

# Twin Parish News

A partnership between St. William, St. Simons Island, GA and St. Joseph, Côtés-de-Fer, Haiti



Wilgens Civil

## Thank YOU for Sharing Your Love with a Haitian Child

**The Education Campaign netted  
\$21,460 for three parish schools**

The Education Committee wondered if we should ask for donations during a pandemic! (Goal \$24,000)

We knew that the children of our twin parish would suffer if we didn't try.

**And YOU came through with the highest  
number of donors in education campaign  
history - 123!**

**Wilgens**, and many other children like him, are very grateful for YOUR gift of an education.

**Wilgens' teachers** are thankful for the opportunity to help him and to earn a living.

The **support staff** at each of the three schools send their thanks to YOU as well.

**Father Islaire Faustin** gives thanks to YOU that his schools have the financial support to operate for another year.

**Helping Hugs Inc.** thanks YOU for making our mission possible.

**None of this is possible without YOU. THANK YOU!**

# Dr. Diane Smith Retires As Medical Mission Coordinator



Diane Smith, Ph.D., R.N.

It's time for a tribute! Our pioneer, medical mission team leader, Diane Smith, is retiring from that role. But she promises to remain with us and continue her efforts for our twin parish.

In recognition of her outstanding work with Helping Hugs Inc. and with deep gratitude, respect and admiration, we offer the following tributes to Diane.

Diane was a member of the first visiting delegation from St. William to St. Joseph parish in 2009. She is pictured here with Carol Roberts, Father Jude Fils Aimè, **Bill Horn** and Theresa Patterson.

**Bill Horn** offers the following remembrance of the formation of the Haiti ministry:



In the very early days of developing our parish Haiti ministry, Diane was there from the very beginning. With her abundant energy, enthusiasm, and missionary experiences she was a vital ingredient to the cause. Diane was the first one to step forward and stress the importance of a site visit, and volunteered to participate in this first trip. Throughout our visit she proved to be the necessary person to not only explore our forming the ministry but also to coordinate our medical mission endeavor. Once we were able to explore the feasibility of developing this ministry, she was the constant source for forming and maintaining the medical ministry component of our efforts. None of what we were able to formulate in the way of a viable organization and medical mission undertaking would have happened without Diane's involvement.

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From left: Sandra Hochwald, Aidine Kiernan, Mary Lynch, Diane Smith

In **2012**, Diane was one of four members of St. William's "Haiti Committee" who attended the "One Table, Many Partners" national conference in Washington, D.C.

**Sandra Hochwald**, founding member of the Haiti Committee and Helping Hugs, Inc. offers her tribute to Diane below.

### A Tribute to Dr. Diane Smith by Sandra Hochwald

Approximately 12 years ago, four women from St. William's Parish were tasked with the responsibility of investigating the formation of a group to help a community in Cotes-de-Fer, Haiti. Under the direction of Monsignor John Kenneally, this foursome was introduced to the Parish Twinning Program of the Americas. The PTPA matches USA Catholic Churches with those in Haiti, South and Central America plus other countries. From this small beginning, a non-profit organization emerged and has continued to grow year after year.

As within any group, responsibilities were "divided and conquered". Aidine Kiernan assumed the leadership role, Mary Lynch handled publicity, Sandra Hochwald tackled fundraising and Diane Smith managed medical missions. This core group generated lots of energy and soon began to attract other charitable like-minded individuals.

Diane Smith, R.N., M.S.N., Ph.D. has served long and hard to alleviate suffering to our spiritual brothers and sisters in Haiti. She has been instrumental in the recruitment and direction of countless very successful medical missions. Under her direct leadership, many Haitians have seen a doctor for the first time and have been treated for a variety of tropical diseases as Cholera, Intestinal Parasites, Malnutrition, Hypertension, worms and lice. A large number of patients arrive at the clinics with infections from machete wounds, insect bites and traumatic falls. All are treated with kindness and respect.....all because of Dr. Diane Smith.

Over the years, it has been heart-warming to observe the skills demonstrated by Diane. She has a magnetic personality which is endearing to people she recruits as well as heals. This past year, our amazing team saw over 1,000 patients! Each mission is conducted in several communities and traveling to the outlying villages is an adventure in itself. With extreme confidence, this special Diane enlists the skills of doctors, nurses, pharmacist, nurse practitioners, nursing assistants, AND non-medical persons. Without fail, each team member expresses the desire to return and assist once more.....all because of Dr. Diane Smith.

Another admirable gain of the medical mission trips is the cooperation received by various community churches, groups, organizations and individuals. Luckily the Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran and Episcopal Churches plus the Brunswick Chapter of The Links, Inc. plus Southeast Georgia Health Systems as well as The Shell Oil Company have joined noble efforts to help with dire conditions in a country located just 90 miles off our American coastline.....all because of Dr. Diane Smith.

