

Small School with a Big Heart: ISOI helps Haiti

The International School of Islamabad reacted quickly to news of the devastating Earthquake in Haiti. Several teachers and students came together to spread the word, and very quickly a committee formed to take action. The committee consisted of teachers from all divisions, students from the elementary and secondary student councils, and many student volunteers. After deliberations several key fundraisers were planned and subcommittees were assigned the task of making these happen. Everyone showed unanimity that despite our small numbers, we had to react quickly and wholeheartedly. Students recalled the way the world came to our side when Pakistan was hit by a similar devastating earthquake in October 2005.

The first event that was planned and took place was a Haiti Relief walk-a-thon on Friday March 12th, 2010. This was planned to be a half-day on the school's calendar so parents, students and teachers enjoyed staying at school for the afternoon, walking the track in the cool spring sunshine. The High School students put on an international buffet food sale before the walk-a-thon that raised \$200 Dollars from the food alone, while the walk-a-thon raised \$900 Dollars for the cause.

The next events planned were a Haiti relief mosaic sale and a Haiti relief art auction. Ms. Shamsa Mirza, the art teacher began a unit with her art students that involved researching Haitian art and creating artwork based on Haitian culture and motifs. The artwork was displayed during the parent teacher conferences on March 17th, 2010 and people were able to place their bids in the auction. It was delightful to see tough competition over some of the student art, as faculty and parents tried to up the bids and purchase the pieces.

ISOI also created a huge mosaic, a replica of a painting by Fernand Pierre (1919-2002), as a tribute to the people of Haiti. Entitled "ISOI 4 HAITI" the painting was sold in pieces, and people were able to buy a piece from the cashier's desk and mount it directly to the mosaic outside the Superintendent's Office. The community enjoyed watching the mosaic grow like a puzzle, until the final pieces were bought during the Parent Teacher conferences. The effort earned a sum of \$500.

ISOI is currently engaged in several other Haiti relief projects. The Elementary school came together under the leadership of the students in the Elementary Leadership Council and set up the goal of creating and selling greeting cards for the people of Haiti. A massive assembly line was set up one Wednesday morning as students met in their house groups to try to create 1000 greeting cards as a school. The cards were stamped with gecko motifs often seen in Haitian art. These cards are eagerly being sold all around school and can be bought not only to pass to family and friends, but also to send directly to Haitian families as a symbol of support. One of the teachers at ISOI has contacts with Haitian families in Florida and will pass greeting cards to them to pass forward.

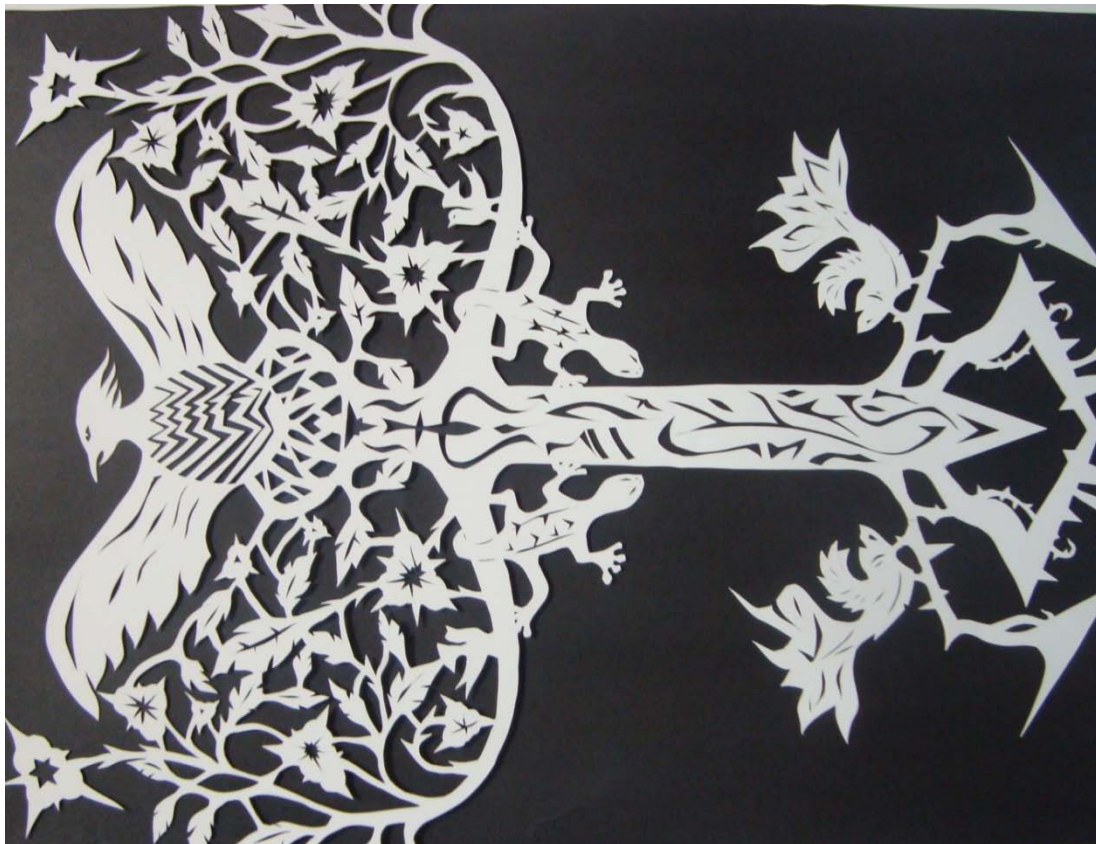
At all times during fundraising efforts, the students and staff on the Haiti relief committee have acknowledged that to truly help the victims of the Haitian earthquake, it was not good enough to simply raise monetary funds, but also, it was important to learn about their culture and learn to empathize with the people and understand their lives. Thus, students and teachers alike embarked on studying and learning about Haiti in many different classes. High School social studies students conducted research

projects on Haiti and presented their findings to students from younger grades. Ms. Andrea Fossum, the HS World History teacher led a celebration of Mardi Gras in social studies classes both in the High School and Middle School. Students of all age groups were exposed to studying about Haitian culture in some way.

As the school year winds down, the final effort ISOI is making in order to conclude the Haiti relief efforts in a large way is the production of an ISOI4HAITI DVD. Based on the international effort made on February 1st, known as “We Are The World 25 For Haiti,” ISOI’s students and teachers have come together in different groups to sing “We Are The World,” as a message of solidarity with Haiti. Footage of fundraising efforts is also being edited into this song, and the DVD will be sold to the ISOI community to raise further funds. The DVD will also be presented at the Springfest on May 27th, 2010.

ISOI has voted to donate the funds raised to the educational center that TIE has created for Haitian children and will be sending TIE the funds, when the school year ends in June. The students and teachers alike have found this effort to have been meaningful in helping not only the Haitian people but also, in helping us become better global citizens and a more united community.

By Shandana Said



Student Haitian Artwork created for the Art Auction.



ISOI's Haiti Relief Mosaic: Homage to Haitian artist "Fernand Pierre (1919-2002)"

