# Ruralite

LOST RIVER
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## From the Ground Up

Nonprofit strives to restore Haiti **Page 4**

**Beverly Beach, of Moore, helped establish the nonprofit To Build a Village following the 2010 Haiti earthquake.** PHOTO BY DIANNA TROYER

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**2010 | 11,470,261** 2023 est. pop.

More than 300,000 people were killed and 1.5 million left homeless when a magnitude 7.0 earthquake hit the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, and its wider region in 2010. The earthquake was the worst in Haiti for 200 years. Since then, the Caribbean nation has been plagued by natural disasters, gang violence and political turmoil. Haiti is the most populous country in the Caribbean, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the most unequal in wealth distribution, according to cia.gov.

# From the Ground Up

## What does it take to rebuild a village?

**By Dianna Troyer**

ADOBE STOCK ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOGDANSERBAN, HAIREM

Although she lives 3,000 miles from Haiti, Beverly Beach still has a positive impact on the Caribbean country.

The 75-year-old Moore resident routinely ships humanitarian packages to organizations affiliated with To Build a Village, a nonprofit she helped start after earthquakes devastated the country more than a decade ago.

"Last year, we helped facilitate the shipment of $100,000 worth of donated medical equipment from a donor who unexpectedly passed away from COVID-19," Beverly says.

The shipment also included a trailer load of leg braces, water filters and other medical supplies from Dr. Stephen Hansen, an orthopedic surgeon in Pocatello.

"A mutual friend introduced us, so when he learned of our shipment, we were glad to add his supplies," she says.

Stephen established the nonprofit United Haitian Orthopedic Philanthropists in 2015. He became committed to helping Haitians after serving a mission there from 1988 to 1990 for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"There are several nonprofits supporting Haitians' efforts to restore their country," Beverly says. "Since the earthquakes, there has been so much political upheaval there. Families are tired of the gangs and are attempting to take back their country."

For several years, Beverly routinely traveled to Haiti until the U.S. State Department issued a no-travel advisory due to kidnapping, crime, civil unrest and a poor healthcare infrastructure. Still, she is optimistic about the country's future.

"Haiti can be restored to what it once was—a leader on the world stage with exports of sugar, coffee, indigo, cacao and cotton," she says. "It was once known as 'The Pearl of the Antilles.'"

Large-scale ecological restoration projects are a key to rebuilding the country, Beverly says.

"Haitians cut down most of their trees as fuel for cooking and heating, which reduced soil fertility and stability and resulted in landslides and flooding," she says. "The soil has to be stabilized and made suitable first, then trees can be planted. We have the plan and are working on funding. Trees play such a crucial role in any ecosystem—providing shade, fruit, protection from wind, and an income source."

