

food purchasing, despite being wheelchair-bound. He was the beloved “Uncle” to all young residents and students, and at nighttime, he was the resident “protector” when Père Duveaux had gone home.

In later December, Lilian Azor also died. Known fondly as “Dixie,” she was deaf and used her experience of that disability to teach deaf children in the school. Visitors in the West Tennessee Haiti Partnership remember all of the meals she cooked for them when they stayed in the St. Vincent’s Guest House prior to the 2010 earthquake. At St. Vincent’s since the days of founder Sister Joan, Dixie was also responsible for supervising younger residents after class.

While enduring physical disabilities, both Samuel and Dixie refused to let themselves be defined by their handicaps. St. Vincent’s is richer for them.



Thank You All!

You raised the \$250,000 which is half of St. Vincent’s operating budget! 2024 was not an easy year in-country with the destruction of our downtown Medical Center and Brace Shop, but everyone rallied. Two months after the destruction, St. Vincent’s began to construct several small buildings on the campus to serve as medical treatment rooms. The Dioceses of Connecticut (spurred by Trinity Parish in Wethersfield), New Hampshire, and North Dakota contributed extra-budgetary funds to purchase medical equipment. The challenge, of course, is to find the essential equipment in-country, as precious little comes in through Haitian Customs these days. The medical staff has, however, been able to procure such basic supplies as blood pressure cuffs, thermometers, and stethoscopes. Support from the (Diocese of) West Tennessee Haiti Partnership enabled Dr. Valcy’s thrice-weekly visits to care for all residents and students.



Individual donors helped SVC to focus on infrastructure: salaries, food, and fuel. There were some uncommonly generous gifts. One generous Florida couple contributed 50% of our food budget (Food for the Poor also distributes rice, beans and oil) thereby ensuring nutritious meals for all on the campus. Another donor’s gift meant the motorcycle tank was always full, so that our courier could pick up the physicians and bring them to the new Medical Center Annex. Yet another’s contribution purchased additional solar panels and batteries, so that electricity could continue to flow.

There were some dicey times. Nearby gang activity in December meant greatly reduced classes, as it was unsafe for faculty and students to travel to campus. The Medical Center Annex, smaller than the downtown clinic, meant furloughing some staff. “Savings” on those salaries were redirected to faculty, whose income was severely impacted by 100% inflation over the past two years. What is needed and what is contributed is a fine balancing act, and one that must be recalibrated frequently as the situation on the ground demands.

But the fact remains that together, you and the St. Vincent’s staff, kept this remarkable center whole in 2024.

And now...please continue your support in this new year of 2025. Use the enclosed envelope or make your gift online at [www.stvincentshaiti.org](http://www.stvincentshaiti.org) to keep all of these remarkable people safe, healthy, and educated for yet another year.

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When you do, please consider selecting the box to cover the processing fees to ensure that all of your gift goes toward helping the children of St. Vincent’s Center in Haiti.

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Spring 2025 Newsletter

[www.stvincentshaiti.org](http://www.stvincentshaiti.org)

The Brace Shop Reopens

More than 80% of Haiti’s health care system has been destroyed. SVC Trustee and trauma surgeon, Dr. Pierre Marie Woolley, reports that the December gang attack, fire, and subsequent occupation of Bernard Mevs Hospital leaves only one hospital intact in Port-au-Prince.

Thus, our Medical Center Annex on the School campus plays a critical role. For safety reasons, Père Duveaux currently limits the staff to a Physical Therapist, a Psychologist and a rotating staff of five physicians, consisting of Pediatricians and Orthopedic Surgeons. The staff strives to keep it open three days a week, but that is not always possible. Security is a priority for both staff and patients. One December day, there were 15 appointments on the schedule, but only one patient was able to come. Having arrived with our courier by motorbike, the doctors were there, and although the situation was frustrating, they certainly understood.

Continued inside





As you read this article, the Brace Shop will have already reopened in our Santo 17 campus Medical Annex. Since the late 1940s and early 1950s polio epidemic, St. Vincent’s has been known in Haiti for its brace work - more so, actually, than for the School. We also pioneered the torque treatment for clubfeet in country, and leg braces are always an integral part of that follow-up treatment.

As health care systems struggle in Haiti, word about available competent medical care spreads quickly. Families of children needing braces approached Père Duveaux after the Annex opened, and, at once, he began planning.

