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NOTABLE

Raleigh Jenkins

Business owner heeds higher calling in Haiti

By Shawn Arraji

The earthquake that shook Haiti in 2010 had a devastating effect from which the country is still trying to recover. The Houston-based nonprofit A Child's Hope, lead by local businessman Raleigh Jenkins, seeks to help the country recover by targeting the group most crucial to its future: children.

Jenkins is the president and CEO of ABC Home and Commercial Services in Cy-Fair, which provides pest, pool, lawn, heating, A/C and security services. It was his work as the president of the National Pest Control Association that landed him in Haiti in March 2010 following the earthquake.

"The Department of Environment in Haiti reached out to the [NPCA] because of the very large problem with flies and mosquitoes and the spreading of malaria and dengue fever," Jenkins said. "They asked us for advice, so we

assembled a group of two businessmen and five entomologists and flew down."

Throughout the course of eight trips back to Haiti during the next year and a half, Jenkins and his team worked with hospitals, orphanages and city service areas to mitigate the spread of disease and train Haitians in pest control strategies.

"This was way bigger than anything we thought we could ever contribute to, but we hoped we would be able to change those micro environments a little bit," he said. "The volunteer doctors and nurses wouldn't stop thanking us for the work we did."

While visiting an orphanage during his planned final trip in July 2012, Jenkins and his son looked out at orphans playing on a playground of rubble and realized their work in Haiti was just beginning.

"I think it is our responsibility to help those most in need of

help," Jenkins said. "I think we found them in Haiti. We felt like God was speaking to us clearly."

His vision would eventually develop into A Child's Hope, a nonprofit dedicated to providing orphans and abandoned children in Haiti with a place to stay, an education and the life and survival skills needed to thrive. The faith-based initiative is being planned within a mountainside community on La Montagne.

With help from architecture students from Texas A&M and the University of Houston, A Child's Hope came up with the design for a community to support 320 children. The plan involves a community center, dining hall, schools, dorms and athletic fields.

"Our goal is to build this into a self-sustained community," Jenkins said. "We want to have our own fish farms, chicken coops, do our own farming and raise our own livestock. The children



Courtesy Raleigh Jenkins

Businessman Raleigh Jenkins founded A Child's Hope to help children in Haiti.

will be doing crafts, and we'll be growing our own coffee. We want a way to earn money to pay for the teachers and ongoing expenses that donations alone will not sustain."

The project also involves reaching out to the community, not only for financial support, but also for volunteers interested in going on missions once the facilities are up and running. A fundraising gala is being planned for April 2014.

Negotiations on the land

purchase of about 15 acres should be settled by the end of December, Jenkins said. The goal is to have the first structures built for children to stay in by summer 2014. A Child's Hope currently donates to an area school to feed lunch to 300 children five days a week.

"Our goal is not to Americanize these kids," Jenkins said. "Our goal is to raise them to become Christian, successful Haitians and leaders of the country for the future."

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