



Media Kit

Our History: The Haitian Neighborhood Center, Sant La, Inc., was founded in December 2000, by a group of community leaders and service providers concerned by the chronic gaps in the provision of services to the Haitian/Haitian American community of South Florida. Sant La's work involves addressing the chronic service gaps resulting from the community's social isolation and lack of awareness about available community resources.

Our Board of Directors: Sant La is led by a broad-based community board with representatives from the Haitian community, the business community, and key public and private sector organizations.

Our Mission: Sant La's mission is to empower, strengthen and stabilize South Florida's Haitian community by providing free access to information and existing services to ensure its success and stability.

Our Vision: Sant La's vision is self-sufficiency in South Florida's Haitian community.

Our Constituency: Sant La serves residents of the Little Haiti area as well as residents of the Northeast corridor, the community at-large, other non-profit organizations as well as private sector, governmental and educational institutions.

Our Objectives: Sant La's objectives are to serve as the central intake and referral point for neighborhood/community residents and to provide information and referral services for increased access to benefits such as: safety-net benefits, educational and training opportunities, housing opportunities, economic self-sufficiency, and access to healthcare and legal services. Sant La has worked to meet these strategic objectives through the following programs and activities:

- ❑ Partnering with existing community based organizations and government agencies
- ❑ Providing capacity-building training and staff development for neighborhood based organizations
- ❑ Working to strengthen neighborhood leadership and community civic engagement
- ❑ Advocating on behalf of the Haitian/Haitian American community's needs on the local, state and national levels
- ❑ Conducting research and evaluation of the communities needs and making corresponding policy recommendations
- ❑ Gathering data and preparing research reports on the Haitian community of South Florida
- ❑ Conducting on-going outreach and information via radio and television
- ❑ Promoting access to health care as well as good health habits and healthy lifestyles through prevention and education
- ❑ Providing Financial Literacy services, including free tax preparation for low and moderate-income individuals and families
- ❑ Providing employment placement and supportive services
- ❑ Providing effective parenting skills for the purpose of promoting positive youth development and sustained educational success

Sant La's Activities and Highlights:

Information and Referral

Sant La offers information and referral services to the Haitians and Haitian Americans in the Little Haiti community and throughout Southern Florida.

- ◆ Sant La staff serve more than 10,000 people on an Annual basis.

Community Outreach and Education

Sant La offers assistance and information to Haitian families and community members about important initiatives and topical issues such as parenting, disaster recovery, crime and victimization, wellness, subsidized health care coverage and transportation.

- ◆ Our television program, *Teleskopi*, reaches 350,000 Haitian and Haitian American households and countless others in Dade and Broward counties
- ◆ Frequent guest appearances on Creole-language radio programs and Community Forums have also provided clients with information

Asset Building and Financial Literacy

Sant La provides a series of workshops entitled "*From Saving to Asset Building*", designed to enhance asset building skills. Topics covered include budget management, credit cards, mortgages and loans. Sant La also provides free tax return assistance for community members.

- ◆ Sant La completes and electronically files an average of 1100 tax returns annually.

Civic Engagement

- ◆ In partnership with The Children's Trust, Sant La provides school-based and church-based civic skills training sessions explaining the structure of American government.
- ◆ Sant La hosts quarterly adult and youth forums to promote community involvement.
- ◆ Neighborhood walk-through's, jitney rides and church presentations encourage community members to articulate their needs and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Educational Advocacy

Sant La's staff actively advocates for educational improvement and community involvement in neighborhood schools. In addition to a situational awareness and informational outreach campaign, staff members are serving on the advisory committees (EESACs) of several schools in the Little Haiti area.

Haitian-American Archives / Resource Library

Our Archives collection continues to expand as we document the growth and evolving nature of the Haitian community in South Florida in a variety of media. Sharing space with the Archives is the Non-profit Resource Library that contains an assortment of publications, tools and information for use by neighborhood organizations and agencies. Sant La is often called upon to provide materials from its archives for display. The Historical Museum of Southern Florida's ***Black Crossroads*** Exhibit 2009 and notable others

Health Access

Sant La promotes access to health services, and connecting people to care through a number of programs, including:

- ◆ The Children's Trust funded "Community Health Connect" program to train Creole-speaking community health workers who assist parents with filling out and submitting KidCare, Medicare and Medicaid applications

Documentation of Needs

Over the past five years, Sant La has been involved in a number of documentation projects and resource mapping activities and has published five Working Papers. Sant La provided data and was acknowledged as the driving force behind *The Haitian Community in Miami-Dade: A Growing the Middle Class Supplement*, a 2005 publication of the Brookings Institution. The agency continues to document and identify neighborhood needs and trends in order to assist in policy-oriented research, strategic decision-making and investments in Little Haiti and the Northeast Corridor.

