

Local man founds building ministry

Mission helps in Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala

BY PAUL R. KOPENKOSKEY
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HUDSONVILLE — Ray Van Drie vowed his first international mission project was his last, even though it had success written all over it.

Van Drie's Christian Reformed Church-affiliated construction ministry, SON-BEAM International, successfully supervised the digging of a well and construction of a church in Thomassique, Haiti, in January 2007.

The Haitians showed their appreciation, but Van Drie said the emotional and physical toll was great.

Stifling humidity, food poisoning and the all-night wailing of a mother giving birth to her breech baby — with neither surviving — nearly trounced the Blendon Township resident's drive to continue guiding construction of churches in Third World nations.



PRESS PHOTO/T.J. HAMILTON

Keeping a pledge: Ray Van Drie, left, is executive director of SON-BEAM International, a building ministry serving in Haiti. Next to him are Steve Windemuller, president, and Stan Drenth, secretary and pastor of Searchlight Ministries. Van Drie almost gave up on the mission, but he remembered the pledge he made at a Promise Keepers conference and kept pushing through.

"I swore I'd never come back," said Van Drie, 55.

But instead, he looked to a pledge he made to God almost two years ago at a Promise Keepers conference.

The fledgling ministry started three years ago when Van Drie, SON-BEAM's executive director, employed his construction skills to help build Searchlight Ministries Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville.

That experience left Van Drie and the others who helped yearning for more. SON-BEAM's board includes Steve Windemuller, the ministry's president; Deb Windemuller, treasurer; the Rev. Stan Drenth, secretary; and Van Drie's wife, Jan, secretary to the treasurer.

Van Drie asked Luis Pellecer, Christian Reformed World Mission's program director for Latin America, which area of the world had

the greatest need. Pellecer's answer: Haiti.

So far, SON-BEAM, Serving Our Neighbor — Building for Evangelism And Ministry, has done \$69,000 in projects that included pouring a concrete floor and building roofs for churches in Honduras, purchasing materials for new churches in Haiti and Guatemala, and paying half the cost to purchase land for a church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital.

Future projects include constructing an orphanage in India and a church in Nicaragua.

Although it's affiliated with the North American CRC, Van Drie said SON-BEAM intends to aid other Christian groups, regardless of denomination.

"We want to be able to help anybody," he said.

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