As of the first week of January 2025, there were 25 children on the waiting list. The previous week, there had been “only” 21! Some furloughed Brace Shop workers have been recalled. Thanks to several diocesan grants, there were funds to purchase needed tools, and those tools are available in country.

The reopening is modest in both size and aspiration. While the Brace Shop will meet needs, it will be smaller and much less visible than it was in downtown Port-au-Prince, for reasons of safety. While we welcome attention and support in the United States, it is best to be unobtrusive in Haiti.

## The Adult Residents Who Give Back

They are all deaf, blind, or in wheelchairs, but that doesn’t prevent them from serving. The adult residents, all of whom are graduates of the School, play a vital part in the daily life of the Center, easing the burden on staff and advancing the care and education of the students. Here are some of the ways that they “pay it forward”:

Now the oldest resident, Jimmy, who is blind, teaches Braille, plays the accordion and, for many years, taught music and accompanied the hand bell choir.

Jean Marc and Mackenson, who are also blind, help the youngest students learn Braille and teach them how to study their lessons after class.

Evens, who is visually impaired, delivers potable water to all 22 classrooms, administrators’ offices, and residents’ rooms.

Jonelson is deaf, but he’s the one who successfully oversees the discipline of the youngest at the Center.

Carlentz is also deaf. He interprets for deaf adults and helps wheelchair-bound children move safely around classrooms and campus.

Judith has severe scoliosis, but she’s completed cooking school and, as a gourmet cook, works at the Café which the adult residents have set up and run on the campus.

Although Moïse is in wheelchair, he helps to water the garden, and Maille, also in a wheelchair, is responsible for informing everyone when meals are ready.



Zachary wheels himself to the arrival point for students and ensures that all the students’ wheelchairs are lined up for them to attend class, and after class, he puts them safely away for the next day.

Kenson repairs and refreshes wheelchairs for everyone at St. Vincent’s and also for the nearby Partners in Health orphanage and school, Zanmi Beni. Several years ago, he translated the Perkins Institute for the Blind Braille Machine Manual into Kréyol and, with two others, repaired 19 Braille machines.

The daily interaction with students, some 20 of whom reside at the School, makes this multi-generational community a closely-knit family.

## Celebrating International Day of the Handicapped

Two unobtrusive small vans ferried SVC participants to the December 3rd celebration at Food for the Poor (FFTP) headquarters in the Delmas section of Port-au-Prince. (The SVC bus couldn’t handle the debris-strewn road.) Observed globally, this day marks the achievements of people with disabilities. In 2024, FFTP asked that St. Vincent’s design both the religious and the cultural components of the day.

Following the Eucharist, there was poetry recitation, singing, dancing, and musical instrument playing. What is unique about this is that all the graceful dancers were deaf. Yet, without being able to hear the music, they began and ended their routines on time and synchronized all their steps! The SVC students, some as young as ten, who played the piano and violin were all blind. Our new music teacher has given his piano to the school, which means that his devoted young followers can practice regularly, and their enthusiastic progress is exemplary.

When queried how it was possible to leave campus and participate in the celebration and why, Père Duveaux responded: “It is not good if everyone stays here and cries. We have to face the situation. And the children need to get out.” Originally, Père Duveaux had a list of 230 invitees. Food for the Poor asked that he cull the list to 100, because “if there is a problem, we can handle 100.”

The daily, hourly, last-minute pivots define life in Port-au-Prince today. Some seem minor, such as paring the invitation list and changing the mode of transportation, but all require infinite care and planning so that everyone is safe. Avoidance of unwanted attention limits much of what we wish to do, but “flying below the radar” means that we can continue to provide education and medical care and thus, fulfill our mission.

## Two Deaths in the Family

Adult residents play a vital role in the daily life at St. Vincent’s as the article on the opposite page attests. Thus, a death leaves a big hole not only in the family, but also in the work that keeps the schedule humming.

Samuel Elizaire died in early December from a sudden respiratory infection. At age 41, he had lived at St. Vincent’s since the age of three. He was our much-valued assistant bookkeeper, having graduated from St. Vincent’s, secondary school, and Quisqueya University with a degree in accounting. Samuel was also the person entrusted with the weekly

*Continued on the back*

