



# 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](http://www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti).*

August 2009

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Susan Pleasants RN*

For the Haitian Health Care Foundation the month of July was a time to think about the upcoming year after a very successful year with tremendous progress and growth with our programs. We are prayerfully considering how to continue our mission and expand our support for our twinning ministries. This is a time of transition for our ministry within the context of the Richmond diocesan Haiti ministry as a result of decisions made to downsize the diocesan Office of Justice and Peace. As we go forward we are dedicated to seeing that our mission to work in partnership with our brothers in sisters in Haiti continues. We are assured by the Diocese that Haiti remains a priority. The dedication by the volunteers working through the Diocese of Richmond in Haiti is powerful. Ultimately our guidance and ability to be able to do this work comes from God and he leads and guides us forward.

The Haitian Health Care Foundation is humbled by the fact that our long time health care partner, Bon Secours Health Systems, has granted our request for support of the midwives training program. I received the news while in Haiti and we are rejoicing that we are able to assist a program that has earned the respect of the Haitian government's Ministry of Health, the Diocese of Hinche's Caritas, and our friends in Zanmi Lasante. Those of you who heard Nadene Brunk, founder of Midwives for Haiti, speak at the annual HHCF dinner, had to be impressed by her passion to help decrease the high mortality rate in Haiti for mothers and infants. She and her organization are an example of what can be accomplished with God's guidance and support and strong collaborators in the United States and Haiti.

Finally, one other note: Please, any travelers to Haiti take all possible precautions with mosquitoes! A close friend of mine, Ton Vriens, has been recovering from malaria. I remember on the HHCF trip last fall lecturing Ton about malaria and preventions for a variety of other ills. I just learned this last trip that taking anti-malarial medication, using mosquito nets, and applying insecticides to the skin are not enough to prevent mosquito bites and malaria. Clothes must also be treated. My daughter, Lauren, showed me thirteen mosquito bites from where she was sitting at the Matthew 25 guest house! I thought I had taken thorough precautions but did not realize that mosquitoes bite through clothing. Please take care and be safe. I ordered mosquito nets from [www.mosquitonetsonline](http://www.mosquitonetsonline) and was very pleased with the service and product that I received.

### Maternal Health Program

## HHCF RECEIVES BON SECOURS FUNDING

As Susan Pleasants noted above, the Haitian Health Care Foundation's proposal for projects related to the promotion and preservation of maternal and child health was, we are happy to announce, favorably received.

A one-time sum of \$44,000 was granted to the Haiti Health Care Foundation by the Bon Secours Health System Mission Fund

(Marriottsville, Md.). This is in response to a grant application submitted by the Bon Secours Richmond Mission Department, based on the HHCF proposal.

In addition we received a contribution of \$15,000 supplementing this grant, from the Bon Secours Global Ministries Fund.

An additional \$25,000 will be granted in the coming months, from the Bon Secours Richmond Mission Partnership Fund. The designation for the use of this grant is to be determined through ongoing collaboration between Bon Secours Virginia and the Haiti Health Care Foundation.

In subsequent newsletters we will spell out in more detail how, and over what time span, these funds will be used.

## MIDWIFE TRAINING PROGRAM BENEFIT ART EXHIBIT

A series of 25 paintings by Haitian artists is raising money for a Midwives for Haiti [M4H]'s training program aimed at ending that country's high rate of maternal and infant mortality. Curated and sponsored by M4H, "The Colors of Haiti" will be on display through September 6, 2009 at the Glen Allen Cultural Arts Center, in Glen Allen, Virginia.

The works depict street scenes, mountains and sea. Some feature unique spatial composition, unconventional proportions and the vivid, raw colors often characteristic of Haitian art. Other images capture scenes more realistically against an almost impressionistic back drop.

The natural landscape of Haiti—referred to in the work of famed Haitian painter Prefete Duffaut as "where heaven meets earth"—is an inspiration to many. But in fact, the 60% of Haitians who inhabit rural areas are impoverished and uneducated with a short life expectancy. The picture is even grimmer for pregnant women: only 15 % deliver with someone close by who has adequate training and supplies. This reality portrays a Haiti that's the most dangerous place to have a baby in the Western Hemisphere.

The death rate for women in childbirth is 60 times that of the US, yet with four prenatal visits, two postpartum visits, a skilled birth attendant and \$5 worth of medication, most of these women would survive their pregnancies. About three out of every 50 babies in Haiti die before their first birthday. About that many more die before age five. Simple resuscitation efforts at birth, early identification of infections, clean water and adequate food would save most of these children.

