



**In January**, a massive earthquake shook the Republic of Haiti.

Over 200,000 people in that Caribbean country were killed; more than one million were left homeless. Haiti was already one of the poorest countries in the world. Before the earthquake, 80 percent of its population lived in poverty.

Fourteen Haitian students were attending UL Lafayette when the quake hit. Their presence was especially notable because only 53 percent of Haitians who are 15 years old or older can read and write.

One of the students lost his grandmother, godmother, aunt and fiancée. All 14 students' family homes were destroyed.

In addition to such unthinkable loss, there was this grim reality: The Haitian students' families had been sending what cash they could spare to help them stay in school. That money was a lifeline and the earthquake took it, too.

Ema Haq is a UL Lafayette graduate who owns Bailey's Seafood and Grill. As an international student, he had experienced firsthand the day-to-day challenges the Haitians faced while living far from home. He could only imagine their distress after the earthquake struck.

So the restaurateur decided to hold a fund-raising dinner for them in February.

Here's what the late broadcaster Paul Harvey would have described as "the rest of the story."

Top university administrators showed up for the benefit dinner at Bailey's. But they weren't there to eat. They were there to serve. Some seated guests. Some took diners' food and beverage orders. Others cleared away dirty dishes and napkins so tables could be set for the next customers.

Another noteworthy group was present: UL Lafayette's Haitian students. They walked among the tables, stopping to say "Thank you" to the restaurant's guests.

None of the diners knew in advance who their servers would be that night. The UL Lafayette administrators were not there to generate positive publicity or earn kudos from anybody. They were simply there to help.

The benefit dinner was just one of many ways that people have raised money to assist the Haitian students. A generous donor, for example, provided frequent flier miles that enabled the student who had lost four loved ones to visit his mother and sister in Florida, where they had fled after the earthquake.

Isn't it amazing how much one simple meal can convey about a university and a community?

We hope you enjoy this issue of *La Louisiane*.

– Kathleen Thames