florida Solar Energy Center to provide targeted assistance and training. Already FAVACA has conducted seminars on the use of alternative energy in various Caribbean islands and nations, and the Haitian Hotel and Tourism Association is looking to purchase \$2 million worth of solar energy equipment from Florida.

**Environmental Protection:** El Salvador has requested



**Focus of a mission to Panama, a wreck reef teeming with life.**

FAVACA’s help to design a plan for protecting its wildlife on land and at sea, particularly around its Pacific barrier

reefs. It hopes to improve eco-tourism and a sustainable fisheries industry.

**Aquaculture:** Farmers in the Dominican Republic are looking to the sea for their next big crop: shrimp. They have requested technical assistance from FAVACA to set up a clean operation in the village of Punta Rucia.

Other areas with a growing demand include disaster management, park development, water management, and environmental business development.

Florida and its Caribbean neighbors have much to share and to learn from each other when it comes to respecting and living peacefully with our environment, and from that perspective, the future is bright green.



The Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas

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## A unique Development Partnership with the Caribbean and the Americas

### Volunteers Awarded, One Remembered



Left to Right: Neville Graham, Joseph "Joe" Burgess, Janet Dilling, Audrey Heffron-Casserleigh, Robert "Bo" Sterk, Dawn Smith Raymond, and Kelley Scudder

The late James Segerstrom of San Francisco was honored posthumously as FAVACA's 100th volunteer of the year, along with seven other awardees. The founder of Rescue III International, he volunteered in Jamaica in 2005 and in Haiti in 2006 by training over 80 first responders in swift water rescue techniques, which saves lives in dangerous rivers and mudslides. He passed away following a stroke at age 60 in February 2007.



volunteers. Governor Crist wrote in a letter of acknowledgment that "volunteerism is an important part of building enduring friendships between Florida, the Caribbean, and Central American region."

The staff of FAVACA has given the Outstanding Volunteer Achievement Award since 1989 to exemplary

Honored at a reception in Miami, the seven other individuals and their volunteer fields are: Kelley Scudder of St. Petersburg/cultural resources; Robert "Bo" Sterk of St. Augustine/beekeeping; Dawn Smith Raymond of Ft. Myers/sign language; Audrey Heffron-Casserleigh of Tallahassee/disaster management; Joseph "Joe" Burgess of Clermont/emergency response; Janet Dilling of Thomasville, Ga./disaster management; and Neville Graham of Lake Placid/delinquency.

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