

Book offers multilingual help for Haitian children

March 15, 2012 12:45 PM Joe Halm

jhalm@tulane.edu

When December social work graduates Lucy Bromer and Caroline Crowley saw the ongoing mental health struggles of children in Haiti due to the 2010 earthquake, they decided to offer a solution ? in three languages.



For their graduation requirement, social work students created *The Big Shake*, a book to help children in Haiti process trauma from the 2010 earthquake. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The duo wrote and illustrated a 52-page children's book *The Big Shake* in Haiti's three main languages ? Haitian Creole, French, and English ? as their professional project, which is a key graduation requirement in the Tulane [School of Social Work](#). The book is intended to help children process the trauma they experienced.

Bromer and Crowley presented their research recently at the National Association of Social Workersâ€™ Louisiana conference.

“Our goal was to create a story that all children of Haiti could connect to, no matter how severe of an impact the earthquake had in their lives,” Bromer says. “We want volunteers, educators, parents and mental health professionals to have access to a culturally appropriate bibliotherapy tool that will help them to meet the children where they are and aid the children on their path to recovery.”

The project was an offshoot of the arts-based [HeARTs With Haiti](#) program, which included children's books, but the duo felt the books would be more effective if written in local languages. Working with a local Haitian, they evaluated the experiences of the children, the culture and the environment, and the story began to flow fairly easily.

“It was fun taking a break from research papers to unleash our creativity,” Bromer says. “We included experiences and themes of fear, loss of home, separation from loved ones and adaptation to a new way of life. We also included themes of safety, calm and hope, which are tenets of psychological first aid.”

Crowley says the major obstacle was obtaining a Creole translation, but after the book's successful testing in Haiti, they have discussed possibly translating it into more languages.