

# many hands

QUARTERLY

Transforming together, to be love in action, in a broken world.

## MARCH 2021 - THIS ISSUE

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MANY HANDS

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## LEAVING US STRONGER



*After two-and-a-half years in Haiti, Shelly and Darryl DeRuiter will be ending their service with Many Hands. Here is their final update for our newsletter.*

We are ending our service in Haiti with Many Hands in March. Just writing this brings a rush of mixed emotions as we consider that the end is drawing near for both our time living in Haiti as well as our partnership with Many Hands and so many of you great people. We cannot thank you all enough for the wonderful support that you have showed us over the past three years. We will leave trusting that our work has been faithful, faith-filled, and will continue to bear fruit.

With the recent complications from new travel restrictions, our planned final return to Haiti changed. To avoid further complications to her health, as well as the need to jump through all sorts of COVID testing hoops, we made the hard decision for Shelly to stay in the US. Together we decided that only Darryl would return for this last final stint. Darryl returned on February 11 and will leave Haiti on March 18. Darryl has a few projects to complete and some transition work to do with some new couples coming in to replace us. Shelly will be continuing and completing her work from the States. So, even though apart, we are together as one in this final segment of our Haiti journey.

Our time will be spent finishing projects and preparing the hand-off to the new managers, Dave Gritters, and Tom and Denise Dent. During our final weeks we will be collecting second tuition payments for all 100 School of Light students, hiring a school director, collecting and organizing individual data and photos for students in our 180 for Haiti program, overseeing our second goat distribution for our current PS1 families, attending our last quarterly planning meeting, and planning and executing a Seed Corn Seminar for 30 local farmers. Did we mention packing up our personal things in Haiti and at our home in the US?!

God continues to direct our steps and next our path will lead us (back) to Visalia, California where Shelly plans to do some part-time Physical Therapy work and Darryl has accepted a two-year interim contract to be the Superintendent at Central Valley Christian Schools (CVC). CVC is where Darryl began his teaching career a LONG time ago. It is also where we spent the first seven years of our marriage, so Visalia holds a special place in our hearts. It will be fun to return to where it all started.

### Darryl's Final Thoughts

Saying the goodbyes will definitely be the hardest part about ending our time in Haiti. I have established so many relationships with the people here and I will miss them tremendously. And the children! Oh my, how I will miss these precious little ones. We hope to return occasionally for visits but that will happen as the opportunities present themselves and time allows. We have learned much and loved more. Thank you for loving these beautiful people and children with us.

### Shelly's Final Thoughts

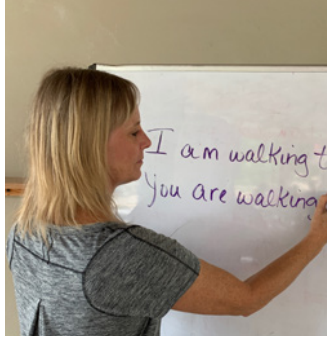
I want to thank each of you for walking this journey with us. The love, financial gifts, and encouragement were the tangibles in a season of unknowing. Although I wouldn't say I now know all that much more, what I have learned is this: God is more unpredictable, more counter culture, and more loving than I appreciated before our time with Many Hands. I have learned that people want to be valued, cherished, and empowered to be their own unique selves. I will miss the beautiful people and friends we made. I will miss the spectacular sunsets and beauty of the land. I am thankful for this challenging, heart-exposing, heart-growing, and beautiful opportunity.

*Shelly and Darryl have faithfully run the race during their service, leaving Many Hands in a stronger place. Though our stories now take different paths, they will always be a part of the Many Hands family. We wish them the very best as they take their next steps serving God in Visalia!*

# PREPARED TO SERVE



Tom builds a small bridge on campus



Denise teaches English



Many Hands staff enjoy lunch together



Cindy enjoys a moment with preschool children

Many Hands is excited to introduce the new (and not so new) faces on our team! Meet Dave and Cindy Gritters and Tom and Denise Dent. These couples are currently spending two months in Haiti to invest in relationships, experience the culture, and develop an understanding of Many Hands' on-ground operations.



## Dave Gritters

Dave Gritters is from Pella, Iowa. He has been married to his wife, Cindy, for twenty-eight years. The Gritters have three adult children who they are very proud of. Dave and Cindy share a background in business management, having owned and operated Gritters Electric for twenty years. At the end of the two months, Dave will return to work with the organization from Pella. He plans to make regular trips back to Haiti to continue building relationships.

