



# World AIDS Day 2011

## 2011—First official CHOIDS World AIDS Day Celebration

Zachary and Jordany with their cousin Dorothy. Dorothy works at Grace Children Hospital. She stopped by briefly and could not

2011 was the first year CHOIDS truly celebrated the lives of those persons living with HIV and AIDS. I will have to say, we did not have the funds or the space to have done so in previous years. After moving to the new home last August, Nurse Julie hired two young men: one to assist the children with singing and poetry, and the other to choreograph dances. These young men spent two hours every Sunday for two months working with the children. By the way, it would be a wonderful gift to have this same team working with the children throughout the year. Preparing the children for the World AIDS Day event cost CHOIDS less



than \$150.

Wilcar, one of the many faces of HIV+ children in Haiti. At CHOIDS we strive to create an environment where AIDS is just one aspect and not the focus of these children's lives.

Here's the break down

- \$100 USD

plus transportation fare each time they came to work with the children. Our plans in 2012 are to have the children more involved in arts and cultural training. Julie helped the children to perform cultural displays, poetry and religious songs.

Even though the celebration was scheduled to start at 1 PM, it did not start until 3. Well, think, we operated on "Haitian time." We had cakes, sodas and sandwiches for the occasion. Three of our children had family members present - Gerline (aunt and uncle), Harold (sister), Jordany and Zachary (cousin). Each of the children played a part in the presentation, even the most shy among them. The pictures below illustrate some of the highlights.



Zachary and Jordany with their cousin Dorothy. Dorothy works at Grace Children Hospital. She stopped by briefly and could not stay to take part in the celebration.



(left) Thyerritson was not shy at all to sing and dance. Ruth C. was his dance partner for many of the parts and (right) Julie assisting the children through a greeting song

The celebration was emotional for many of the adults present, especially for our friends from Wisconsin, whom after learning of the children's personal stories, playing with them, and saw what they are able to do - could not do anything else but cry. The reality is that all of our children have depressing stories - from one of our youngest, **Valentina**, whose mother was going to get rid of her just because she was too sick to be cared for - to **Venise**, our oldest, who was rescued by *Doctors Without Borders* workers who found her all beaten up by a family member whom her mother trusted to care for her before her death. Those stories may have become common place for the staff and even me, because we have heard them so much and so often, but for people who have not lived in these settings and have not had the chance to interact with the people whose stories they have read about, that would be extremely difficult. What impressed me the most with our Wisconsin friends is that they truly cared for our children. Their gestures - touching and playing with the children, made the children feel normal. Their interaction with the children showed no signs of HIV stigma that many Haitian expressed when they learn that a family member has been diagnosed with HIV.

At some point during the trip **Michelle** wanted to hear the kids' stories from them, so with the help of Nurse Julie who knows their stories first hand, the kids were able to share what they could remember of where they came from with us. I'm thankful to the team for doing this, because I'm often too busy to even think of doing things like that.



## More pictures of our first World AIDS Day event



(left) Sisters Esther and Ruth C. danced to a peasant choreography that their choreographer put together to a Haitian song that the girls sang and (right) Esther reciting a poem



The kids performed to Shakira and Haitian songs. It was a marvelous day to see what these children were able to do after just spending two hours in training for eight weeks. In the end, **Esther, Dania, Zachary and Thyerritson** stole the show. Zachary read a monologue that Julie wrote using the assistance of some of the older children (The translated version of the monologue will be posted on our website).



**Alexandra** is 13 years old and has been living at the CHOIDS home for over two years. She is the first child we had from the January 12, 2010 earthquake. The scar on her forehead and another in the middle of her head (covered by hair in this picture) are from the 2010 natural disaster. Before coming to CHOIDS Alexandra lived with her younger sister whom she has not seen since she left the tent city where they lived. Alexandra is very helpful around the house including helping her new moms, her brothers and sisters with whatever they need.



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"Changing the lives of HIV+  
children in Haiti one child at  
a time"



2011 was an extraordinary year for the CHOIDS children and staff. People from all over the US represented Jesus in their lives. I'm so happy to know that there are people from all over who are willing to allow God to use them in such a wonderful way. **From the bottom of heart, I thank you for helping care for these 16 HIV+ children. Your work is not in vain.**