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by Peter Bodley

Managing editor

## Relieving poverty in Haiti is Reiser's goal

Rev. Bernard Reiser's mission is simple: To help the impoverished people of Haiti with a focus on children and families.

"Keep the Wheel Turning" is the theme of Reiser's Haiti relief event at the Courtyards of Andover Tuesday, April 28, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

"I am very excited about the gala event... to make people more aware of the extreme conditions in Haiti," said Reiser, founding pastor in 1964 of Church of the Epiphany, Coon Rapids, from which he is now retired.

This is the second year of the fund-raiser for Reiser Relief Inc.'s campaign to ease the poverty of the people of the Caribbean country of Haiti.

The first event in 2008 at Church of the Epiphany raised \$30,000.

This year's benefit has been moved to the Courtyards of Andover "because we needed more room," Reiser said.

And the fund-raising goal is \$100,000, according to Reiser.

Admission is free to the event, which will feature wine, punch, hors d'oeuvres and musical entertainment by Sherwin and Pam Linton and the Totino Grace High School Jazz Band.

There will also be Reiser memorabilia on sale and a chance to win a deluxe dinner for four with Reiser and many other top prizes in a raffle.

Donations are 100 percent tax deductible and should be made payable to **Reiser Relief Inc., c/o Father Bernard Reiser, 1800 111th Ave. N.W., Unit 320, Coon Rapids, MN 55433.**

Reiser has been helping the people of Haiti for more than 10 years. That followed a trip to the country in 1996, which he describes as "one of the most emotional trips I have ever experienced."

"The poverty and desperate situations I witnessed tore my heart," said Reiser, who had previously seen slums in major cities of other countries he had visited.

From that trip to Haiti, the Reiser Relief, Inc. nonprofit organization was born "as a conduit to fund projects in Haiti," he said.

Since then Reiser Relief, Inc. has continued to expand to include support for school buildings, education, eldercare, food distribution, clean water delivery and an orphanage.

- Since August 2005, a 3,500 gallon truck consistently delivers free water to 24 neighborhoods in Cite Soleil, which is located by the Haitian capital of Port au Prince, and is described by Reiser as one of the poorest slums in the western hemisphere. Four deliveries are made daily, six days a week. A second, 2,500-gallon truck delivers free water to Jeremy Wharf, a slum outside Port au Prince built on top of a garbage dump.



Rev. Bernard Reiser with a child he met on a trip to Haiti. Submitted photo

- Terre Promise Primary School in Cite Soleil, which Reiser help to found, provides both education and food for 400 children, for many their only meal of the day.
- Reiser Heights preschool through sixth-grade school was built by Reiser in the mountains of Lespinasse/Donte two hours south of Port au Prince, a remote area with no electricity and water.
- Grace Village, Titanyen, for which 16 acres of land was purchased in 2008, which will include a new orphanage, eldercare, education and feeding street children.

In addition, in 2008 Reiser Relief delivered two shopping containers totaling 413,342 meals to feed the people of Haiti.

But these projects cost money to support.

The annual cost of the fresh water delivery in Cite Soleil is \$48,000; it costs \$16,000 a year to keep the primary school operating and \$15,000 annually to run Reiser Heights.

The cost of the land for the Grace Village project has a \$34,000 price tag with an estimated construction cost of \$180,000.

Once Grace Village is completed, there will be costs associated with running the orphanage, caring for the elderly, feeding street children and providing education in Titanyen.

Jeff Gacek and Alyn Shannon, of the White Bear Lake-based Healing Haiti project, are directors of all the Reiser Relief, Inc. programs in Haiti, while Kevin McClellan is coordinator of the water project.

For more information on the Keep the Wheel Turning Haiti relief event, contact Doris Schulte at 763-755-4716.

Peter Bodley is at [peter.bodley@ecm-inc.com](mailto:peter.bodley@ecm-inc.com)