

A Children of Promise Story – Junior Obrand

In 1984, a son was born to Acevil Obrand, a farmer (now deceased), and his wife, Esther. They all lived in the community of Gris-Gris, which sits atop a mountain at the western end of the SUD-EST (south-east) Department of Haiti's southern peninsula. The newborn was named Jignore, but at a young age he would be commonly known to all by his nickname, Junior.

With the addition of two younger siblings they became a family of ten children, five girls and five boys. All of them attended school in Gris-Gris. Their education was very important to their parents. At the time of Junior's primary education, his church school of St. Rose of Lima was a one room schoolhouse. Junior applied himself to mathematics, and reading, writing and spoken language skills of French and Haitian Creole, but from the age of 13 he was eager to be conversant in English. With few English speakers in his community, his best opportunity for this was to attend weekly English classes offered at the secondary school Lycee Dulcine Jean Louis in Gris-Gris, where he participated in two hours of English classes per week. At the age of 14, Junior and his school friends formed what is known as an English Practice Club, where they would gather and practice English and learn new words and phrases with other teenagers in the community.



By the time Junior was 15 years old; St. Rose of Lima had become a parish with its own pastor and paired with the sister parish of Church of the Risen Savior in Burnsville, MN. The new relationship between these two parishes resulted in regular visits by Risen Savior mission teams to Gris-Gris for a variety of clinics and projects. Junior's older brother, Joel, often applied his trade skills and sweat labor to the projects of early sister parish missions. Junior liked to be around the activity of these mission projects and help as he could, and especially to be with these English speaking guests.

Following his secondary education, Junior completed more formal instruction in English in Port-au-Prince. He received his certificate of English proficiency from the American English School there in March of 2006.



Attending this English School was made possible with the support of Mike Mahowald, one of the founding Sister Parish Committee members. About Mike, Junior says, “I owe him more than just

gratitude. I can’t tell my story without mentioning his name.” Soon after this training, he served as an interpreter for a variety of mission teams from Risen Savior, including Agriculture projects with Mike.



It was on a teacher training mission in 2008 that he met his future wife, Paula. They were married at Risen Savior in 2009 and now live in Apple Valley with their two children, Ester and Wesley.

As Junior established himself in his new home in Minnesota, he completed a degree in law enforcement. To one who knows Junior, this career choice “to protect and serve” his community, is a very understandable one.

However, Junior’s work ethic and educational foundation, especially his tri-language skills, moved him into a different career path with Feed My Starving Children (FMSC). Junior Obrand is now the Regional Program Manager for distribution of FMSC food for all of the Caribbean. In the 2015-16 fiscal year, this Christian charity based in Coon Rapids, MN, provided nearly 273 million nutrition-packed meals to hungry people worldwide with Haiti being the largest national recipient of its packaged food. As Program Manager, he serves in a critical capacity to feed starving and malnourished children in that part of the world.

All of this was built on the foundation of Junior’s early education and development at St. Rose School in Gris-Gris, Haiti. He is now pursuing another social science degree to serve him even better in his work. This is a testament to

the necessity and benefits of life-long learning, which is perhaps one of the most important lessons the St. Rose School educators can instill in its young students.

Even though Junior no longer lives in Haiti, he still “comes back and serves” Haiti in a way that brings critical hunger relief to so many there. He serves as a role model for the students of St. Rose School and affirms the importance of their early education and development, and the resulting opportunities it can open for them personally and for Haiti.