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Duolingo Launches Haitian Creole Course With Little Haiti Challenge

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Leading language learning app's campaign will support Haitian-owned businesses across the U.S.

PITTSBURGH, Pa., Feb. 22, 2022 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Duolingo (NASDAQ: DUOL), the world's #1 language learning platform, today launched its new Haitian Creole course for English speakers. The course provides language learners the opportunity to learn the revolutionary language of the first Black independent nation spoken by more than 12 million people, while discovering the culture of the Haitian people.

To promote the new course, Duolingo is partnering with several Haitian-run restaurants around the US - including Grandchamps in Brooklyn and Manjay Restaurant in Miami - to give away a free month of Duolingo Plus, the app's premium subscription service, to customers who patronize a participating restaurant, giving them the opportunity to practice their Haitian Creole with fun phrases like 'Sa k pase?' (What's up?).

One of the largest Haitian communities in America is in Miami. In fact, Haitian Creole is the city's third most spoken language so Duolingo is challenging Miami Mayor Francis Suarez to learn the language and keep a 30-day streak of Duolingo lessons in the new course in exchange for a $30,000 donation to Haitians in Tech, a Miami-based organization that provides aspiring and established Haitian technologists with resources to grow in their careers.

"Miami is proud to have one of the largest Haitian populations in the world. We applaud Duolingo for making Haitian Creole more accessible to everyone; it will serve as a vehicle to Haiti's rich history and cultural traditions," said Miami Mayor Francis Suarez.

Developing the Haitian Creole course came with a unique set of challenges due to the historically spoken nature of the language, which began to be more widely used by enslaved people from the sixteenth to seventeenth century and became a national language when the island of Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti) revolted to become the first independent Black republic. A lack of formal teaching of Haitian Creole until the late 1980s created a mostly spoken language, with few formal writing or explicit grammar rules. Florida International University (FIU) Haitian Creole Professor Nicolas "Tiko" Andre, a leading expert in Haitian Creole and founding member of the Creole Academy in Haiti, along with former graduate students and a cohort of Haitian Creole professors and experts, partnered with Duolingo to develop the new course and describe grammar rules.

"Haitian Creole is a language filled with beauty, nuance, breadth, and depth. While developing this course, we wanted to honor the history of the language and implement the patterns and rules used by Haitian Creole speakers that we saw over time and across regions," said Dr. Nick "Tiko" Andre, linguist and Haitian Creole program coordinator at FIU. "We are thrilled that Duolingo's platform will allow more people to learn this unique language and engage with the rich Haitian culture."

Duolingo is dedicated to bringing cultural awareness of lesser-known languages to a wider audience. Its currently working on developing new courses to teach South African languages, Zulu and Xhosa. Duolingo technology has already been used to help revitalize indigenous and endangered languages including Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Hawaiian, and Navajo. To learn more about the Haitian Creole course, go to www.duolingo.com.

About Duolingo
Duolingo (www.duolingo.com) is the most popular language-learning platform and the most downloaded education app worldwide. The app makes learning new languages fun with bite-sized lessons that feel like playing a game. The company's mission is to develop the best education in the world and make it universally available. Duolingo offers over 100 total courses across 41 distinct languages, from Spanish, French, German and Japanese to Navajo and Yiddish.

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