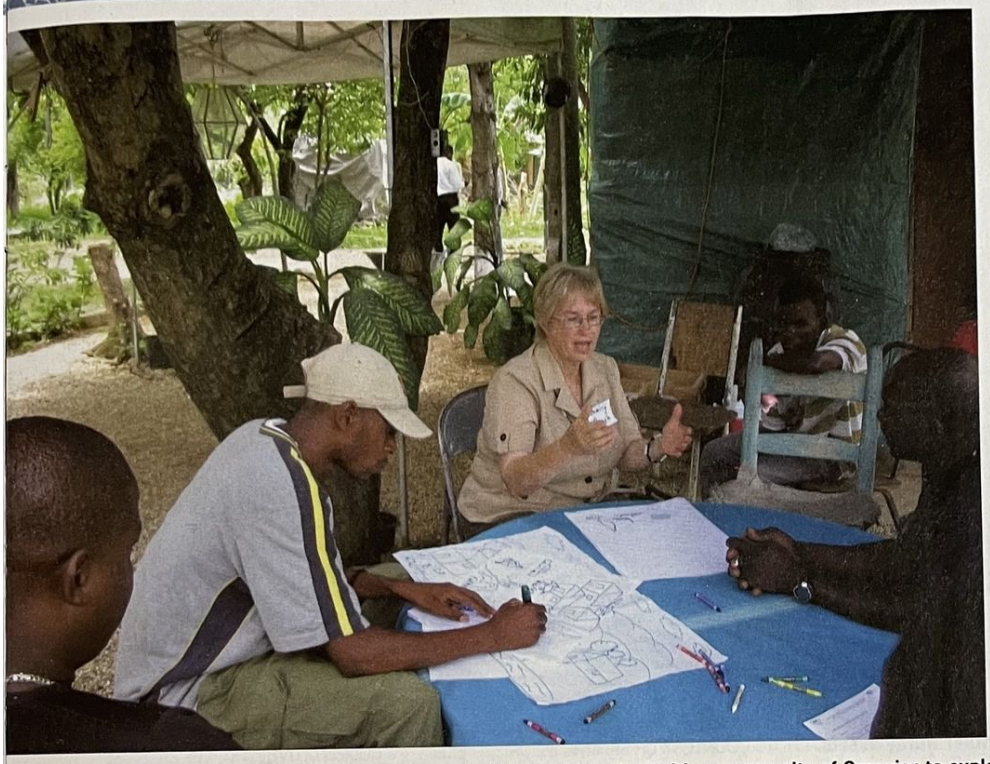
### Sturdy Stucco Structures

Beverly's interest in Haiti started when she saw photos and TV coverage of the country's devastating earthquake in 2010.

"It kept replaying in my mind," she says. "Haiti has had many earthquakes, but the widespread damage and high number of casualties there can be partially blamed on structures being made of stone and concrete."

Knowing 1 million people were homeless, she kept thinking of how expanded polystyrene foam structures can withstand hurricane winds and earthquakes.

As owner of Architectural Hotwire Foam & Stoneworks, Beverly has experience with construction materials. Her company has done work on Pizza Huts, Sonics and many small businesses and homes in Idaho, Oregon and Washington.



**LEFT: Beverly Beach, center, meets with villagers from the Haitian community of Gressier to explain restoration ideas. RIGHT: A shipment of medical supplies and clothing arrives in Haiti, where one of Beverly's friends coordinates the distribution.** PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEVERLY BEACH

"One of my biggest jobs was cutting all the trim designs on the Hampton Inn in Pocatello," she says.

Beverly envisioned using her expanded polystyrene construction experience to build new homes for Haitians. She shared her idea with friends, and one of them introduced Beverly to a certified permaculture designer, Kate Tirion, whose vision was to restore Haiti's soil to prevent erosion and mudslides.

Combining their expertise, Beverly and Kate brainstormed with 14 collaborators and formed To Build a Village in 2010. The goal is not just to meet the immediate needs of Haitian families, but to help them become self-reliant in sustainable communities. Along with housing, Haitians needed to be able to grow their own food.

"Applying Kate's principles of permaculture, watersheds can be analyzed and restored with planted vegetation to make a soft, spongy and absorbent groundcover," Beverly says. "Our program also focuses on doing individualized assessments and helping families in villages become productive contributing members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)."

When the government sought proposals for redevelopment, Beverly and Kate submitted their ideas. In March 2011, they were invited to present their project to the Building Back Better Community contest. Out of 100 groups, they were one of two with proposals that extended beyond housing and were invited to meet with Haiti's Special Envoy to the United Nations, Leslie Voltaire.

Beverly also met with CARICOM members.

"They told me our program was exactly what Haiti needed and when the Lord was ready, it would happen," she says.

Beverly says their ideas resonated with community leaders because the program focused on Haitians rebuilding Haiti.

"However, the devastation was so massive that immediate needs took over," she says. "Communities lost out on the opportunity for contracts or input into solutions tailored to each community."

For more than a decade, To Build a Village has continued to encourage regenerative practices, especially planting trees.

Beverly knows about that firsthand. A U-shaped shelterbelt of towering trees protects the back and sides of her home south of Lost River Autobody. The trees were a huge selling point when she and her husband, Shelton, retired and moved there in 2019.

"We were living in Snake River but have always had a connection to the Lost River Valley and surrounding area," Beverly says. "My grandmother was a hospital administrator in Challis when Dr. Barter worked there."

They also took their children camping in the Wildhorse area north of Mackay.

Before retiring, the Beaches traveled the world while Shelton worked in military intelligence for the U.S. Army.

"Wherever we've lived, we've seen how families need a community, not just a house," Beverly says. "Haiti needs that, too. Rehabilitating her degraded ecosystems will build the foundation for families and communities to reclaim their position on the world stage. Haiti is rising and will again become a thriving and contributing member of CARICOM and the world." ■

*Beverly provides updates about projects in Haiti at tobuildavillage.org and on the "To Build a Village – in Haiti" Facebook page.*