



Call for Funds – Teaching Haitian Child Refugees

FRENCH HERITAGE PROGRAM RAMPS UP EFFORTS TO MEET INFLUX

New York, January 22, 2010—As the United States welcomes thousands of Haitian children fleeing the devastation in their country, schools with French programs are facing increasing enrollment demands from parents concerned about continuing their children’s education in French. Already at capacity, these schools will only be able to admit a few dozen of the newcomers. This constitutes a major obstacle to their integration, to their psychological recovery following such a traumatic experience, and more fundamentally to the pursuit of their studies with as little disruption as possible. Preserving and developing their French-language skills is also critical for these children to be able to eventually return to their native country. **The French Embassy’s highly successful French Heritage Language Program, which is aimed at disadvantaged Francophone youths who are often recent immigrants, is ideally suited for the critical task of providing Haitian refugees with French-speaking classes.**

Following requests for help from Miami’s Haitian Cultural Alliance, the French Embassy, in cooperation with the French Consulate in Miami, has therefore decided to ramp up its French Heritage Language Program in order to meet this large influx of new students. This five-year-old program is primarily funded through private donations, from individuals or institutions, and **additional funds are urgently needed**. Donations are tax deductible, and easy to make at www.facecouncil.org/donation. They will be put towards hiring new French-speaking teachers, purchasing teaching materials, and coordinating with local school authorities and the Haitian community.

The Embassy estimates that a special fund of \$200,000 will be required, in addition to the existing budget of \$100,000. Indeed, the need is great: though the exact number of student refugees arriving from Haiti is impossible to determine, they are likely to number in the thousands, as South Florida is already home to an estimated 600,000 Haitians. The initial focus of the Heritage program’s additional efforts will be Miami because of its large existing Haitian diaspora, but the Embassy plans to help in other cities with sizeable Haitian communities as well, such as New York, Washington D.C., and Boston.

Created by the French Embassy’s Educational Service, the French Heritage Language Program is run by the non-profit French American Cultural Exchange foundation (FACE) to address the linguistic needs of students of Francophone backgrounds. Launched in 2005 in several New York City public schools, and in 2009 in Miami, the FHLP promotes English-French bilingualism and biculturalism by offering free, for-credit French classes that build on students’ cultural heritage, providing them with a key asset in today’s globalized economy (French is spoken in over 50 countries). Please, help make a difference in the education and the life of these children. Donate today.

To donate: www.facecouncil.org/donation

For more information: www.facecouncil.org/fhlp

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About the French Heritage Language Program

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The French Heritage Language Program was created in 2005 by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and received additional support from the Alfred & Jane Ross Foundation. The program is designed to support and enrich the teaching and learning of the French language, by students of Francophone backgrounds. The primary objectives of the program are to help these students develop proficiency in French, and keep a connection to their respective cultures and identities, while increasing their opportunities for success in their new environment.

Through university partnerships (Center for Applied Linguistics, National Heritage Language Resource Center at UCLA), the program also contribute to scholarly research in the field of heritage language learning.

The French Heritage Language Program works closely with the Internationals Network for Public Schools, which includes nine high schools for new immigrants in New York City, all working for the development of models for global education. The French Heritage Language Program has already served 450 students in five different international high schools, one elementary school, and two community centers.

In addition to the support of the Alfred & Jane Ross Foundation, other foundations have generously contributed to the development of this program, such as the Grand Marnier Foundation, the Graham-Windham Foundation, the Arthur Ross Foundation, French-American Aid for Children, the Florence Gould Foundation, and France Telecom North America. Many private donations have also been received.

About the Cultural Services of the French Embassy

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The Cultural Services of the French Embassy promote the best of French arts, literature, and education to cultural and academic institutions across the United States, with a strong focus on contemporary works. Its role is advisory, conceptual, developmental, as well as promotional and administrative.

About FACE

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FACE (French American Cultural Exchange), is a New York-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to nurturing French-American relations through innovative international projects in the arts and education. Housed at the headquarters of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in New York, FACE is administered by a French-American Board comprised of Trustees based in both New York and Paris. It works in partnership with the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States.