In February, Dave accepted the role of Director of Operations. He looks forward to supporting the organization's staff in Haiti as a whole. When not in Haiti, Dave makes weekly contact with the management staff there to offer wisdom and a listening ear. Dave says, "My goal is to pour into the staff to help them do their jobs better. My role is mainly to shepherd and encourage."

Though not a full-time member of the team, Cindy will support Dave with organizational and administrative tasks. Cindy has experience in office management and accounting. As the worship coordinator for her home church, she has directed teams of volunteers in a ministry setting.



## Tom and Denise Dent

Tom and Denise Dent are from Humeston, Iowa. March 2021 will mark twenty-seven years of marriage for them. They have two beautiful adult daughters along with Denise's Australian shepherd. Tom and Denise will spend the majority of their year on the ground in Haiti, making regular visits home to the farm as needed.

Tom brings thirty years of experience in agriculture and farming to the position of Director of Agronomy. Twelve years as a board member for a local cooperative has supplied Tom with an intimate understanding of the business aspect of co-ops. Tom's responsibilities will include working with Agronomist Claudin to increase the department's capacity for organizational growth and sustainability. Tom says, "My goal is for us to be able to grow or source all the food for our feeding programs locally."

Denise is stepping into the role of Director of Education for the School of Light preschool and primary school. Denise will advise and train the current school staff and oversee the hiring of new faculty as the schools grow, among other responsibilities. Denise has twenty years of experience in public education as both administrator and teacher (Spanish, French, and World History). She says, "I feel that God has been preparing me for this for a long time."

We know that God equips those whom He calls according to His own will and purpose. Many Hands believes that these individuals have been called and equipped with skills and talents "for such a time as this." We pray God continues to bless and strengthen each one.

## New Land Purchases in Sylvain

There were no 'For Sale' signs posted, but Many Hands learned one-by-one of three pieces of land, adjacent to Many Hands current Sylvain campus, for sale by different sellers.

Many Hands Agronomist, Claudin Augustin, was the negotiator. He acts in a manner that is 'Firm but Fair', one of Many Hands Haitian staff core values based on Micah 6:8 and Ephesians 6:4. Land is measured in Haiti by the Karo. One Karo is equivalent to 3.2 acres. The recent land acquisitions add up to nearly 1 ½ Karo which is just under five acres. The intent for use is mainly to expand Many Hands agriculture possibilities.

Many Hands hired eight men tallying 658 man hours of work to install one thousand fence post holes, string 2.5 miles of barbed wire, and plant approximately two thousand cactus plants to outline each piece of property. Many Hands is thankful for God's provision of available property and funds to purchase them.





# A MONTH TO CELEBRATE

**Christi Gabhart, Director of Ministry & Benevolence**



*All the couples celebrate together on their big day*



*Francio and Roselene walk down the aisle*

In Haitian culture, December is wedding month. Before Wedding Day 2020, twenty couples had invested time to meet together on several occasions with Many Hands Spiritual Shepherds. They had come to Many Hands' Sylvain campus for their fitting for dresses and suits. On the big day, each radiant couple, beautifully dressed with hearts prepared, walked down the aisle, declared their intent to marry, said their vows and exchanged rings.

By the end of the day on December 19, 2020, Many Hands has accompanied a total of 102 couples to be united in marriage. The pastors see the results as many couples who were married from the previous years have entered into the serving ministry of their individual churches. Through this, these couples continue to nourish their souls in church and are under the direction of their own pastor. Through our marriage program, the couples are under the authority of their pastor who works directly and personally with the couples. Working together, we resolve any issues before they marry and walk alongside them in the years to come.

The couple that stole our hearts is 79 year-old Ernest Mezidor along with his bride Debel Mania, 72. They became Christians three years ago. Their four children range in age from 40 to 47. Currently, all but one of their children have also committed their lives to Jesus Christ. This was a day to celebrate in the life of this extended family.

Francio and Roselene from Sylvain came to Many Hands' Sylvain Campus the very next day to say thank you for everything. They had wanted to marry for such a long time but just could not do it on their own. They said, "Li te kase yon kod, yon chenn, avek Satan", it broke a chain with Satan. They are no longer in bondage because they are now married. It's all about life transformation in Christ Jesus.

## Voted Best Thrift Stores



*Melissa Tafta, Tim Brand, and Jeff Thomas, accept the award from Cityview*

Our hard-working staff and volunteers have been recognized for their tireless efforts in making our stores the best in Iowa! In 2020 and 2021 our three locations have been recognized with various awards.

