

Mariekarl Vilceus-Talty - Story

Mission Granbois is a private non-profit foundation started in 2009 by Mariekarl's family. Its mission is to change the narrative of the Granbois community through education, health and financial literacy. The Granbois community is located in the L'Artibonite region of Haiti, lying within the boundaries of Marchand Dessalines, a historic town, four to five hours from the Porte au Prince capital. With poor infrastructure and limited government resources, the Granbois community suffers from: inconsistent electricity (without an expensive generator), intermittent cell phone service, limited clean water sources, distant schools or libraries, and limited public transportation and sanitation facilities. The primary occupation is subsistence farming.

Unbeknownst to our family, my mother, Edouarine Alexandre Vilceus began helping children years ago meet their educational expenses. By 2012, she alone had sponsored 25 children through primary and secondary school, many of those children went on to initiate fundamental changes which are sustaining new communities today. Upon her death in 2012, we came to understand the true depth of her selflessness. From the humble beginnings in this primarily farming community, initiating regular programs of providing meals to village children outside the rainy season, Mission Granbois flourished. Expanding its mission, in 2013, we established the Edouarine Alexandre-Vilceus scholarship fund in memory of our mother—the de facto family matriarch, a nurse, and trailblazer—who set the vision in motion to give back, provide support, and maintain the dignity and worth of the Granbois community. To date, approximately 53 youths have benefited from the scholarship fund and continue to participate in service commitments to the Granbois community.

Currently, Mariekarl serves as the Chairwoman of Mission Granbois. With the support of her aunt, President Margaret Alexandre, PhD, Mission Granbois has accomplished a great deal. One important accomplishment is the installation of a clean water filtration system that utilizes gravity ceramic filters in plastic buckets. This aids in decreasing cholera and other bacteria. It is one of the most efficient ways of improving health outcomes, especially for small children. Additionally, the organization donated land and collaborated with the Haitian Health Department to construct the Centre de Sante de Granbois health clinic. The clinic serves a geographic area of ten square miles and approximately 10,000 residents. It has two nurses and support staff but has little in the way of medicines and other needed health items or services. Mission Granbois also established "La Asociación Mission Granbois – España, en colaboración con la Embajada de la República de Haití en España." Mission Granbois further provides annual health screenings and health education for over 300 residents. It also provides overseas shipping and distribution of 25 barrels of clothing and dry food. Mission Granbois began successful "Kids for Kids" program providing goats to older children and to single mothers for raising, selling, and redistributing offspring fostering responsibility and financial literacy. Mission Granbois collaborated with Healing Soles to provide over 350 pairs of shoes to community children and adults, donated school supplies and uniforms for 75 children, and

initiated “The Breakfast Club” which provides breakfast for school age children every morning. Mission Granbois also established the Mission Granbois Summer camp, which has ballooned from 25 children in 2014 to over 150 in 2018. Lastly, Mission Granbois facilitated the Mission Granbois Summer 2017 E-booklet, which documents the collaboration between Professor Margaret Alexandre and Professor Selena T. Rodgers, both faculty members in the School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs at York College, City University of New York.

Though it seems daunting at times attempting to traverse political unrest, natural disasters, and lack of resources, my family and I are so grateful to have the opportunity to make a difference in the world one smile at a time. It is a tremendous honor and testament to my mother’s legacy to change the narrative for those who are less fortunate through education, perseverance, gratitude, and love.