

Young partners cite benefits of Baltimore Haiti project

HUNT VALLEY - Some of the strongest advocates for the Baltimore Haiti Project are the students from the Archdiocese of Baltimore who give a portion of their summer to the children of the town of St. Marc and The Good Samaritans School.

They gave stirring witness at the Gala of Hope Oct. 29, at the Marriott Hunt Valley Inn.

Anebi Adoga, a senior at Loyola Blakefield, segued from man's stereotypes to God's higher truth.

"The Good Samaritans students are some of the finest people I have ever met," said Adoga, who is black. "It was awkward, a lot of them expected me to know Creole. ... If we are truly made in the image and likeness of God, then I know God through them and they know God through me.

"That's what the Haitian children taught me."

Lauren Kelly, who traveled to the Caribbean nation with a large group from Archbishop Spalding High School, came home with rearranged priorities.

"Before Haiti," she said, "I worried about parties and Facebook and what dress I was going to wear to the dance. After Haiti, I realize that none of that matters. For the students I met, there concerns were: 'Will I get another meal? Will I pass my exam, and remain in school?' "

On the educational front, Deacon Rodrigue Mortel, director of the archdiocesan missions office, provided a welcome progress report on the James M. Stine College, the new secondary school which opened Oct. 3 in St. Marc.

Prior to its opening, boys and girls as advanced as the ninth grade had to remain at The Good Samaritans School, which was designed to serve children in kindergarten through grade six.

“We opened (the Stine College) with 20 classrooms and 270 students,” said Deacon Mortel, a native of St. Marc and retired doctor. “Current capacity is 800 students. We can add another 10 classrooms, five on each wing, and bring capacity to 1,200 students.”

The gala is sponsored by the archdiocese and the Mortel Family Charitable Foundation.

Deacon Mortel recognized Patrick Brady, chairman of the religion department at Archbishop Spalding and a longtime supporter of the Baltimore Haiti Project.

Clergy in attendance included Cardinal William H. Keeler, archbishop emeritus who invited Deacon Mortel to work in Baltimore; Auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski; Father C. Douglass Kenney, associate pastor of St. Margaret, Bel Air; and Father John Rapisarda, associate pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Ellicott City.

OLPH is among the strongest members of the Baltimore Haiti Project’s sister parish program in the Diocese of Gonaives, nearing its second decade of feeding as many as 1,000 students at Our Lady of the Nativity in Verrettes.

While Church of the Nativity in Timonium is among the newest, a contingent from its parish came to the gala excited about an upcoming visit to their sister parish, St. Ann in La Brande.

“Their pastor, Father Wilner Saint-Hilaire, just visited us in September,” said Ellen Franklin, a Nativity parishioner preparing for her first trip to Haiti. “We’re helping them rebuild the kitchen for their school.”