2022 ANNUAL **REPORT** FRIENDS OF ECOLE AGAPE, INC.

“Feeding a child at school is such a simple thing – but it works miracles.”

Help us remove the ‘at risk for hunger’ label that Haitian children bear. When the risk is removed students are more likely to pay attention, have a more retentive memory, have fewer behavioral issues, and perform better in school.

**WHEN YOU FEED A CHILD, YOU FEED THE FUTURE.**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2022 FRIENDS OF ECOLE AGAPE, INC.**

A person holding a mug and a dog

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceThank you for your continued concern about the students of Ecole Agape in Lilavois, Haiti. The year 2022 was rife with economic, political, and societal difficulties. Without your help and compassionate generosity, our students would not have been able to continue their education**.**

**REMEMBERING**: **David Lewis McChesney: 5 February 1942 – 4 June 2022.**  **A Life Well Lived and a Man Well Loved**. Friends and family remembered this benevolent man with stories, life experiences, and donations to Ecole Agape, WAIM, and American Cancer Society. Judy McChesney, an early member of Friends of Ecole Agape, lost her husband in June. David was a beloved family man, friend, and optimist. A Together Team, they helped with fundraisers. David was particularly appreciated at event set up and clean up, one of the first to show and one of the last to leave. He was generous with his time, talent, and treasure. He is missed**.**

**ECOLE AGAPE STUDENTS.** The ongoing socioeconomic and political crisis in Haiti disrupted the school year. Rising energy prices, civil unrest, protests against the government of Haiti, armed gang violence, an outbreak of cholera, shortages of fuel and drinking water, and widespread acute hunger became the everyday life for the vast majority of Haitians. Director Ginnette Cassius reported that the students were experiencing stress and fear of violence when they left their homes or walked to school.

With school closed for the months of September, October, and November, there were only 113 school days. Student attendance was sporadic, but 231 students attended classes when school was in session. The computer lab and reading workshops in the library were favorite classes. When possible, the older students retrieved homework assignments and library books to practice preparing oral and written summaries. Having access to the internet has facilitated learning and connected the students to the outside world. A class had a ZOOM exchange between students at Ecole Agape and students at a school in Saskatchewan, Canada.

In April, teachers gave Easter baskets to all the students. In May, students celebrated Mother’s Day, honoring their teachers. There was no Summer Camp due to the gang violence in the streets and no security for students and monitors. Director Ginnette conducted a limited summer session from mid-July to mid-September for grades 5 and 6 to complete the curriculum and review the material and concepts covered when school was in session.

Paul Wicks, an emeritus member and consultant, demonstrated the use of the Reading Room’s App to FEA members. When the Library App is downloaded on tablet computers, an almost limitless number of “open source” books can be stored as a digital library. The books are in PDF format, organized by content level, with a variety of themes, and topics for ages 6-12 years, both fiction and non-fiction. As more “open source” books become available, they will be added to the tablets. French and English books will be translated into Creole. A student can select and read a book in one of several languages or use the tablet as a mobile computer. The student can access the digital library without the need for the internet. The tablets reduce the expense of creating a traditional library and of buying and shipping books to Haiti. In August, members voted to purchase 10 tablets to be sent to Ecole Agape.

**ECOLE AGAPE STAFF.** FEA members continued to fund staff salaries during the school’s intermittent closings. A course in “Animation Technique and Simplified Management of a Mini Library” provided training for Chantal Coutard, consultant, and Nathalie Maxy, librarian. Chantal and Nathalie also assessed the tablet for its potential use in the classroom. Chantal developed a curriculum for the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade health and sexual education unit. In August,Friends voted to provide $100 for a consultant to teach the staff about computer resources.

