

Summer 2024



# many hands

Quarterly

## The Blessing of Restoration

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Progress of the restoration of  
the Saunders' family home.

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## Board of Directors

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- Vice President of Board...Tim Van Maanen
- Secretary of Board.....Jenny Sorheim
- Treasurer of Board.....Jennifer Douma
- Director.....Danny Householder
- Director.....Kendra Meyer
- Director.....Art Sathoff

“The doors opening to this position were an answer to prayer, knowing that I could continue to use my gifts to serve and bring joy to those around me.

-Carrie Veenstra

visit us at [mh4h.org](http://mh4h.org), [mh4a.org](http://mh4a.org),  
[manyhandsthift.com](http://manyhandsthift.com) and  
[manyhandsimpact.com](http://manyhandsimpact.com)



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COVER IMAGE: Families wash laundry in the Bouyaha river, Haiti.

# NEW FACES

Many Hands is excited to announce the addition of a new board member and two new staff members. Danny Householder, Andrea Smith and Carrie Veenstra started their positions in the Spring of 2024.



**Danny Householder**  
 Board Member

Danny Housholder has served as a pastor to the faithful congregation of Lutheran Church of Hope Ames since 2017. Passionate about sharing the love of Christ, Danny enjoys teaching and preaching, group Bible studies, pastoral care, serving with others, and helping people discover a soul-satisfying life with Jesus.

Danny was first connected to Many Hands in 2018 when he joined a group of Kairos college students for a trip to Haiti. Witnessing Many Hands' sustainable and meaningful work up close, he was inspired to learn more about the organization, and he is continually impressed by our faithful and life-transforming mission-efforts. Danny took another group of students to Abaco in 2023 for an Impact Trip, which made him all the more excited and honored to join the Many Hands board.



**Andrea Smith**  
 Director of Marketing

Andrea Smith is passionate about helping people define and share their unique stories with the world. With more than 30 years of experience in a multitude of marketing, communications and advertising disciplines, Andrea believes that she's finally found the best fit for combining her interests and expertise with her love of Jesus.

"I came to Many Hands from a more traditional corporate background. Yet, through all my career iterations, I have always felt like something was absent. It wasn't about the work or the people. Rather, the missing piece was being effective in my job and giving the glory to God for any successes," shared Smith.

Bringing a fresh perspective and an unending list of new ideas to the role of Director of Marketing for Many Hands, Andrea's proven ability to develop strategic initiatives and connect with diverse audiences will be instrumental in raising awareness and mobilizing support for Many Hands' critical work in Haiti, Abaco, and locally throughout the United States.



**Carrie Veenstra**  
 Office Administrator

Carrie Veenstra comes to Many Hands from the classroom as a teacher. She taught various levels, ending her education career in the Kindergarten room. When asked in her interview if she could multitask, she giggled and shared, "I sure can!". She knew when leaving the Christian school classroom there was a need to replace that time with another mission-minded place where she could keep loving God and others.

Carrie shared, "The doors opening to this position were an answer to prayer, knowing that I could continue to use my gifts to serve and bring joy to those around me." Carrie is currently serving in the Pella office. It excites her to work alongside the Many Hands team helping where needed and know it is reaching out beyond the local community!





Photos: LEFT & TOP RIGHT: Better Together attendees listen to Julie Hulstein's presentation at the Better Together event. BOTTOM RIGHT: Tim Brand speaks to the audience at the Better Together event.

## WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER

### Many Hands and Vi Bella Celebrate Partnership

On June 11th, supporters gathered for the "Better Together" fundraising event, a powerful celebration of the impactful partnership between Vi Bella, a purpose-driven lifestyle brand, and Many Hands for Haiti (MH4H), a non-profit organization empowering Haitians.

The atmosphere buzzed with a shared commitment to creating positive change in Haiti. The event served as a platform to showcase the remarkable work this collaboration has accomplished and the bright future that lies ahead.

This collaboration is more than just a feel-good story; it's a catalyst for positive change. By creating new job opportunities, Vi Bella and Many Hands are providing artisans with a critical source of income, paving the way for economic stability and improved living conditions. But the impact goes far deeper than financial gain. The opportunity for meaningful work fosters a profound sense of empowerment and self-sufficiency within the artisans.

