



CALTRANS NEWS

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News

Haiti Engineering: Two Years of Incredible Experiences

By Herby Lissade, Office of Emergency Management Chief

It's been more than two years since the catastrophic 2010 earthquake hit the tiny island nation of Haiti, but the devastation remains, and [Haiti Engineering](#) is continuing its technical assistance to the Haitian people. What started as an effort—by mostly Caltrans employees—to help Haiti, has provided bonuses in understanding disaster response intricacies. That in turn helps us prepare for what could occur in our own state.

The past two years have been an incredible experience for everyone involved with Haiti Engineering. While other organizations may assist Haiti, no other is as grassroots as we are when it comes to providing architectural and engineering services.

For example, last October, Haiti Engineering held "18 Holes for Haiti," its first golf tournament in Sacramento. Caltrans Maintenance Geographic Information System employee Dario Moreno coordinated the event. The successful tournament helped raise money to send a team to Haiti to coordinate projects with the [Samuel Dalembert Foundation](#) and the Roman Catholic Church in Haiti. We were also able to purchase comfort items such as a refrigerator, a freezer, and several fans for our team members while they are in Haiti. Just being able to cool off with a bottle of cold water is a treat in Haiti.



Headquarters Supervising Transportation Engineer Agustin Rosales lines up his shot at the annual Haiti Engineering Golf Tournament.

Former Caltrans Director Randy Iwasaki also continues to be a key figure in our efforts. For the golf fundraiser, he solicited golfers and financial donors. Meanwhile, District 8 Senior Electrical Engineer Ferdinand de la Cruz donated several items in addition to his time.

To help with the event, the following organizations sponsored holes at the golf tournament: Nissan of Elk Grove, Jim Sanders Engineering, Al Morgan Pacific Coast Insurance, Fehr and Peers, Bridge Watch – US Engineering Solutions, Cambria Solutions, Cal Poly Structural Engineering Students for Haiti "SESH," and Smith, Watts & Martinez, LLC.

Haiti Engineering's next golf tournament is coming soon, so please check [our website](#) and join the fun.



District 7 Transportation Engineer Dana Hendrix and Apostolic Nuncio Bernadito Auza at the Nunciature in Haiti discuss the many churches that were destroyed in the earthquake.

Just before Thanksgiving, District 7's Dana Hendrix, Haiti Engineering's architect from the Cuningham Group, University of California Ph.D student Pierre Auza, and I traveled to Haiti to meet with Haitian Roman Catholic Church hierarchy. The trip included a visit to Haiti's Central Plateau to meet with then-Sacramento King's center, Samuel Dalembert of the [Samuel Dalembert Foundation](#). The foundation is building a community center and athletic complex in one of the poorest areas in Haiti, the Central Plateau near Hinche. With its mountainous terrain and huge lake, this beautiful part of Haiti resembles parts of Lake Tahoe or Big Bear.



From left to right: Herby Lissade, Bishop LaFont, and Father Marat discuss plans for the new St. Rose de Lima Church in Leogane, Haiti. The church was destroyed in the January 2010 earthquake that devastated the tiny island nation.

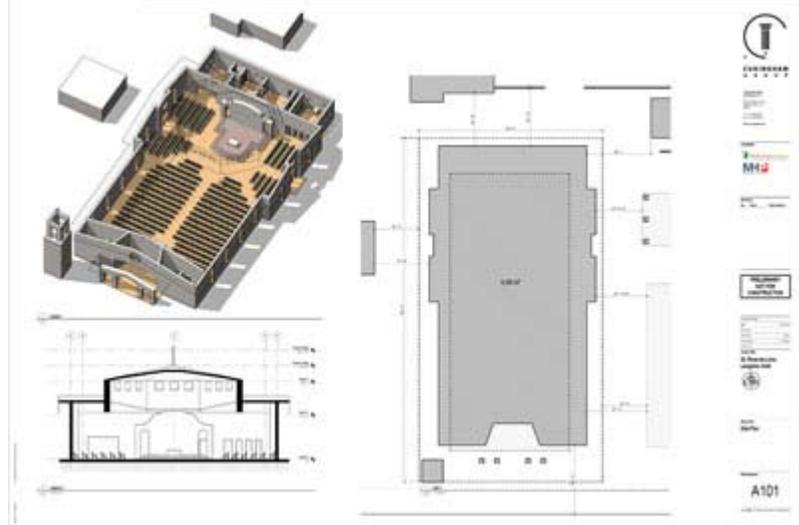
In early December, Haiti Engineering members District 7 Maintenance Transportation Engineer Richard Hung, and District 7 Senior Transportation Engineer Peter Lin met with members of the Tzu Chi Buddhist foundation, which has a mission in Haiti, to discuss a possible collaboration between the two organizations.

