

## 8,800 links of hope head for Haiti

### LOCAL LIBRARIES LINKED TO HELP HAITI

**Date of Event: February 18, 2011**

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OCLA website: <http://www1.chapman.edu/ocla/> (hosted by Chapman University)

8,871 links of fabric and paper is enough to carpet a gymnasium. Zig-zagging across the floor, the final chain of hope for Haiti was hoisted by 186 cheering students, K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade, at St. Callistus Catholic School Parish Center in Garden Grove. They had been the first library to donate to “**Linking Libraries to Help Haiti**”, Orange County Library Association’s fundraiser to aid the devastated Haitian library in Port-au-Prince. OCLA raised \$2,217 and built the final chain of 8,871 links.

During the four week campaign, library users and staff throughout Orange County built chains of support by donating 25 cents for a fabric link on which to write their name. Every link represented a wish for the rebuilding of Haiti’s libraries. Each link was joined to build each library’s chain, and on February 18, all libraries’ chains were connected by OCLA members. The chain and the donated money are destined for the library of Centre Culturel Pyepoudre in Port-au-Prince. Their dedicated library staff currently lends books from bins outside in the streets of the neighborhoods they used to serve. OCLA’s donation will help rebuild a library refuge where children, teens and adults can read, study, and escape their destitute surroundings.

Despite being short of staff and lean on funds, libraries throughout Orange County made time to support “Linking Libraries to Help Haiti”, as they recognized the value of the library as a place to enrich the community, whether here or in Haiti. Twenty-four library sites participated: all branches of Anaheim Public Library, the Orange Public Library, the Fullerton Public Library, and Buena Park Library, Mission Viejo Library, Placentia Library, Yorba Linda Public Library, Santa Ana Library, Huntington Beach Public Library, and the Leisure World Seal Beach Friends. The libraries of St. Callistus Catholic School, Stonegate Elementary School in Irvine, Pioneer Middle School in Tustin, Kennedy High School in Anaheim, and Richland Continuation High School in Orange joined the effort. Also contributing were Santa Ana College Nealley Library, the staff of the Orange County Law Library, and the Leatherby Libraries at Chapman University. Individuals also sent checks for the Linking project.

Many stories of caring emerged during the campaign. At Stonegate Elementary School, one kindergartener, Nathan Tran, was so motivated to help he scoured his house, even under the sofa cushions, to come in with 54 quarters. Girl Scout Troop #866 in Mission Viejo took on donations as a community service project. One scout, Olivia Price, 10, after she wrote her name on a link, said, “I hope they get to build a library with this.” Madison Shimizu, 10, dropped a quarter into the collection can and said, “It feels really good to donate. I hope one day the people in Haiti get to read *Number the Stars*. It’s a great book.” At Pioneer Middle School, Kassey Cho exercised her leadership skills to motivate her P.A.L. class to rally for the cause. The children at St. Callistus sent a special prayer along with the chain.

Ongoing donations for Haiti’s libraries may be made through the American Library Association at [www.ala.org/haiti](http://www.ala.org/haiti) or sent to: c/o International Relations Office, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611-2795. Checks should be made out to "American Library Association" with a notation for Haiti.