First, our Spencer location was awarded the SRG People's Choice award for Best Thrift Store. Next, our Grimes location was awarded the Iowa Living People's Choice award for Best Thrift Store. Then our Clive Location was recognized in the "Best of the West" awards as Best Local Retailer. Finally, our stores were recognized in the prestigious CityView DSM BEST as "Best Local Thrift Store", beating out dozens of stores in the Des Moines Metro Area.

We are humbled by these awards and thankful for the high level of excellence our staff and volunteers strive for daily. Thank you for choosing to shop with us. We are proud to serve you!

**CLIVE:** 8801 University Ave, Clive, IA

**GRIMES:** 2900 SE Grimes Blvd, Grimes, IA

**SPENCER:** 1019 S Grand Ave, Spencer, IA

MANY HANDS  
**BUSINESS  
BREAKFAST**  
WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
**JOHN O'LEARY**  
**POSTPONED**  
NEW DATE  
**FRIDAY, OCT 29, 2021 | 7AM TO 9AM**



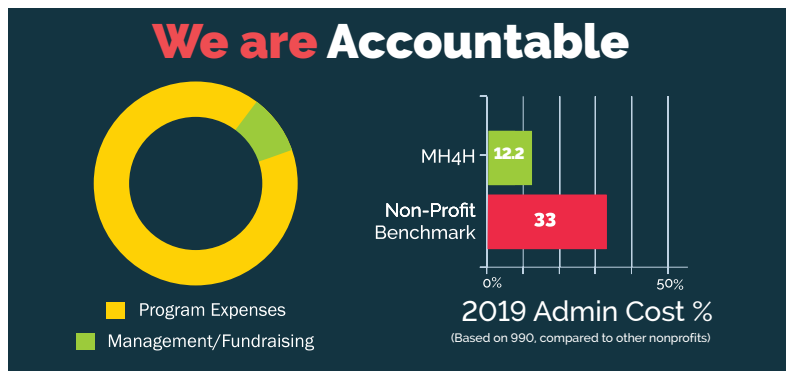
Our team has begun preparing for the 2021 Many Hands Business Breakfast. However, as we have drawn closer to our April 16 date, our partners and attendees have shared that there are still some concerns with potential availability and current COVID restrictions.

In light of these concerns, we have made the decision to postpone the Business Breakfast to October 29. When we first postponed this event mid-last year, we were hopeful that the pandemic would be behind us by April. Our goal is to create a world-class event that maximizes resources and gives you the opportunity to connect. We feel this date will honor this goal and give all our supporters the chance to attend. We are thankful for each of you who believe in the Business Breakfast and desire to see its ongoing success.

Our team is excited for John O'Leary to share his message on October 29, one that we believe will inspire each of us.

If you already have tickets, your tickets will transfer over to this new date. If you are looking to purchase, our ticket sales are still open. If you would like to be refunded, please let us know by emailing Emily Van Gent, Event Coordinator, at [evangent@mh4h.org](mailto:evangent@mh4h.org), who will help you with that process.





# TAKING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER

**Laura Nicholson - Executive Assistant**



Staff and supporters together as a team



Melissa Tafta and Kori Seeley demolish walls



There is always something special when you can get staff and supporters together to serve side-by-side. A couple weeks ago, 15 staff members, leaders, and friends of Many Hands connected for a retreat at Abide in Omaha, NE. Having opportunities for individuals to serve stateside has been an ongoing conversation at Many Hands. We continue to pray and seek guidance around how we can create experiences that will transform the lives of those in attendance. While we have not been able to send teams to Haiti on IMPACT trips, we have been using this time to reflect and connect with new curriculum and different forms of trips that we are so looking forward to sharing with all of you in the near future. We look to find ways to encounter and engage with those who want to step outside of their comfort zone to be challenged and transformed. Abide was the place to pilot these new ideas.

Abide Omaha is a non-profit organization located in North Omaha, whose mission is to revitalize the inner city, one neighborhood at a time by providing a holistic approach focusing on building stronger families, safer neighborhoods, and emerging leaders. During our two-and-a-half days at Abide, we were able to learn about their programs, help with demolition work, and package over 300 boxes of food for the upcoming Better Together Food Pantry distribution for the North Omaha community and its families.

Along with serving at Abide as a group, we were able to dive deeper into our individual faith stories - sharing with one another our passions, challenges and expectations on how to be Love in Action. We are #BetterTogether.