The future of this partnership is brimming with promise. Vi Bella and Many Hands envision continued growth and expansion, reaching more individuals

and transforming countless lives. Their vision extends beyond job creation; they aspire to equip artisans with valuable skills, setting the stage for sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

The "Better Together" event was marked by inspiring stories, heartwarming connections, and a renewed sense of purpose. Tyler Kamerman, Many Hand's Chief Development Officer, shared his enthusiasm, "It was energizing to see so many new faces...and to share the story of the incredible work Many Hands and Vi Bella are accomplishing together in Haiti. The outpouring of support and the funds raised solidify our plans to continue expanding our mission."

#### Together, we raised over \$38,000!

This remarkable sum is a testament to the growing community of supporters who are committed to empowering Haitian artisans through this impactful partnership. As Ecclesiastes 4:9 teaches, 'two are better than one,' highlighting the power of working together. This partnership embodies that spirit, with each organization lifting the other and, together, lifting up the Haitian artisans they serve; we truly are Better Together.



Photos: TOP: Steve Kraal and Tyler Kamerman speak to Impact Michigan attendees. MIDDLE: Guests mingle and enjoy food and conversation at the Impact Michigan event. BOTTOM: Pastor Ryan Forbes speaks to guests.

## A NIGHT OF IMPACT

### Experiencing Love in Action at IMPACT Michigan

Many Hands hosted a heartwarming evening called Impact Michigan, on June 6th, showcasing the incredible work God is accomplishing through the combined efforts of people in West Michigan and Abaco, Bahamas. It wasn't just a fundraiser; it was a celebration of community and God's love in action.

The night featured a powerful message about leaving a lasting impact. Tim Brand, CEO and Founder of Many Hands, gave a speech that was a powerful call to action. He drew inspiration from his book "Standing on the Shoulders" and shared stories of his father's influence, all to highlight how communication and collaboration between Many Hands and West Michigan fueled their remarkable work in the Caribbean. Casting a vision for the future, he highlighted promising partnerships forming in the region, emphasizing their potential to create significant global change. This inspirational message challenged attendees to reflect on their own unique "thumbprint" on the world and how they can make a difference during their lifetime.

Another impactful speaker was Pastor Ryan Forbes from First Assembly Church in Abaco, Bahamas. Pastor Forbes provided a firsthand account of the immense needs in Abaco, and the remarkable resilience of the community thanks to the shared connection within the Body of Christ. Tyler Kamerman, Many Hands' Chief Development Officer, also interviewed Taylor Kraal, a young woman profoundly impacted by her service trips to Haiti and Abaco (four in total), which served as a testament to the life-changing power of the IMPACT Journey and the lasting impact moments it creates.

Steve and Rebecca Kraal generously opened their beautiful home, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that perfectly embodied Many Hands' mission-focused, family-oriented approach. With over 130 attendees, the evening marked a culmination of over seven years of partnership between Many Hands and the people and churches of West Michigan. It was a heartwarming sight to see so many come together to learn more, contribute resources, and be inspired to make a difference in their own life journeys. With over \$35,000 raised through this event, Many Hands is empowered to continue its Christ-centered mission and make an even greater impact in the future.





TOP: Claudin Augustin speaks to a group of students about the importance of planting trees.



Photos: School of Light students celebrate Flag Day on Many Hand's Campus.

## A JOYFUL SEASON OF LEARNING

### Many Hands and the philosophy of Akonpanyatè

By Christi Gabhart, U.S Lead of Ministry & Benevolence

It is with great JOY that the news of the 2023-24 school year at The School of Light can be shared. There may have been moments of uncertainty because of the state of affairs within the country of Haiti; even so, perseverance, resiliency, and raw GRIT have brought the students and teachers to a triumphant end to the school year.

The student body is made up of 72 Preschool students and 112 Primary school students, grades 1-5. Micul Pierre is the school director. To make the school run, there are 10 teachers, eight teacher helpers, one recess helper, one administrative assistant, and two ladies that keep everything clean.

The philosophy of The School of Light is unique. According to Micul, "We believe each student has the capacity to learn. If they are having difficulty it is

probably in the method." The School of Light supports this philosophy by offering special tutor teachers called 'Akonpanyatè' in Creole. The term 'akonpanye' means to accompany. So 'Akonpanyatè' would be 'one who accompanies'. This is the method that creates a successful learning environment for each individual student.

