



HAITI HEALTH CARE NEWS

An occasional bulletin to report on the work of the Haitian Health Care Foundation, Inc., of the Diocese of Richmond, available also at www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti.

January 2009

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Susan Pleasants RN

On behalf of the Haitian Health Care Foundation, I would like to wish everyone a very blessed New Year—a year which will be one of continued growth for the HHCF. We are excited about continuing to develop relations with our partners and broaden our scope of resources to our twinned parishes.

The Foundation will expand our maternal child program, and Dr. Kurt Elward will be leading efforts in this area. We have had the opportunity to support the efforts of the Midwives for Haiti (M4H) training program which produced its first graduating class this past fall. We look forward to continuing to work with them and to develop additional resources to improve the health of pregnant women in Haiti and their newborn babies.

We are very appreciative of Bon Secours Virginia Health System's desire to be an active partner with us as we identify areas in which we can collaborate in Haiti.

During 2008 the HHCF began a partnership with the Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation to help develop the child wellness program on their campus in Hinche. We look forward to working together with their foundation to bring health care to the children through their onsite first-aid clinic, in collaboration with the Haitian government's Ministry of Health (MSPP) and Zanmi Lasante at Ste. Thérèse Hospital, and the Diocese of Hinche's Caritas.

It is by working together as partners that we can succeed with our mission to help our brothers and sisters in Haiti receive the basic health care services which are the right of every human being.

Last January HHCF was represented at the dedication of the new MSPP/Zanmi Lasante hospital in La Colline. Our Foundation, along with twinning parishes located around Lascahobas, helped to support the opening of a new dental clinic. Since then dentist Dr. Roody Beauboeuf and his staff have provided dental care to a population which never before had access to dental services. Despite the fact that the needs are overwhelming at times, the lack of equipment and supplies, and the ongoing challenge of keeping the equipment running, Dr. Beauboeuf remains upbeat and very positive about the dental clinic and plans for the future. As we told Dr. Beauboeuf during our medical professionals' trip in October, we are dedicated to supporting his efforts to bring dental care to the people of this area. Kathy Faw RN, chair of the HHCF Dentists for Haiti program, has led the way in helping to obtain needed supplies, and the Church of the Redeemer in Mechanicsville, Virginia, has assisted with funding. This is a very challenging

area to obtain support, but a healthy mouth is essential to promoting general health and prevention of heart disease, which is directly linked to poor dental hygiene and decay.

I thank the HHCF Board of Directors for all of their hard work in helping our Foundation reach out to so many in Haiti. Please accept our appreciation to all that support us by volunteering their time, talent, or treasure to help improve health care for the people of Haiti.

HEALTH CARE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Susan Pleasants RN

Increasing emphasis is being placed on the concept of "sustainability" both within our Diocese of Richmond and with the Haitian partners with which we work. As a past member of the Diocese of Richmond's Haiti Sustainable Development Committee for 30 months and doing work in Haiti since 2004, I have formulated my own opinion of how this applies to service in Haiti.

The ideal of Haitian people earning a living and being able to afford to purchase the necessities of life, including health care, is admirable. Certainly most people in any part of the world want to ability to enjoy a safe, healthy life, earn a basic living free from dependency on others, and have their basic everyday needs met. But what is the reality in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere? It is that, as illustrated by the hurricanes last year, the people of the central plateau of Haiti are denied these basic rights, with losses to be felt for generations to come.



Some of the Gran Plas devastation

For some, having a handful of chickens, a cow, or a few goats was an accomplishment which took place over several generations. I cannot describe the look on the faces of the people of Gran Plas, a small village near Mirebalais which was completely eliminated by flooding, as the villagers stood around their ruined homes and tried to comprehend their losses. It is also overwhelming to those of us who witness these losses and try to determine the best way to help these people. The word heartache is hardly adequate; to see so many others suffer when we have an abundance of resources is sometimes a hard burden to carry.