Headquarters Senior Transportation Engineer Manual Morales introduced Haiti Engineering staff to structural engineers Stephen Pelham and Matthew Mlaker of the Sacramento structural engineering consulting firm Barrish Pelham and Associates Inc. Mr. Pelham, a principal with the firm, appreciates Haiti Engineering's efforts and offered much-needed free office space, which Haiti Engineering gladly accepted. To show their commitment to Haiti Engineering's cause, the firm provided technical assistance to a school project in Haiti. The Episcopalian Church in Haiti reached out to District 5 Maintenance Deputy Director Steve Price for a peer review of a large school septic tank structure. Barrish, Pelham and Associates reviewed the engineering documents and made their recommendations. We hope we continue our relationship with Barrish, Pelham and Associates for many years to come.

This January, Haiti Engineering team members returned to Haiti and presented draft plans to rebuild the St. Rose de Lima church. Haiti Engineering reached a huge milestone when the Catholic Church accepted the draft plans and provided the necessary funding. Haiti Engineering helped raise the Vatican's awareness of the church's importance, not only to the Haitian community, but also to the world. Last year, Father Marat, the church's pastor asked Haiti Engineering for help. While Haiti Engineering didn't go to Haiti to build churches, we were compelled by the request.



These preliminary plans for the new St. Rose de Lima Church in Leogane, Haiti, show how the church will look from the outside. The new structure is being designed to withstand Haiti's earthquakes.



The new church will seat about 700 people and will serve the Leogane community.

Christopher Columbus founded the St. Rose de Lima Church and parish more than 500 years ago. In addition to its historical significance, the church is one of the few structures in the community that could provide emergency shelter for many of the town's residents. We formed a team of professional architects and engineers to design the project. The team includes Haiti Engineering, the Cuningham Group, MHP Structural Engineers, and BETA Engineers.

We are finalizing design plans that will go to bid, and we hope the new church will be constructed before its 503rd anniversary next August. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough funding for the church furnishings, so members of Haiti Engineering formed [Raise the Bells](#) with the mission to raise money for the church's interior. We're going to have a wall with a giving tree. People who donate certain amounts will have their names placed on one of the tree's leaves, and Caltrans Headquarters Maintenance employee Dan Irvine was the first person whose name was placed on the tree. We will also have a time capsule available for donations of any

amount. For more information, please visit the [Raise the Bells](#) website.



All that remains from the previous St. Rose de Lima church are the bells. Haiti Engineering is working with the Catholic Church to "raise the bells" and help rebuild the parish's church.

Haiti Engineering wants to thank all the people and organizations that have helped us make a remarkable difference in Haitian lives. We couldn't do it without the team efforts of everyone involved.

In closing, I am reminded of Haiti's place in history and in the expansion of the United States. Haiti's slave revolt was the first and only successful slave revolt in history. And the Haitian Revolution led to the United States' size doubling. It was Napoleon's loss of Haiti that convinced him to sell the Louisiana territory to the fledgling United States.

The Haitian Revolution should be remembered as a celebration of human spirit, of life and the yearning for freedom, and the fight against all odds for that right.



Despite the many hardships that Haitians still face, these two children have fun posing for the camera.

So, if you're reading this, why don't you join me in rebuilding the St. Rose de Lima Church—one of the iconic institutions founded by Christopher Columbus more than 500 years ago. The St. Rose de Lima Church bells once summoned slaves to wake for work more than half a millennia ago. Those bells eventually summoned the slaves' descendants to worship and other community functions. Please join me and the many other Caltrans employees, alumni, and friends by raising the bells.

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