There is a special teacher for grades one and two, and another for the other grades. During the regular class time, the special teacher observes the students and establishes which students may not be grasping the subject matter. During recess time, as well as after school, these teachers work one-on-one with students who have been identified. Another challenge is that many of the parents can not read or write and in turn are not able to help their children with the learning process.

There is an "Education Inspector" for the area where MH works. He came to the MH campus to do a training with the teachers at The School of Light. He learned about the system MH has for the 'Akonpanyatè'. He found this concept to be fascinating and wanted to learn more. After many questions, the Inspector said he could see such potential with this method that he wanted to incorporate this concept into area schools.

Micul states, "The results I am looking to find for this school are based on the concept of the 'Akonpanyatè'. Students are able to establish a solid base in their learning and will be able to build on this into future grade levels."

With confidence, Micul says, "Many Hands School of Light represents light to other schools."

## STUDENTS PLANT SEEDS FOR THEIR FUTURE

Many Hands lead agronomist, Claudin Augustin, plans a special day each year to celebrate the first day of May. In Haiti this is a national holiday. Schools are closed, banks are closed, and it is a day off for MH staff to recognize "Agriculture and Labor Day". Through Claudin's hands-on, interactive teaching, the students in Lekol Limye learn about the importance and advantages of planting trees. The students are engaged and focused as they have the chance to plant papaya trees on the MH campus. The produce is used in the menu for school lunch.

## PLANNING UNDER WAY FOR NEW CLASSROOMS

New construction always brings excitement to MH staff. Seeing growth, development and change encourages staff as well as the community. Planning is under way to prepare for the start of the 2025-26 school year when Lekol Limye will advance to having 7th grade. The space for the 7-8-9 classroom pod on MH campus has been identified. There will be decisions made to create a design with an atmosphere conducive to learning. Ideal time for construction to begin is January 2025.



Scan the QR code to donate towards the construction of new classrooms for the School of Light



TOP: Lisa Berg teaches a student in the ARK Program. BOTTOM: ARK Program students work on reading and math skills.

## FOSTERING A LOVE OF LEARNING

### *The ARK Program celebrates a successful first year*

By Lisa Berg, Director of Education & Early Childhood Development & Celekah Mills, ARK Classroom Teacher & Librarian

At Many Hands for Abaco (MH4A), we're dedicated to supporting the educational journey of every child in the Abaco community. The recent years have presented significant challenges for Abaco's education system. Hurricane Dorian's devastation in September 2019 forced school closures, and the subsequent COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted in-person learning. This year, we're excited to share the positive results of the first year of the Academic Recovery for Kids (ARK) program at Central Abaco Primary School.

The ARK program was launched with a clear goal: to help students strengthen their foundational reading and math skills. We're pleased to report that the pro-

gram has been a success, with participants demonstrating increased proficiency in these crucial areas.

As with any new initiative, the first year of ARK involved learning curves. We encountered challenges, but true to our spirit of collaboration, we made prompt adjustments to optimize outcomes. This commitment to continuous improvement ensures the program's effectiveness for future students.

The impact of ARK extends beyond test scores. Students who previously felt hesitant to participate now actively engage in class discussions, empowered by their improved reading and math abilities. This newfound confidence allows them to approach



**The ARK program isn't just about short-term gains; it's about setting students up for long-term success.**

challenges with a sense of capability, fostering a positive learning environment.

The efforts of this program isn't just about short-term gains; it's about setting students up for long-term success. By equipping them with the necessary skills, we're ensuring a smoother transition to junior high and beyond. Teachers anticipate fewer students falling behind in the future, creating a more positive learning environment for everyone.

The success of the program hinges on its ability to cater to individual needs. Through repeated practice and differentiated instruction, we create a supportive and engaging environment where all students feel comfortable exploring challenging concepts. This focus on personalized learning allows students to flourish, as evidenced by the story of a third grader who went from struggling with sounds to confidently reading entire sentences.

The ARK program's success is a testament to collaboration. Thanks to your generous support, MH4A can continue to empower students on their educational journey. With your continued help, we can expand the program, reaching more students and fostering a lifelong love of learning in Abaco.