Three of the artists contributing to the exhibit, which was procured in Jacmel, an artists' haven just south of Port-au-Prince, include Jacmel natives Gerard Michael Lafontant, Wilbert Laurent and Patrick Verneret.

Early in his career Lafontant's style was called similar to that of Prefete Duffaut. As Lafontant's talent emerged he demonstrates

a variety of styles that complement the subject matter. Laurent's work shares a common trait of Haitian art with its bright primary colors and distortion of distance and depth. His scenes of the countryside, of scenes in the city of Haitians going about their daily activities, are a favorite of collectors. Verneret's genres include contemporary African art, contemporary realism and abstract expressionism. His paintings are precious to people for their colors.



One of the pictures on exhibit

M4H was founded in 2003 by Nadene Brunk, a certified nurse midwife with Virginia Women's Center of Richmond, in response to the UN's Millennium Development Goals. She began training midwives from all over the US to teach largely illiterate groups of women and men skills that save lives during childbirth. In the spring they graduated their first class of Haitian midwives. A second class is now in training. The organization's goals are to increase the number of women in Haiti who deliver with a skilled birth attendant and to build a school for midwives in Hinche.

For more information, visit [www.midwivesforhaiti.org](http://www.midwivesforhaiti.org) or email [nsbrunk@comcast.net](mailto:nsbrunk@comcast.net).

**Caritas: Eye & Ear Clinic**

**SLIT LAMP DONATED**

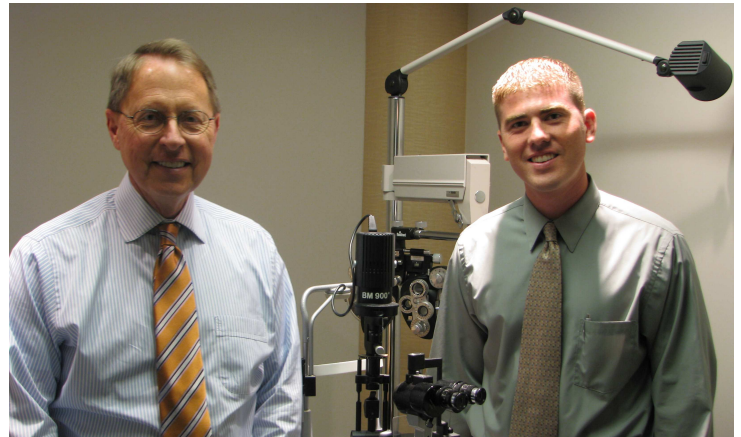
This summer the Virginia Eye Institute of Richmond made a donation of a slit-lamp instrument, or biomicroscope, to the Haitian Health Care Foundation. The instrument will allow eye exams

through magnification of the eye structure to detect infection or a variety of diseases or conditions including cataracts, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and diabetic eye disease.

The instrument, which as we go to press is on its way by container to Haiti, will be placed in the eye clinic adjacent to Ste. Thérèse Hospital in Hinche, Haiti. The clinic is presently staffed by two ophthalmologists who come from Port-au-Prince one week a month to provide eye exams and care on the Central Plateau.

Recent visits by VOSH/International (Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity) to Haiti indicate that 15 percent of examinations result in referrals for cataract or glaucoma care. The availability of the slit-lamp instrument on the Plateau is expected to significantly enhance detection and treatment of eye conditions for a population that oftentimes is without services or obtains greatly delayed care.

The Virginia Eye Institute is a leading practice of eye care in central Virginia, specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders across 13 practice sites.



Chris Carney (Chief Executive Officer), J. Eric Hays (VP of Operations), Virginia Eye Institute



Caritas/Hinche's Eye and Ear Clinic

**LaColline Dental Clinic**

**THE DENTAL CLINIC REALITY**

*Dr. Roody Beauboeuf, dentist at La Colline, sent us this report on the first three months of activity at the clinic.*

The La Colline Hospital is the only health center to provide dental care for the whole Lascahobas population. Hence the La Colline Dental Clinic has a great deal of patients. Sometimes it is terrifying to see how crowded the hospital garden can be and how so many patients rush toward the dental clinic door in order to receive dental care.

As you know, providing the best dental care to the largest number of people is our main goal. But is it possible to reach this target in this situation? It is unbelievable but true: we are facing a huge public dental health problem.

Dentistry is different in specific points from general medicine. The dentist spends more time with a patient and frequently uses several instruments for only one kind of dental care. What is the hardest is to make people understand this. Most of them only understand after they received their dental care. Then they say, "I'm sorry Doc; I thought it was a simple thing—just a little tooth."

At the beginning it was very frustrating and upsetting to spend so much time and so much human power trying to explain how dental care is given. I finally decided to build the following schedule.

