

# COMMUNITY

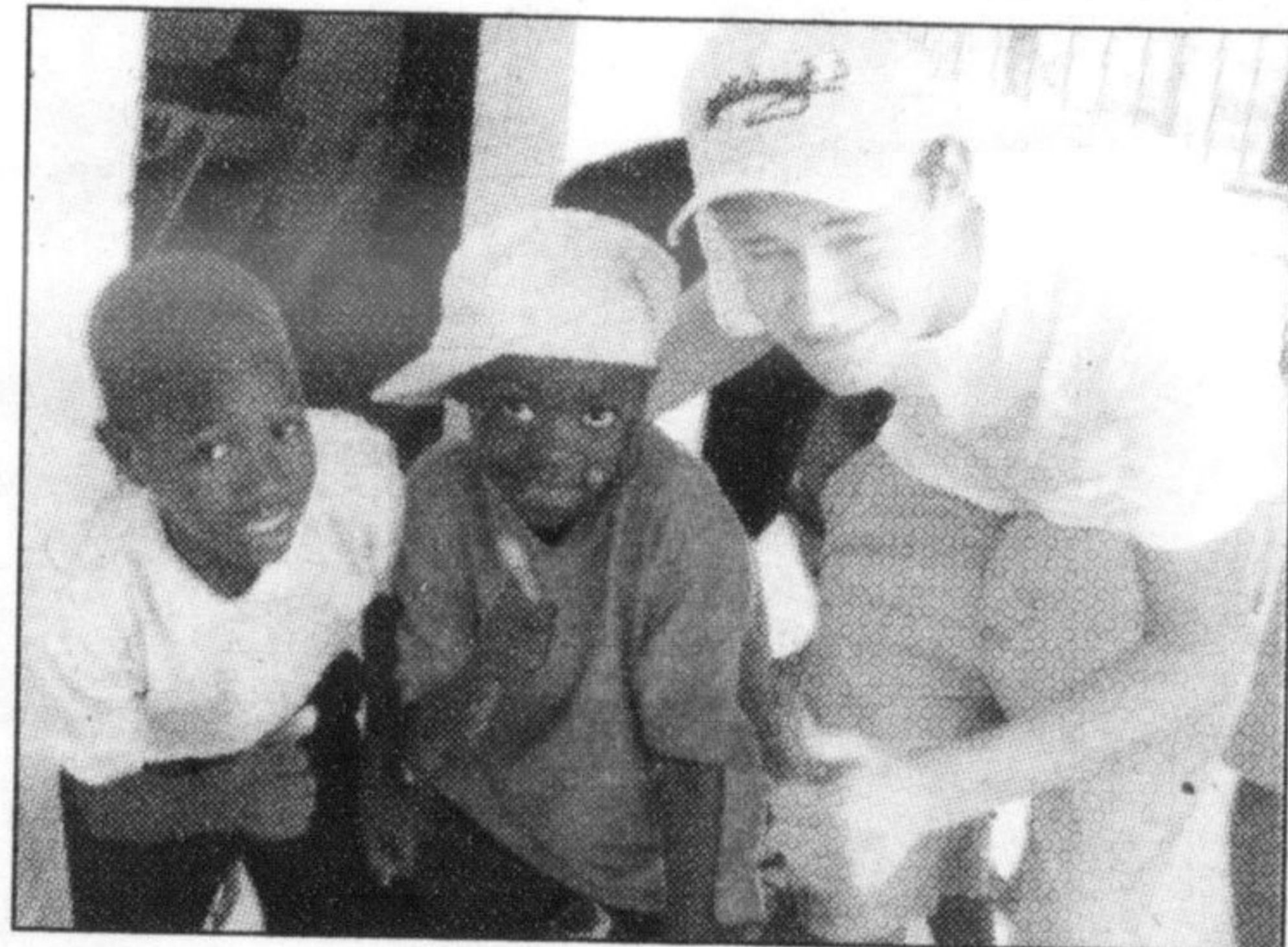
## Missionary work 'powerful' experience

*Trip to Haiti has big impact on father and son*

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

It was a trip that could have easily never happened, but one that'll never be forgotten. So says Dean Martin, who didn't really expect his offer to help out in earthquake-ravaged Haiti would translate into much last fall when he gave it to fellow Miltonian — and longtime member of Partners International Canada — Phil Dempster.

"I've been friends with Phil for years and I was one of those silly people who said, 'If you ever have an extra seat on one of those flights (to Haiti), let me know,'" recalled Martin. "I



didn't think anything would come of it." So much for that assumption.

Rewind to mid-March, and a seat not only became available for Martin, but for his son Reese as well. The opportunity could almost be looked upon as an inevitable right-of-passage for the Grade 12 Milton District High School student, whose three older siblings have all done some form of missionary work over the years.

"Yeah, I guess it's a family tradition," said Reese.

With just three weeks notice before the early-April trip, the Martin family scrambled to collect bundles of clothing, school supplies and other little gifts for the 68 children at an orphanage in Anse-A-Galets (near Port-au-Prince).

Noted Dean, "My wife and daughter are pretty skilled shoppers, and got some great deals on clothing. Bomar (Bargain Barn) donated a lot of clothes and some other

stores gave us discounts."

With plenty of support from local businesses and friends, the father and son travellers — along with Dempster — each had a suitcase full of goodies to present to the Haitian youths.

Dean figured there would be some serious satisfaction in helping out the orphans during the five-day trip, but couldn't have imagined the magnitude of that until it was experienced firsthand.

One goodwill encounter in particular still gets him more than a little choked up.

"One day there was this woman with six kids, including a baby, who walked a great distance to see us. The pastor said this

was a golden opportunity for us to help someone directly with money. She teared up when we gave her \$60, which we were told would feed her family with rice for three months.

"The best way I can describe it is sensory overload... to realize just how much of a difference that little bit of money can make," said Dean, who along with his fellow Partners International Canada volunteers treated orphans to their first restaurant visit in several months — perhaps much longer than that — for a much-appreciated all-you-can-eat rice and chicken buffet. "It's a really powerful thing to experience this. I actually turned 50 down there and to have the kids sing Happy Birthday to me, partly in Creole and partly English, was great. I missed being with my whole family, but it was certainly a memorable birthday."

Added Reese, "You can see the devastation and poverty on TV, but that doesn't really do



**HELPING IN HAITI:** Above, Dean Martin (in back) takes a group of orphans to a restaurant for lunch. At left, Dean's son Reese gives a thumbs up with his two new friends.

it justice. This (trip) definitely opened up my view on what things are like in other parts of the world."

Dempster knows that harsh reality all too well.

"You fight the urge to bring a few of the kids (at orphanage) home with you," said

Partners International Canada's Director of International Operations. "Despite the hardship down there, these are some of the best behaved kids you will ever meet, and they steal your heart."

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