**The ARK Program's remarkable success is driven by the combined leadership of Lisa Berg, MH4H's Director of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Celekah Mills, the ARK Classroom Teacher and Librarian.**

## BUSH FIRES IN ABACO



Fires burn as onlookers watch from their cars.

In recent weeks, Abaco has faced a relentless battle against widespread bush fires. For 18 days, the fires ravaged hundreds of acres across multiple communities, including but not limited to Spring City, Marsh Harbour, Murphy Town, Dundas Town, Central Pines, Great Cistern, and Bahamas Coral Island. The flames continued to spread northward and southward along the major highway of S.C. Bootle.

The fires had a profound impact on the landscape, scorching vast areas and posing a significant threat to both natural habitats and communities. However, through the tireless efforts of local fire volunteers and additional support teams, the community was able to prevent the loss of homes, businesses, and most importantly lives.

The unity and support from the Abaco community were remarkable. Roscoe Thompson, Chairman of Marsh Harbour and Spring City Townships, praised the collective efforts, stating, "The camaradery and the community support we had from all was amazing."





The Saunders family poses with an Impact team after a day of hard work renovating their house.

## THE BLESSING OF RESTORATION

### Work Continues on the Saunders House Project

By Laura Johnson, Director of Impact

The restoration of Larry and Nicole Saunders' property is a powerful story of partnership, prayer, and divine provision. After five long years, the Saunders family is closer than ever to moving back into their home, thanks to the combined efforts of the Bahamas Youth Network (BYN) and Many Hands Impact teams.

The Bahamas Youth Network spearheaded the project with a heartfelt desire to help a deserving family return to their home. This mission was embraced by our Impact teams, showing the spirit of God's Global Church working in unison. The collaboration between these teams has been a beacon of hope, showcasing what can be achieved through unity and shared purpose.

Carrie Hendrickson of BYN shared the emotional journey of the project. "We felt called to the project, but the scope of work was beyond what we could do," she reflected. Standing before the nearly restored home, "It is just another miracle that God has provided through our combined networks to make the seemingly impossible, possible." The collective efforts and faith of all who are involved have been instrumental in moving the project forward.

While significant progress has been made, the project is still ongoing. The next steps involve finishing the interior and exterior paint, leveling the floor, and further contributions from the Saunders family to install flooring and replace windows. The dedication and hard work of both BYN and Many Hands Impact teams continue to drive the project forward, inching closer to the day the Saunders family can finally return to their home. Larriell Saunders, the youngest Saunders daughter, shared, "We are overjoyed with all of the work that has been taking place. Although it has been five years since the destruction occurred, BYN and Many Hands Impact teams have helped to make our journey back to normalcy and life as we knew it an easier one. We truly appreciate all of the help and we pray for God's continued blessing and favor over all those who have and will continue to help."

The ongoing restoration of Larry and Nicole Saunders' property stands as an example of what can be achieved when people come together with a common purpose and a shared faith. As the project moves toward completion, it remains a powerful testament to the enduring power of prayer, community, and God's provision.



**Third Church, Pella, IA**  
March 9-15 | People: 20



**Kraal's Michigan Team & Trinity Church**  
April 2-8 | People: 21



**Lutheran Church of Hope Ames - Kairos**  
May 14-21 | People: 15



**Des Moines Christian School, Des Moines, IA**  
May 14-21 | People: 20



**Celebrate Church, Knoxville, IA**  
June 4-11 | People: 13



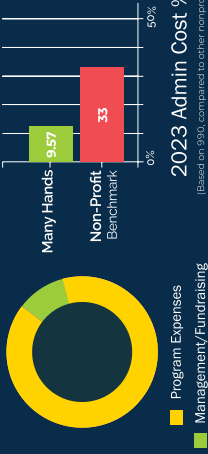
**Convoy of Hope, Germantown, WI**  
June 15-22 | People: 20



**Are you interested in being a part of an Impact trip?**

Visit our website at [ManyHandsImpact.com](http://ManyHandsImpact.com) or email [Impact@mh4h.org](mailto:Impact@mh4h.org) to learn about upcoming trips.

# We are Accountable



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