To date, Sant La publications include:

- ◆ *Analysis of Service Gaps in Little Haiti*
- ◆ *Effective Outreach Strategies in the Haitian/Haitian-American Community of Miami Dade*
- ◆ *Financial Literacy Needs and Issues in South Florida's Haitian Community*
- ◆ *The Haitian Community in Miami-Dade: A Growing the Middle Class Supplement*
- ◆ *Health Care Needs and Issues in Little Haiti*
- ◆ *Little Haiti in Pictures*
- ◆ *Risk and Protective Factors in Little Haiti*
- ◆ *South Florida Haitian-American Community Resource Directory – 3rd Edition*

Capacity Building / Cultural Competency Training

We continue to build the organizational capacity of Sant La, and other neighboring community based organizations, by promoting improved core management skills for non-profit agency personnel in order to enhance service delivery for Haitian children and families. Sant La offers:

- Sensitivity Training
- Survival Creole
- Haitian Legacy 101

Employment Services

A new program offering employability skills and supportive services helps place and train those looking for employment through continuous workshops and referrals. Sant La's staff assists each applicant in mapping an outline for success the first time they walk through our door.

Strengthening Families Program

A new parenting program targeting youth ages 10 to 14 designed to promote effective parenting skills and positive youth development. Activities are outlined to foster communication, proper compensation, cause and effect and personal growth.

For more on Sant La's services, please visit www.santla.org

Biography of the Executive Director:

GEPSIE M. METELLUS

Gepsie Morisset-Metellus is co-founder and Executive Director of the Haitian Neighborhood Center Sant La, a one-stop neighborhood resource center that serves the Haitian/Haitian-American population of South Florida.

Gepsie's community involvement spans over two decades of leadership and service to the community through numerous boards. She currently serves on the Miami Dade County Public Schools Diversity Equity and Excellence Advisory Committee, the Alliance for Human Services, the Alliance for Community Based Care and The Board of Trustees of Aventura Hospital. She is also a member of the Miami Chapter of the International Women's Forum.

In addition to authoring publications such as *The Haitian Presence in the United States; Haitians: Their History and Culture*; and *The Long Journey of South Florida's Haitian Community*, *The Magic of Little Haiti*, Gepsie is also a respected radio and television commentator about the issues that impact the Haitian community. She is often invited to discuss and analyze issues that particularly impact the South Florida community.

She has been honored by numerous local and national organizations for her exemplary leadership, outstanding community service, personal and professional contributions to educational excellence and improved inter-group relations in the South Florida community at-large. Since her arrival to Miami, Gepsie has been and continues to be a stalwart advocate for the needs and interests of the Haitian community as chairperson of the Haitian Refugee Center, as a member of the programming team of *Radyo Lakansyèl* and *Radyo Etensèl*, chair of the Association of Haitian Educators of Dade, as well as the Society of Haitian American Professionals and Entrepreneurs. A number of prominent Haitian American Professional Organizations have recognized her tireless and exemplary leadership, as well as her ability to articulate and elevate the Haitian-American community's perspective and interests at a national level. Her community involvement and leadership have brought her many honors, including: Women of Impact, Bell South Black History Honoree, In the Company of Women, Rockefeller Foundation Leadership Fellowship, Women's Hall of Fame, Miami ICON, Outstanding Americans By Choice, and Humanitarian Award, among many others.

Ms. Metellus is multilingual and has a multicultural perspective shaped by her extensive travel to Europe, Asia and the Caribbean. She traveled to Beijing, China, in 1995 to present at the International Conference on Women. In 1996 she traveled to Japan at the invitation of the Japanese Government; and in 2002, she, along with a select group of national leaders, was invited to travel to Israel by the American Jewish Congress.

Gepsie's motto is "Provide the leadership to get things done! – knowing how to effectively use her ties and relationships with mainstream institutions to benefit issues, projects, and initiatives of significance to the South Florida community.

Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Gepsie M. Metellus migrated to the United States at the age of twelve. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in French/Romance Languages from Queens College, NY in 1983, a Masters of Science in Modern Language Education from F.I.U. in 1993, and a Post Masters Certificate in Education Leadership from Nova Southeastern University in 1994. She and her husband Gerard reside in Miami Shores and have no children.