- Monday: Dental consultation, teeth extraction, temporary fillings
- Tuesday: Dental fillings, root canals
- Wednesday: Teeth cleaning, root planning
- Thursday: Dental fillings, root canals
- Friday: Dental fillings, root canals
- Saturday: Dental consultation, teeth extraction, temporary fillings for Zanmi Lasante employees.

This schedule helps a lot. If I hadn't done it, I would never leave the dental clinic at 7:00 pm but at 10:00 pm. as happened once. Despite of this schedule I still missing lunchtime at 2:00pm, especially on Monday because of the crowd. On Thursday and Friday I am alone. The social service resident leaves every two weeks as I do. In that way, somebody is always present during the weekends. The departure to Port-au-Prince is fixed for 1:00 pm every Thursday. Starting from this hour, one of us is alone every week until Monday.

On Monday we cannot go over 25 patients so we always take the first 25. The people that remain average about 40. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday we are obliged to reduce the number of people if we consider the amount of dental care they deserve. Wednesdays are easier unless you meet many very massive tartar build-ups—these cases require an ultrasonic scaler. They can be done by hand, but it is very exhausting when you have to clean a dozen like that. (Our scaler cannot work properly because our chairs cannot push water through the handpiece.)

During the first three months of this year we did 91 teeth cleanings, 278 extractions, 225 amalgam, 134 permanent and 38 temporary fillings, and 8 root canals.

#### Maison Fortuné Orphanage Wellness Program

### THE MERCK COMPANY DONATES VACCINES TO MAISON FORTUNÉ

*Susan Pleasants sends us this report.*

On June 18, while I was visiting Hinche, Dr. Cruff Renard, Director of the HIV program at nearby Ste. Thérèse Hospital, called to tell me that Merck was donating vaccines for the children of Maison Fortuné Orphanage.

Dr. Cruff has been our hero and advocate for the children since last summer when he started coming to the orphanage to give the children physical examinations and treatment for a number of problems. He had recommended meningococcal vaccines for them, but due to lack of funding we had no way of paying for these vaccines. Our small fund was dedicated to purchasing a few first aid supplies for our makeshift clinic.

The goal for the clinic developed with Dr. Cruff, Lefort Jean-

Louis, the director of the orphanage, and the Board of Directors of the Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation, was to form an on-site medical team to meet the day-to-day needs of the children with the help of Dr. Cruff, his associates, and visiting medical professionals. The little team at Maison Fortuné, led by Frenel Jean-Dieudonné, director of activities, with the help of three older boys, has made great progress. We want to help them grow in the ability to provide first-aid services to children until they can see a physician.

Fortunately the team made it possible to quickly mobilize and give the vaccines generously donated by Merck Co. with the assistance of our Zanmi Lasante friends. They sat around the dining table in the orphanage administration building and drew up 140 doses of Pneumovax, then placed them in a cooler which we brought to the girls' building next door. I administered the vaccines while the team recorded the vaccination in the child's chart, located and comforted the children, giving out candy and stickers. In addition to Noë, Gulnot, and Dieuphete, I had my daughter Lauren and niece Brittany to help me. They were all wonderful and enthusiastic helpers. The orphanage principal, Pettris Joseph, helped to locate all of the boys, some of whom had suddenly vanished! Eventually all were vaccinated.

The donation by Merck Company has allayed the fear that one of the children might contract meningitis and spread it through the orphanage. Thanks very much to the Merck Company for their help.

Now we are making plans with the Haitian Red Cross, with the assistance of our Zanmi Lasante friends, to hold a Basic First Aid training class in the near future, to enhance the skills of our medical team and orphanage staff to help the children and others in the community.

It is only with the assistance and support of others that we can address the overwhelming health care needs and lack of resources that we face in Haiti.

### MEDICAL MISSIONARIES' CONFERENCE POSTPONED

We just received word that the October conference on global health sponsored by the Medical Missionaries in Northern Virginia will not be held this year. Dates for 2010 have not yet been set.

### DATES SET FOR HEALTH CARE IMMERSION TRIP TO HAITI

The Haitian Health Care Foundation will again sponsor an immersion trip to Haiti for health care professionals and anyone interested in health care issues being addressed by the Foundation.

The dates are October 17-24. Susan Pleasants RN and Kathy Faw RN will lead the group, which will visit the various projects of the Foundation and others. There will be the opportunity for some "hands on" clinical work as well.

One of the sites to be visited is the world-renowned Zanmi Lasante medical complex at Cange, founded by Dr. Paul Farmer.

The cost: about \$1400. Contact: Susan Pleasants at [vabatt@aol.com](mailto:vabatt@aol.com)

# Haitian Health Care Foundation, Inc.

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