



# VINCENTIAN FAMILY HAITI INITIATIVE

## INITIATIVE DE LA FAMILLE VINCENTIENNE EN HAÏTI

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*December 2012 Newsletter*



#### **National Implementation Council Named**

Two representatives each from six separate Vincentian organizations doing work in Haiti have been named to a new National Implementation Council (NIC) to support the work of the Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative (VFHI). Under the leadership of Project Director Regine Theodat, the group has begun to meet monthly to offer strategies that will ensure the project delivers on its mission to address the root causes of poverty.

Theodat believes the council's work will ensure success. "It is critical to have knowledgeable local people on the ground sharing advice and

recommendations. This council is a valuable component of the VFHI," she said.

One of the council members' most important responsibilities is to serve as ambassadors back to the organizations and service populations they represent and communicate important activities and opportunities. Once programs get underway, the council will assist in program evaluation.

"I am grateful to these Haitian men and women who have stepped forward as leaders and are lending their support to this project," said Father Joe Agostino, C.M., VFHI coordinator.

Vincentian organizations represented on the council include:

- International Association of Charities
- Association of the Miraculous Medal
- Congregation of the Mission
- Daughters of Charity
- Vincentian Marian Youth
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul

#### **Haiti Project Welcomes New International Board Member**

Gene Smith experienced first-hand the hardships of living in Haiti when he visited Port-au-Prince as Hurricane Sandy flooded the island and washed away the crops of subsistence farmers in the south. By the time the storm passed, more than 50 deaths were reported and food shortages were predicted to follow within months.





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Smith traveled to Haiti in late October to attend his first meeting of the international board of the Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative (VFHI). "Even though I have visited Haiti more than 10 times in my work with the Daughters of Charity and the Society of St Vincent de Paul, this visit is the most hopeful because through the work of VFHI we will help Haitians lift themselves from poverty," he said.

Father Joe Agostino, C.M., who coordinates the VFHI, is excited to welcome Smith to the board. "Gene's wealth of experience with the Vincentian Family on international projects will provide expert insight to the board. We are honored he accepted our invitation and look forward to the advice he will share as we work to bring systemic change to millions of people living in poverty in Haiti."

Smith is a 40-year collaborator of the Daughters of Charity worldwide and past president of the U.S. Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. He brings fundraising, management and social work experience to his new volunteer post, skills he gained through decades of work with the Daughters. He retired in 2011 as executive director of the Seton Institute, which provided financial and material resources to Daughters of Charity in the least developed countries of the world.

Smith remains fully involved in Vincentian family activities. Currently he is the international representative of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul on the Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change and the spiritual advisor of the Western region of the Society in the United States. He earned a bachelor's degree in social work and an MBA from the University of San Francisco.

In 2005, he was ordained a deacon in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. He is married to Nina Smith, who is a Lady of Charity and a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. They have three children and three grandchildren.