

## RELIGION

# Good Samaritan helps pave the way

DENISE FORD-MITCHELL  
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Eleven years ago, Ann Bickel Hume paid forward the blessing Pony Aristil is receiving today.

Hume believes God saved her, and now she's returning that benevolence through her Bon Samaritan America, a nonprofit Christian humanitarian ministry.

Two weeks ago, Hume opened her heart and home to the bashful above-the-knee amputee from Sodea in the Republic of Haiti. And when the teen leaves Friday, Nov. 2, he won't have the crutches that have slowed him for two years.

Hume, Aristil and Creole translator Emmanus Charles journeyed from Hume's Oscoda home Tuesday for the first of many appointments with prosthetists and rehabilitation workers at medical equipment supplier Wright & Filippis Inc., 3665 Bay in Saginaw Township.

Doctors removed the teen's cancer-filled right leg in 2005. For two years, Aristil walked 3½ miles to school in flip-flop sandals using crutches.

"I was very ashamed when they cut off my leg," Aristil said through interpreter Charles.

"I will be more comfortable and able to carry things better with two legs," he said.

Aristil, 18, who lives in poverty in Haiti with his widower father and four siblings — will return to Saginaw frequently for measurements to ensure his new prosthetic limb — which may cost as much as \$40,000 — fits properly. He's bunking with Hume, a stranger who reached out to help him, in Oscoda.

Her "good Samaritan" efforts began 10 years ago when Hume joined forces with the Haiti-based Bon Samaritan organization, which provides education, food and health care in that country.

The organization was exactly what Hume was looking for to keep a promise she'd made the year before.

"I was really struggling with the aggressive treatments I was receiving for breast cancer," explained Hume, 53. "I promised God that if he let me live, I'd spend the rest of my life working for his glory."

The certified medical assistant/lab technician found her calling during a missionary trip to Haiti in 1997.

"I fell in love with the people and the



DAVID A. SOMMERS/THE SAGINAW NEWS

Clockwise, from top left: Pony Aristil, 18, of Haiti lost his leg to cancer two years ago. Pete Freigang, 37, of Saginaw Township, a certified prosthetist for Wright & Filippis Inc., makes a plaster cast, the first step in constructing an artificial leg for Aristil. Jim Wazny, 36, of Merrill, an amputee support system specialist for the company, shows Aristil his own prosthetic leg.

country," Hume said. "It just broke my heart to see so many people trying to survive with nothing.

"It's even worse for children and adults who need medical care. But there's only so much we can do. Donations help us to maintain a clinic and pay the doctors in Haiti," she added.

In 2006, Hume recruited the Rochester

Hills-based Filippis Foundation, the community service arm of Wright & Filippis Inc. The company, which has 30 offices throughout Michigan, provides computer-designed artificial limbs, home medical equipment, rehabilitation services, wheelchair lifts and ramps. The foundation is paying for Aristil's artificial leg.

Three or four times a year, Hume shells

out \$500 to \$700 for round trips to Haiti. Aristil is the sixth Haitian Hume has helped over the years.

"The Haitian government doesn't do anything to help its people," Hume said.

"Few people can afford an education because it costs so much for materials and supplies. Health care is totally out of the question for the poor families there," she said.

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 75 percent of its population living below the poverty line. More than half of the population is unemployed, and the annual income is \$350 per capita. Roughly 70 percent of the population is illiterate.

The life expectancy of a Haitian is only 54, and one of every five children dies of malnutrition, dehydration or diarrhea, according to The Friends of the Children of Haiti.

Sponsors and donations enable Hume to help folks who can't help themselves.

Wright & Filippis certified prosthetist Pete Freigang, 37, of Saginaw Township is working with Hume to produce Aristil's replacement limb.

"When we get done, Pony will be able to ride a bike," Freigang told Charles, the Creole translator.

Smiling, Charles replied, "He says he doesn't know how to ride a bike."

"He will when he leaves here," Freigang assured him.

Wright & Filippis amputee support system specialist Jim Wazny, 36, of Merrill agreed.

"Once we get everything fitted properly, I'll help him learn to walk again," Wazny said.

"It's important that he realizes life's not over because you're missing a limb," he said, lifting a leg of his pants to reveal his \$45,000 computerized prosthetic leg.

Six years ago, Wazny's left leg was amputated above the knee after a devastating motorcycle crash.

"I didn't let that stop me," he said. "Life goes on, and I want to make sure that Pony's does, too."

For information or to make donations, call Hume at (989) 739-3946 or e-mail her at [god\\_bless@chartermi.net](mailto:god_bless@chartermi.net). ♦

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