

Howe also credits Russ and Chris Miller at the Sauble Home Building Centre.

"Without them and the crew of people who worked at filling that container, the shipment would never have happened," he said.

The shipment, which in Haiti would be worth more than \$225,000, left Sauble Nov. 15. The group expected it to arrive about 10 days later but when they arrived Jan. 17, the container was not at the Mission of Hope construction site.

"Two days later it finally arrived," said Howe's daughter, Kathy Hauer. "Every item, including 888 two-by-fours, 40 toilets, 40 sinks, everything in every box, had been taken out and counted. We had 13 pages of inventory, everything from building supplies to clothes, shoes, wheelchairs and medical supplies. It was all itemized, but still everything was closely checked by customs officials."

The group's project included finishing a cafeteria started by the previous year's group, building Grace House, where older people go to live their final days and starting work on 40 home pods. There are four homes in a pod and each home will house six to eight children and a housemother who cares for the orphans.

The Canadians faced heat that reached 104 F (40 C) at times with little or no shade and random dust storms.

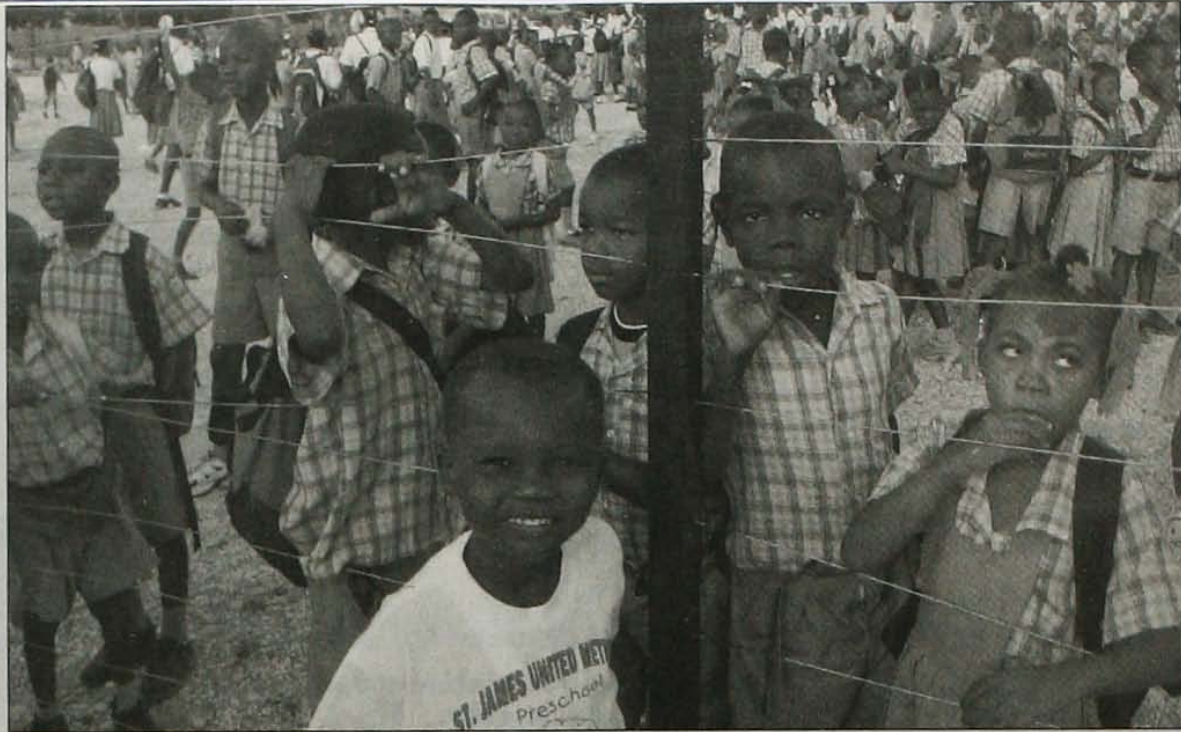
"What impressed me was that there was no complaining . . . I honestly wondered how the young people in the group would make out," Howe said. "None of them had ever done anything like this before and they really, really impressed me. They did me, and our country, proud."

"It was tough going — hammering on rock, pouring cement," one of the teens, Joas Swartzentruber admitted. Swartzentruber was one of 10 teens on the trip, which included church members ranging in age from 17 to 71.

"The opportunity came up to do this missions trip and I took it," the teen said. "It surprised me to see how they were living and while the work was hard at times, it was so rewarding."

Ken Holley, the youth director at Sauble Christian Fellowship, said his first missions trip "won't be my last. The friendships made amongst the workers, and the Haitians, being with the children and doing what we could to help . . . it all made for a memorable experience."

Some of the group helped build a home for a grandmother who had eight family members, including a two-year-old grandson with AIDS, living in eight-by-eight-foot shack woven together out of mud and sticks. Within a few days, the Canadians had constructed a 14-by-14-foot cement block house.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Kids line up to go to school in Haiti

"Seeing the look on their faces made every minute worthwhile," Holley said.

While working in one of the villages, Holley met a 10-year-old orphan girl.

"She immediately stole my heart," he said. He continues to support her and her family with a monthly sponsorship.

Swartzentruber held on to a small girl for three hours. "She just didn't want to leave me . . . the kids really get to you, they are always around and they are so loving. And then we saw three little boys who slept in the trees. That was their home."

Hauer had a two-year-old boy fell asleep on her knee during a Sunday morning worship. "What truly saddened me was that no one came to get him after the service was over," she said. Eventually two teenaged girls came to get him. "It was so heartbreaking."

Hauer, on her first trip to Haiti, said she had heard all about the country and its extreme poverty from her father, "so I kind of knew what to expect, but it still shocked me. Having the container arrive while we were there was such a highlight . . . you could hear me scream for miles."

The biggest need in Haiti is better services, Howe said.

"One of the main things is water and hydro . . . we need to figure a renewable energy source for them. As the orphanage grows, so too will their water and hydro needs. Without it there will be no growth. We're looking at putting solar or wind power in place, but it takes money to do that."

That's why he says although not all can go on a mission trip, all can be senders. "Every dollar helps," he said. "Every dollar makes a big difference."

A group of residents at Central Place in Owen Sound have teamed up with Sauble Christian Fellowship and are making sleeping mats, hats, blankets, sweaters and other items for the group to take with them next January.

Depending on the number of people involved, the 2009 trip could be four weeks in length, or two groups of 40 could go on two-week trips. Next year's trip is well into the planning stages and those involved in the last trip are speaking about their experiences every chance they get.

Anyone interested in learning more about Sauble Christian Fellowship's work in Haiti may call 519-422-3717 or 519-422-1437 or view their website, www.saublechristianfellowship.org