

# livingCity

City New Beginning Haiti from Living City August/September 2013

## **Talent to share**

*Eighteen songs for Haiti — to support a housing project in the region destroyed by the 2010 earthquake*

By Susanne Janssen

*A New Beginning*, with a driving rhythm along with it: “You changed me when you came into my life / only wanna love you / you are my new beginning.” The song is also a new beginning, literally, for some families in Haiti.

“New Beginning” is one of the songs that Canadian Nick Cianfarani wrote together with friends who share his passion for music. Nick does not only play for himself; he tries to build relationships through music using both his talent and his connections to help others.

With friends from all over the world, he recorded 18 songs that are collected on an album called *New Beginning*. The 40 artists who collaborated were not paid for their work, so that all the proceeds could go to the Focolare’s housing project in Haiti.

The idea of the project, located in Mont-Organisé, started in 2009. It was meant to provide housing for Haitians who lived in poverty, who were abandoned or were in need of daily care. Some members of the Focolare in Haiti had received a plot of land, and, reaching out to civil and religious authorities, they began planning several activities to raise funds.

After the disastrous earthquake in January 2010, many people fled from the epicenter in Port-au-Prince to the north, and housing became scarcer. International aid for this project arrived as well, particularly from the United World Association (AMU), a non-governmental organization inspired by the Focolare’s spirituality of unity.

Construction started, and the complex is now composed of 20 one-room houses, a large hall for community meetings, a common kitchen and storage rooms. At first people who had lost all their belongings found help there. Now, close to 17 people — families in very destitute conditions and people with some disabilities — have found lodging through the project. People from the local community support the center and provide care for the inhabitants in need of assistance.

The office of the North East Association Against Poverty is also located there. It is the headquarters for all the Focolare activities and projects in Haiti, such as youth and adult meetings, the management of 175 adoptions at a distance, and the support for five elementary schools, three trade schools and one kindergarten started by members of the Focolare. The youth and Word of Life groups gather there, too.

Nevertheless, there are still more needs to fill, and the schools could expand to give the possibility of education to more young people.

In Canada, Nick wondered what he could do for the Haiti project and decided to use his talents: “I was part of the international performing arts group Genrosso, and while living in New York, Rome or now in Toronto, I have always been involved in producing musical events.” He sent out a request, and 40 friends whom he met over the years — from Brazil, England, Italy, Germany, Jordan, the U.S. and Canada — answered, offering songs, their voices, lyrics and technical help.

“It was amazing,” Nick recalls. “It made me understand how we really can make a difference together. Most of the songs were recorded here in Toronto, but some also in Loppiano and Naples, Italy,” he says of this “global project.”

The title song has a special story behind it. Dorian, a young person from Calgary who participated in the Genfest, the youth festival sponsored by the Focolare that took place last summer in Hungary, visited the Focolare center in Toronto. One evening he and Nick wrote the lyrics of “New Beginning” together; a rhythm came to their mind, and they recorded the song the very next day.

Another song that Nick wrote for a meeting of teenagers in Rome called “It’s Being Done to Me,” made its way to Jordan.

“Some youth that participated in the meeting founded a band in Jordan, and they translated the song into Arabic,” says Nick.

The song of the “Jeel Band” became very popular, and its video won a national prize for the best song promoting peace — another example of what music can accomplish.

In Mont-Organisé, the project organizers already have further plans for their northeast region: a project to reforest the area and plant mangos, oranges, lemons and pineapples could provide work for a number of people.

A sustainable investment in the future — and music contributes to its start.

## Captions

Vocal power. Youth from different countries offered their time and talent to contribute to a CD for Haiti

The colors of Haiti. With international help, the Focolare built a meeting hall and 20 one-room houses for people in need

Happy students. Schools offer education to children of the northeast Haiti

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