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Media Contact: Maureen Earls
(805) 450-6111
maurenearls@yahoo.com

NEWS

Fonkoze Santa Barbara's 2nd Annual Irish Night will Raise Funds for Literacy Training in Haiti

SANTA BARBARA, CALIF., February 27, 2009 – Fonkoze Santa Barbara, a nonprofit micro-finance institution dedicated to providing financial services to the poor women of Haiti, is pleased to announce its 2nd Annual Irish Night on March 15th from 5-7 p.m. to raise funds to provide literacy training for 1,000 Haitian women.

Irish Night will take place at Trinity church, located at 1500 State Street, and will feature traditional Irish food, music and dancing. Attendees will be treated to a delicious meal of Irish stew, soda bread, dessert and an assortment of beer and wine. Accordionist Gail O'Campanella and Tenor John Coleman will entertain with traditional Irish music. A sing-along of favorite tunes and Irish group dancing will keep the crowd on its feet.

While the spirit of the evening will be good old fashioned Irish revelry, the purpose of the event is to help the poor women of Haiti raise themselves out of poverty. To this end, Fonkoze Santa Barbara has already been successful in establishing a micro-credit branch bank in Jean Rabel—a small town in northern Haiti. The bank opened in January of this year and serves 1,000 poor Haitian women by providing them with micro-loans so that they may start their own small but self-supporting businesses and begin to make a living for themselves and their families. The commitment to the women of Jean Rabel begins with the establishment of the bank, but certainly does not end there. Fonkoze Santa Barbara is currently working to raise \$25,000 to fund literacy materials and training for all of the women borrowers served by the Jean Rabel branch. All of the proceeds raised during Irish Night will go toward this aim.



“We’re over halfway to meeting our goal of being able to train all 1,000 women served by our branch in Jean Rabel in basic literacy,” said Maureen Earls, one of the founders and guiding spirits of Fonkoze Santa Barbara. “We’re confident that the money raised at Irish Night will allow us to reach that goal.”

Ms. Earls and three other members of the local Fonkoze solidarity leadership group are returning to Haiti at the end of March to visit the Jean Rabel community and tour the new branch bank. With 500 supporters on the mailing list, Fonkoze Santa Barbara has many well-wishers who will be anxious to hear stories of how their “sisters” in Haiti are progressing.

Irish Night is sure to be a night of fun and inspiration. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$5 for kids. **Complimentary tickets are available to members of the press who wish to attend.** Please contact Maureen Earls to coordinate press attendance.

For more information or to make a donation to Fonkoze Santa Barbara, contact Maureen Earls at (805) 450-6111 or maurenearls@yahoo.com. Donations can be made out to Fonkoze USA and sent to 1317 Laurel Canyon Drive, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

About Fonkoze Santa Barbara

Fonkoze Santa Barbara is the local chapter of Fonkoze USA, the largest micro-finance institution offering a full range of financial services to the rural-based poor in Haiti. It is committed to the economic and social improvement of the people and communities of Haiti and to the reduction of poverty in the country. Modeled after the Grameen banks established by Dr. Muhammad Yunus’ organization in Bangladesh and India, the Fonkoze micro-credit banks have effectively helped thousands of rural Haitian families pull themselves out of poverty.

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