**ECOLE AGAPE SCHOOL.**  In March, Friends of Ecole Agape sent 20 new and used sewing machines, ready for use. A sewing room was added to the new school building. In July, FEA members voted to disburse $1,945 to furnish the room with 10 sewing tables, chairs, 3 worktables, and a mirror. Sewing classes are an integral part of the school’s plan to become self-sustaining. In the future, the school will have a Saturday sewing skills class for students at no cost. Classes for adults in the community will extend over a two-year period with instruction twice a week for an affordable fee. The plan is for adults and/or students to make rental apparel for special occasions, with the income supporting the school.

Chantal and Marie Michele attended our June 26 Wine Tasting. On the eve of the event, Chantal and Marie Michele addressed their country’s upheaval and its effect upon the school. The major reasons for the decline in attendance, enrollment, the students’ ability to progress through the grades are political instability and growing violence. Families fearing the street protests and gangs are less likely to send their children to school. The school has improved security with heightened walls, locked areas, and new gates, but going to and from school poses the greatest threat, because the gangs are targeting schools that stay open.

On October 18, a ZOOM meeting with Marie Michele, Chantal, the school Director Ginnette Casseus and several FEA members revealed that escalation in gang violence, long lines and increased cost for fuel and food had closed most schools, including Ecole Agape. After this meeting, the membership voted to send money for food. Ginnette agreed to distribute money to families that were struggling with food insecurity and acute hunger. Risking her own safety, Ginette distributed money to these families in small amounts without attracting the attention of the gangs.

**FEA INITIATIVES JANUARY THROUGH MARCH**

A group of people holding certificates

Description automatically generatedThe Finance Committee was established in the BY-LAWS of 2021. In March, Chairpersons Anne Rash, Larry Grasso, and Michael Bartron opened an account with Ameritrade, a brokerage firm that does not charge non-profits fees. This low-risk investment account’s interest will be available for emergencies as well as other needs above and beyond the yearly operating budget.

Co-Chair of Social Media and Technology, Sheila Appleton added Twitter and Instagram to our internet presence. On March 10, members voted to allot $1,000 for the purchase of Haitian crafts to be sold at the wine tasting and barbecue & concert. Marie Michelle and Chantal agreed to purchase and to bring the crafts on their next visit. On March 26, twenty-five chili chefs competed in the Third Annual Chili Cook Off. The Hungarian Club received the People’s Choice of Best Chili, Best Presentation of a chili, and Most Original Chili. Second prize went to Denise Reardon-Popp of CLICK Kitchen; third prize to Eric and Kathie Hood; Best Vegetarian Chili went to Bob Jennette; and the Most Smokin Hot Chili award went to Randy and Michelle Schott. All winning chefs donated their prize money to charity. Curtis Brand, Dennis Collin, Jon Hand, Mark Campbell, and Bruce John gifted their musical talent. The event was dedicated to Doris Palmer. one of our long-term generous supporters.

**APRIL THROUGH JUNE** FEA met with Marie Michele and Chantal while visiting for our 4th Annual Wine Tasting. They brought metal works, jewelry, wooden items, and hand painted artifacts for the Haitian Crafts Sale. Melanie Morrissette and Sandra Mason of Storrs Therapeutic Massage provided chair massage and donated their entire proceeds to Ecole Agape. Jim Mercik, a Connecticut multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and arranger, whose compositions are in the Smithsonian’s Permanent Collection of Folk Music gifted the wine tasters with his immense talent. At the end of his performance, he received a standing ovation, a first at a FEA event. Patrons showered praise on the delicious appetizers prepared by Friends of Ecole Agape. Ashford Spirit Shoppe again provided a variety of fine wines to pair with the appetizers.

**JULY THROUGH SEPTEMBER**

FEA approved and funded the purchase of 10 android tablets, furnishings for the new sewing room, and the cost of computer training for the staff.

