



Haitian pastor Jephthe Lucien talks to young children about their work creating care packages for Haitian children.

Triblocal.com photo by Sheryl DeVore

## Haitian pastor visits Lindenhurst child care center to thank students

By Sheryl DeVore  
TRIBLOCAL.COM REPORTER

Most preschoolers and kindergartners living in northern Illinois likely have plenty of crayons, coloring books and toys.

A single crayon in Haiti, however, is a treasure, a luxury, for young children — especially now five months after a 7.8 Richter scale earthquake shook the island leav-

ing hundreds of thousands homeless and forced to flee to small villages.

The worlds of Haitian children and northern Illinois children living more than 1,000 miles may seem far apart, but their worlds came closer May 6, when Haitian Pastor Jephthe Lucien came to spend time at the Lindenhurst Early Childhood Center.

Lucien — born in Haiti, a graduate of Trinity University in Deerfield and now a

pastor in his native land — didn't come to preach or talk about the difficult lives for children living in Haiti.

He came simply to say thank you.

For the past few months, students at Antioch Upper Grade School have been collecting toothpaste, soap, clothes, crayons, pencils, pens and other items to be put in

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# Pastor

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boxes and sent to children and adults in Haiti. The preschoolers at the Lindenhurst center are helping fill the boxes and drawing pictures with crayons on the boxes.

When Lucien came, they were working on their second round of care packages, which they call love packs, to be sent to the people living in Pignon, Haiti. There, Lucien and others are providing food, shelter, schooling and counseling to adults and children displaced by the earthquake.

Antioch Upper Grade School principal Jim Kallieris and childhood center director Frank Davis mingled with teachers and children as they talked and worked. Lucien walked around the classroom, stooping to the children's height to say thank you and answer questions.

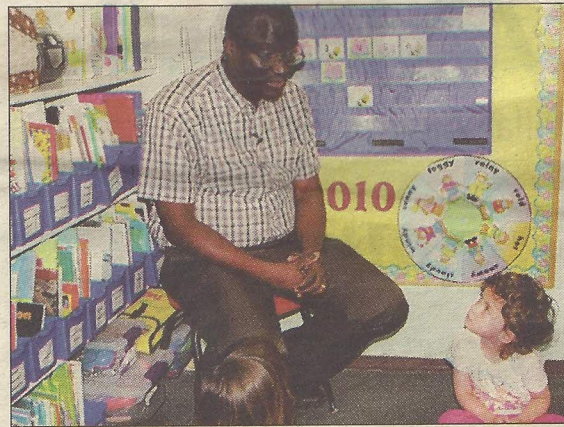
"I thank you for loving the children of Haiti," Lucien said. "When they receive what you send them, they are very happy. One of the children was so excited about getting a toy, he didn't sleep all night."

Pignon was a village of about 40,000 before the earthquake hit. It swelled to nearly 120,000 afterward, when people who were working in Port au Prince to make money to bring to their families were forced to return to the villages, Lucien said. More than 200 orphaned children are also living with people in the village, he said.

By working with Bright Hope International, Lucien has found homes for 385 people, feeds them, sends their children to school and helps them start up new businesses, such as bakeries.

"These people are stressed," Lucien said. "They are experiencing post-traumatic stress for losing their families, having broken legs or lost hands. Most don't even know how they got hurt. They ask why they lost a hand or leg. A lot of them are concerned about surviving.

"This is something that has shaken their entire being. They were living in a tragic



Haitian pastor Jephthe Lucien talks to a preschooler at Lindenhurst Early Childhood Center.

Triblocal.com photo by Sheryl DeVore

situation already," Lucien said, referring to poverty and living conditions in Haiti before the earthquake. "You couldn't imagine something worse."

An estimated three million people were affected by the quake, according to the Haitian government, with 230,000 people dead, 300,000 injured and more than 1 million homeless.

Lucien did not tell these stories or statis-

tics to the young children. Instead, he asked questions, such as, "What did you put in your box?"

"Underwear," one preschool-aged boy answered.

Packaged underwear was part of the array of items laying on tables to be put in boxes.

Lauren Zeeb, a seventh-grader from Antioch Upper Grade School, understands the situation in Haiti a bit more than a 4-year old does. She also understands that "helping others" is a lesson that can be taught at any age.

"It's cool seeing kids want to give," Zeeb said.

Sammie Scroggin, a sixth-grader at Antioch Upper Grade School, said being with the young children shows her, "Giving is important at any age. You can do one small thing and it helps."

With a teacher leading them, a group of children began to sing as one of them held up a book with the words:

"We all sing with the same voice, the same song, the same voice. We all sing with the same voice, and we sing in harmony."

"Catchy song, isn't it?" Davis said.