



Marie Sintulaire – Testimonial

"As a volunteer, my dreams for the after-school program exceed our resources. We currently operate in a small, old building that is deteriorating daily. While the building diminishes, the size of our student count increases annually. I have experienced the positive impact the center has had in my life and academic career. The center provided me with everything from school supplies, computer and printing resources, college tours, academic support, to leadership training. I know my generation could not be the last to have access to such a blessing."

"In order to ask for help in sponsoring the new building, I had to expose the poverty in our community and at our center. Our circumstances do not define us; they strengthen us. It was after I explained the needs of our center and our lack of resources that I became aware that I am a part of something that is bigger than me."

"I am ecstatic about the plans for the construction of the new building to house the Development Center. Knowing that by sharing my story I am helping the upcoming generation of Haitian Americans have access to resources that will help them to succeed is gratifying."

"I have seen the prideful grin on their tiny faces when they answer a math equation correctly after several attempts. I have heard the engulfing sound of joyful children at play. I have heard the powerful testimonies of adults who attended the program as a child. I have the conviction that this center and the community created by this center needs to be protected for many years to come."

Marie Sintulaire – Florida State University Freshman

Marie Sintulaire Interview

Good news is often hard to find, however, if you know about the Children and Youth Development Center in Belle Glade administered by the First Haitian Baptist Church you can find it there. This after-school program has a new star.

Marie Sintulaire, who just graduated high school at Glades Central with a 3.98 average, will be attending Florida State University this fall with a \$9,600 scholarship, supplemented by a \$40,000 scholarship which she will receive from Leaders for Life. She plans to major in finance.

Sintulaire credits the Church's Development Center for much of her success. She began the after-school program in kindergarten and continued while attending Belle Glade Elementary, Lake Shore Middle School and on to Glades Central. Like many students in Belle Glade and at the Center, her parents worked long hours in the agriculture industry – mom at a packing house and dad at a sod farm.

“The program offered a safe, sense of community and focused on building good character,” said Sintulaire. “Whatever you needed, they helped you, whether it was lessons or materials.”

As children grow up through this after-school program, they help the little ones. When Sintulaire was in 5th grade, Pastor Morales asked if she would like to help teach the younger students as an assistant mentor. She did. The program then offers students a chance to be mentors, then “assistant principals” and finally “principals” in the program, (always supervised by an adult.)

“It was like on the job training without the job,” she laughed. However, the program taught Sintulaire valuable skills. “I learned teamwork skills, how to operate and work in an environment, public speaking, time management, how to be a well-rounded person and be involved in the community. I used these skills at school and in my social life.”

Sintulaire's parents are very proud of her. “I understand how hard they worked and how much they wanted me to exceed expectations and have a better life.”

She looks forward to moving to Tallahassee August 22, with classes beginning late August. Her plans for the rest of the summer? “To relax and mentally prepare for college.” She is a normal teen after all.

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The First Haitian Baptist Church of Belle Glade is currently fundraising to replace the aging 1940s building where the Children and Youth Development Center is housed. This will offer needed space and better facilities to accommodate the many children throughout the Belle Glade community who would like to attend the after-school program. For more information about the Development Center email Assistant Pastor, Morana St. Hilaire at moranasthilaire81@gmail.com.