During the recent HHCF medical professionals' trip, the participants had a chance to visit a small group of women who have formed a cooperative in Haiti. This group, led by Ton Vriens, founder of the Netherlands-based NGO Turtle Tree Trust Foundation, holds great promise for economic independence. With economic independence comes the ability to purchase services such as health care. This small group of about 70 women, *Fanm Veret*, is producing artistic items which are being sold in the United States. One item is particularly unique—a computer sock called McSock, which has a multitude of possible uses. The women are also making crafts and stuffed animals for a hospital in New York. It is difficult to find a true independent economic cooperative in Haiti. Many so-called cooperatives are actually businesses that employ women who have no say in the governance of the organization. So this is a very exciting group to watch and may be a model for others. [See www.madewithloveproject.com or contact Ton Vriens directly at vriens@aol.com.]

I am convinced that supporting the efforts of our health care partners on the ground in Haiti is the way to proceed. As we work in partnership, we give them the strength of our ongoing presence and the knowledge that we will not quit—when the Haitian Health Care Foundation undertakes a new program, it is with the understanding that it will be sustained. In some cases this may occur in increments, and perhaps a project will not achieve financial independence in our lifetime, but we can make progress toward this goal. By helping our partners train people who are able to deliver services in the future we are creating program sustainability.

Several excellent examples of this are the Midwives for Haiti training program and development of the child wellness program at Maison Fortuné Orphanage. As I have had the opportunity to work with a small group of boys at the orphanage who want to be doctors someday, I realized that this is a real life example of contributing to future sustainability—for these individuals and also the country of Haiti.

By being a voice and advocate for the Haitian people based on what we have experienced, we are able to educate others within our diocese. As a very talented Haitian physician, Dr. Desiré Roland, said to me on my first trip to Haiti, “When you come, it gives us confidence to help the others.” We are contributing to future sustainability with our presence, our desire to stand shoulder to shoulder (*Kole Zepol*) with the Haitian people, and our desire to listen to what we are asked to do. When possible we can support the efforts of the medical professionals on the ground who work against overwhelming odds.

THE HHCF AND MAISON FORTUNÉ ORPHANAGE'S WELLNESS PROGRAM

Background

The Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation was established to support the orphanage founded in 2000 by Lefort Jean-Louis. This orphanage has been a blessing to hundreds of young Haitian boys and more recently, girls. Many of these children may not have survived without MFO. Since the hurricanes last year, however, we have seen an increase in scabies and fungal infections and increased gastrointestinal complaints among the children there. The water system was contaminated and required repair (and across Haiti there are numerous cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which has prompted one of our health care partners, Zanmi Lasante, to train their social service teams to recognize the symptoms and to treat them).

Over the years, members of the HHCF Board have provided both medical care and logistical support to MFO. Past president Dr. Kurt Elward led a vaccination program at the orphanage five years ago, and the Bon Secours School of Nursing visiting team led by Kathy Faw has performed health screenings. In January 2008 our current president Susan Pleasants was instrumental in developing a wellness program, with approval of the MFO Board, which voted to approve a request for a matching grant from the HHCF for the wellness program. Previously the MFOF Board had focused on the basic needs of the children (housing, food, a water system, and education). The opportunity of adding health care services was a godsend.

The program has accomplished thus far:

- Established a relationship with Dr. Cruff Renard, Director of HIV Services at the Ministry of Health's Ste. Thérèse Hospital. Dr. Cruff has taken a personal interest in the children and has donated hundreds of hours of his personal time, providing, free of charge, physical exams for over 127 children at the orphanage. These exams have been supplemented by basic screening lab work, EKG and X-rays as indicated—thousands of dollars of donated medical care through the Zanmi Lasante/Ministry of Health system.
- Medical records have been established for each of the children.
- An on-site medical clinic was set up, including an exam table secured with the assistance of Bon Secours Health System and a medicine/first-aid cabinet.
- A medication delivery system was developed to handle the ongoing needs of the children. Up to 20 children may require medications at any one time, and a core “medical team” has been set up which includes two very bright older boys who want to become physicians.