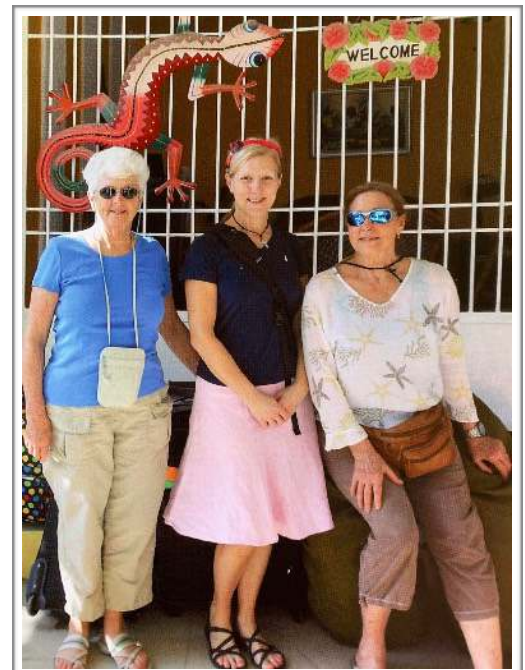
An American Hero, she is! An outstanding example of compassion, she is! A leader in every way conceivable, she is! She has represented St. William Catholic Parish in a splendid Christian fashion! Dr. Diane Smith, you will be truly missed on a full time basis. Enjoy your time of deserved rest and relaxation. We shall look forward to your guidance when time allows. Thank you for a job well done.

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In 2014 Diane led a "medical mission assessment team" to Côtés-de-Fer to examine the facilities for a mission trip. Diane, Sharon Rowlett and Sharron Olson visited with St. Joseph Parish Council to get their input for the first medical mission that was conducted later that year.

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From left: Diane Smith, Sharon Rowlett, Sharron Olson



From left: Dr. Shirley Wilson,  
Patient, Diane Smith

**Dr. Shirley Wilson shares the following tribute to Diane.**

By the following year, **2015**, Diane had made connections with Dr. Shirley Wilson, Obstetrician/ Gynecologist with the Southeast Georgia Health System and active member of the the **Brunswick Chapter of The Links Incorporated**.

This personal relationship between Diane and Shirley has blossomed into a full fledged partnership between The Links, the local hospital and Helping Hugs.

Dr. Wilson joined the second medical mission in **2015**. Here, she is shown giving a Links' Survival Kit to a patient. These kits are filled with toiletries for underprivileged women and girls in Haiti. Helping Hugs members help The Links members fill these bags each Spring for shipment to Haiti.

However, the survival kits were just the beginning. In 2015 Dr. Smith facilitated the Links' partnership with Helping Hugs' yearly Medical Missions to Haiti.

The Links developed a Seminar & Webinar program attached to the Mission that provided **tropical medical education** for the medical team members and the public and also provided these team members with continued medical education credits. This was done to encourage more medical professionals to participate in the Medical Missions to Haiti.

Dr. Smith has on a yearly basis since 2015 been on the Seminar & Webinar planning committee and a speaker in both. In addition, Dr. Smith was a speaker in the Links' Womens Empowerment Workshops in 2015 & 2016 bringing awareness to the community of what is involved in volunteering in a developing country.

Since hypertension was identified by the medical mission team to Haiti, Dr. Smith furthered the Haiti mission efforts by developing an **on going anti-hypertension program** for the patients being seen by the medical mission team. Last year She encouraged both groups (Helping Hugs, Inc., and Brunswick (GA) Chapter of Links, Inc.), to hire a Haitian nurse to monitor the patients' blood pressures in the interim between the yearly medical missions and to adjust the patients' medicine dosages per a protocol designed by the medical mission team under the supervision of the Haitian Medical Director of the area.

Dr. Smith constantly seeks medical professionals to participate with the medical mission team. She approaches these medical professionals in a friendly social manner and then "hooks" them into participating by enticing them with her many stories of her experiences over the years during her missions. Dr. Smith has been and remains a firm supporter of the community service programs of the Brunswick Georgia Chapter of the Links, Incorporated.

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## Filling the Shoes of D.S.

What shall we do without Diane coordinating the annual medical mission trips? No worry. Diane has taken care of that! In her usual friendly manner she approached Erin Brown, and invited her to join in the work of the medical mission committee. Ultimately Erin agreed to take on the role of coordinator.

Erin introduced herself to Helping Hugs members with the following message:

**I would like to briefly introduce myself, I joined St. William's Parish this past fall. At which point Diane Smith asked "Are you a Nurse?" well here I am today a member of the Helping Hugs, Inc. I will do my best to fill the shoes of Diane Smith, which are bigger than life.**

**My husband, Donald and I moved to St. Simons Island the first of October and of course we are loving everything it has to offer. I was born in Upstate NY, I am an LPN, my background is geriatrics and working with those with developmental disabilities. I retired in 2019.**

Welcome, Erin, to the dedicated group of parishioners who implement St. William's partnership with St. Joseph parish.



Erin Brown  
Medical Mission  
Coordinator 2020