An unusually warm and sunny day for September contributed to the success of our 7th Annual Barbecue & Concert. Chef Denise Reardon-Popp from CLICK prepared the main entrées: pulled pork, chicken legs and thighs, hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, and vegetable skewers, while FEA members provided side dishes, drinks, and desserts. For the second year, UConn Pharmacy students were servers in the food tent. Karen Bushey-Lussier opened for Curtis Brand, Hugh Blumenfeld, Radio Waves while the Patty Tuite Band closed, their first performance at an FEA event.

On September 24, Jennette Picard and Judy Melichar represented Friends of Ecole Agape at the Celebrate Mansfield Festival, an event that features the people, businesses, and community organizations that make Mansfield unique.

**OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER**

The October 18 ZOOM meeting with Marie Michelle, Chantal, and Director Ginnette Casseus provided the membership with a first-hand narrative of the continuing problems and their effect Ecole Agape’s ability to educate students.

With a return rate of 14 percent, the 2022 Sponsorship Appeal generated $27,000. The vast majority of donors either sponsored a student (57 percent) or designated their donation for use where it was most needed (27 percent). The remaining donors sponsored salaries, tuitions for secondary students, books, internet service fees, solar lights, and shipping costs. The campaign canister total for the year was $355.40.

**A group of girls in pink dresses

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**At the Annual Meeting in November, officers were elected for 2023. The By-Laws were amended to add a new position: Event Manager, responsible for the formation and physical construction at the various fund-raising venues.

In December, Amazon announced AmazonSmile would be discontinued on February 20, 2023. Microsoft announced that beginning January 2023 Give with Bing would be part of the Microsoft Rewards program. Users may designate Friends of Ecole Agape as their nonprofit. The advantage of the Microsoft Rewards program is that one does not need to spend money to acquire funds for Ecole Agape.

**We thank you for their generosity in 2022. We hope to see you at our 2023 events. Your support gives us hope, gives us a sense of community, and enables us to continue our work in Haiti. Please know the difference you have made in the lives of the students at Ecole Agape, their families, and Haiti. “If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family (nation).” African Proverb (Fanti Ghana}**

When you educate a man, you educate an individual. When you educate a woman, you educate a generation.

**We invite you to send us your feedback! Do you have questions, comments or criticisms about the goals and work of Friends of Ecole Agape? We value your opinion.**

**Please contact or visit us at:** [**www.friendsofecoleagape.org**](http://www.friendsofecoleagape.org)**;** [**friendsofecoleagape@gmail.com**](mailto:friendsofecoleagape@gmail.com)**;** [**https://www.facebook.com/friendsofecoleagape**](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofecoleagape)**;** [**https://www.instagram.com/friendsofecoleagape**](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofecoleagape) **or write to Friends of Ecole Agape, Inc. P.O. 303, Ashford, CT 06278.**

**We invite you to join us. Please consider sharing your talent and time. If you would like to know more about Friends of Ecole Agape, please call one of our members. If you are considering joining Friends of Ecole Agape, Inc., call 860-810-6656.**

**Friends of Ecole Agape, Inc:** Co-Chairs: Anne Rash and Jane Moynihan; Co-Secretaries: Judy McChesney and Lillie Tierney; Treasurer: Larry Grasso; Social Media and Technology: Sheila Appleton and Rikke Wassenberg; Event Manager: Ted Hill. Finance Committee: Anne Rash, Larry Grasso, Ted Hill. Members: Cindy Moeckel, Judy Belek, Mary Anne Brennan, Catherine Belanger, Jeannette Picard, Peter Kirk, Judy Melichar, Leigh Gwara, Marie Smith, Mary Ertel, Mary Romney, Lorraine Cloutier, Rabbi Jeff Glickman, Mindy Glickman, Susan Hacking, Saud Anwar, and Yusra Anwar. Emeritus Members: Lucy Hill, Kacee Erhard, Diane Giggey, Maggie Kirk, Barbara Pivarnik, Mary Wehrle, Mary Patrone, Dick Long, Dr. Tom Gorin, Paul Wicks, and Elizabeth Wicks.