Next steps and opportunities

We are collaborating with the MFOF, the Minister of Health, and Zanmi Lasante to provide an excellent array of needed preventive health care, and where necessary, medical care for specific conditions. This package includes:

- **Vaccinations.** Basic vaccines in Haiti include polio, tetanus, BCG, and measles. Haiti has the lowest immunization coverage in the Western hemisphere. Currently about half of all Haitian children do not receive routine immunization against preventable diseases. We propose to assure all these basic vaccines are provided and in addition provide a meningitis vaccine.

- **Health screenings.** Currently the Zanmi Lasante staff is providing well exams and assisting with illnesses as they arise. We propose to supplement these visits with several specialty areas, including vision care and psychology. When Dr. Desiré Roland, founder of the La Colline clinic in Lascahobas, was asked to consult on the wellness plan for the MFO children he recommended adding psychological services. In discussion with Dr. Eddy Eustache, Director of Mental Health and Social Services for Zanmi Lasante, a recommendation was made to establish fee-for-service age-related support groups for the children, who have never had been an opportunity to discuss their adjustment and the psychological trauma of abuse and living on the streets they may have experienced prior to coming to MFO.

- **Health Education.** The MFO Board has asked for health education for the children including basic health care issues and sexuality. Dr. Cruff has offered to have his team come to the orphanage to assist with this.

- **First-Aid Training.** One of the key components of the wellness program was the establishment of a core medical team composed of five individuals who have been taught how to obtain basic vital signs and to administer medications. The next step will be formal first-aid training, including “hands on” experience with a clinical rotation at a medical clinic. The Haitian Red Cross offers first-aid training, and we have contacted the American Red Cross to determine resources in Haiti for this project.

- **Critical medical procedures.** Hand washing, antiparasitic medications, and increased water intake are all critical components of the wellness program. Dr. Cruff Renard has recommended providing dispensers for hand-washing.

- **Coordination of services.** Providing a case management component in the Wellness Program has happened through the volunteer efforts of Susan Pleasants working with on-site Maison Fortuné Orphanage staff.

- **Long-Range Planning.** Ideally the medical records could be transferred to a computer system with satellite linkage and access to practitioners in the United States. We would like to identify additional child health specialists who are interested in volunteering their services. We are looking for sources for the donation of first-aid supplies, equipment, and vaccines. With the support of our health care partners and continued blessings from God, all things are possible.

THE EYE, EAR, NOSE & THROAT CLINIC OF CARITAS/HINCHE

The Diocese of Hinche’s Caritas organization has taken responsibility for the Eye and Ear, Nose, and Throat Clinic at

Ste. Thérèse Hospital in Hinche. Members of the Haitian Health Care Foundation Board have met with Caritas director Father Jacques Volcius on several occasions to determine the needs of the clinic, which he has determined is a top priority for Caritas support.

The HHCF will be providing a small grant of \$3,000.00 to help meet the clinic’s equipment and supplies needs. This clinic is very important, since it is the only one in the upper plateau and is centrally located at the hospital in Hinche.



Dr. Delva Pierre-Michel, an ENT specialist at the clinic

The clinic operates one week a month, sending mobile clinics to outlying parishes. The HHCF is seeking volunteers who are interested in helping to develop this program. This support could be with equipment and supply procurement or serving on the HHCF as an ophthalmology or ENT medical professional. If you are interested please contact Susan Pleasants at vabatt@aol.com or Dr. Bill McAveney mcavenwj@yahoo.com



Dr. Laguerre Jean Creon with a client at the clinic

The following towns and villages are scheduled for mobile clinic visits during 2009: Layaye, Cerca Carvajal, Saltadère, Cerca la Source, Thomassique, Baptiste, Maïssade, Bassin-Zim, Marmont, Terre Cassée, Los Palis, and Colladère.

