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Lawrence University

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Earthquake Relief Funds Heading to Haiti for Music School Reconstruction

Posted on: December 12th, 2011 by Rick Peterson

Almost two years after a devastating earthquake leveled much of the island nation of Haiti, Lawrence University’s campaign to help rebuild the Holy Trinity Music School in Port-au-Prince is taking shape.

The school, a long-time destination for Lawrence student and faculty volunteers, was destroyed by the January 12, 2010 earthquake that killed more than 200,000 Haitians. Nine days later, Lawrence hosted the “Concert for Haiti” which was recorded by Fox-11 WLUK and rebroadcast several times across Northeast Wisconsin.

The concert raised $32,000 through donations from the community and a recent gift from the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac pushed the overall total to more than $40,000. The funds are now being sent to Haiti to begin reconstruction efforts.

Tom Clowes '01 is one of numerous alumni who have traveled to Haiti to work with young music students there.
“Weeks after the earthquake, musicians from Holy Trinity began performing for displaced people living in makeshift tent cities. With this donation the music school will build a temporary rehearsal structure enabling work to go on even in inclement weather,” said Lawrence Professor of Cello Janet Anthony, who has traveled to Haiti annually to teach music. “Plans have been drawn up to rebuild the entire cathedral complex (cathedral, convent, elementary, trade and music schools, art museum, concert hall, administrative offices, guest house) but, even with the most optimistic estimates, the completion date is several years off. This donation marks the first large step in the process of rebuilding and is hugely important. The generosity of our local community is astounding, moving and extremely gratifying.”

The funds raised, with generous support from Fox-11 WLUK, the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac, the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, the American Red Cross and the Northeast Wisconsin community, are being used to build a temporary shelter in downtown Port-au-Prince that will house two rehearsal halls, a studio and an instrument depot, as well as office space at the school’s annex in nearby Petionville.

“This was a wonderful example of our community pulling together to collaborate for an important cause,” said Lawrence President Jill Beck. “Lawrence could not have done this alone. We are so grateful to our many community partners, especially to the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region for stewarding the donated funds and to the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac for raising additional funds and coordinating with the diocese in Haiti to ensure the money is safely transferred to the school.”

Since 1996, Lawrence students and faculty have traveled to Haiti to teach at various music programs. The Holy Trinity Music School began in 1963 and slowly became one of the only institutions in Haiti to integrate children from all economic levels.
At the time of the earthquake, more than 1,200 students attended the school with its five orchestras, three bands and the renowned Petits Chanteurs. Over the years, the music school has gained international acclaim, touring the United States several times.