THE LA COLLINE DENTAL CLINIC

Dr. Roody Beauboeuf

Every day the La Colline Dental Clinic shows its utility by providing various types of dental care to the county population. This is a place generally frequented by a large number of people who are hopeless and suffering terribly with all kind of dental and oral afflictions. Once they come to this clinic they are mostly certain to leave with a solution for their problem.



Dr. Roody Beauboeuf meets with HHCF Board members Kathy Faw RN, Susan Pleasants RN and Anne Knasel MD

Recently a 26-year old mother came to the clinic crying and hopeless because her 7-year old son was suffering terribly from a dental abscess invading his whole jaw. It was as embarrassing to hear the young boy gasp as it was disturbing to see how painful the lesions were. Fortunately we were there to help. The young boy is now healthy and smiling again.

The Lascahobas population is very lucky to have a dental clinic like this one in their neighborhood. Besides providing dental care, this clinic plays a huge part in dental education and dental/oral disease prevention. Most of the patients stated that they would not be suffering from dental and oral illness if they had known about dental disease prevention.

From April through December the clinic has served 1,528 persons, including 299 people who received a cleaning and deep cleaning treatment and 377 who had cavities filled; 14 root canals were done; 563 teeth were extracted.

The idea of opening a dental clinic in this area of the Haitian Central Plateau was a good one. The needs for this specific health care are huge. It is abnormal for a child 2 to 6 years old to have cavities in all their teeth. It is also astonishing to encounter teens with dental decay and gum diseases. Sometimes the lesions can be so serious that they lead to huge abscesses for the teeth and to periodontitis for the gums. As a result the whole mouth and body health is compromised.

A dental public health program must be built for the Lascahobas area and for the whole central Plateau. Less than 25% of this population knows about the importance of care for their teeth or how to preserve them. They don't know that if they don't have good mouth health they can't have good body health because the mouth is the main entrance of the organism. Many part of the human body can become ill secondary to a dental or gum infection.

The point to the issue to avoid all these complications resulting from teeth and gum troubles is to apply preventative dental health care at three levels:

Primary Preventive Dentistry: All that can be done to keep the teeth and the gums from disease—education and frequent dentist consultations.

Secondary Preventive Dentistry: Cure all disease already present to prevent complications—fillings, cleanings, root canals.

Tertiary Preventive Dentistry: Rehabilitation of the masticatory, phonetic and esthetic functions—full and partial dentures, bridges.

There is an enormous need for support in the dental medicine field in Haiti. Especially in Lascahobas the La Colline Dental Clinic is the only one for the entire area (45,000 people). With a great deal of well meaning and hard work it is possible to improve the population's dental health.

NOTE: The efforts are endless in Haiti but with committed and dedicated volunteers the goal of supporting our brothers and sisters is not impossible. As you just read, Dr. Roody has many challenges but delivers health care through dentistry with passion. (Kathy Faw RN. Chair, Dentists for

Save the Date!

The Board of Directors of the Haitian Health Care Foundation of the Diocese of Richmond

Announces Our 2009 Annual Dinner Benefiting the Work of the Foundation in Haiti

Friday Evening, April 24, 2009

**Hermitage Country Club
1248 Hermitage Road
Manakin-Sabot, Virginia**

Haiti.)

Haitian Health Care Foundation, Inc.

Individual and Group Contributors Since July 1, 2008

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Church of St Therese, Chesapeake, Va.
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Support for Dental Clinic Since July 1

Bon Secours Central Sterile Supply
Church of the Redeemer, Mechanicsville, Va.
Dr. Gilbert Debiasi

Dr. Fred Knasi
Dr. and Mrs. Richard Wilson

Midwifery Training Project Since July 1

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I am enclosing a check for \$ _____ payable to: **Catholic Diocese of Richmond**).

I would like to designate it for (please check one):

- General Haiti Health Care Fund
- Support for the dental clinic project
- Support for the midwifery training project
- Foundation Associate Member (\$25 a year)

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