



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.

March 2009

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Susan Pleasants RN

Early this year, I received an email from one of my favorite Zanmi Lasante physicians, Dr. Desiré Roland. He told me to have “kouraj” [courage]. His words are very powerful and inspire those around him. Recently I shared with a group of Virginia Tech students Dr. Desiré’s statement “To have done more for the world than the world did for you, that is success.” These words are serving as a source of strength and courage for them as they undertake a project to build an outpatient clinic in Hinche in partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Health, Zanmi Lasante, and the Virginia Tech Chapter of Engineers without Borders. At the time, Dr. Desiré was in Canada studying and away from his beloved Haiti. So for him to wish me courage when I knew he must draw upon every ounce of his own was another source of the inspiration that naturally flows from him.

For me, working with the Haitian Health Care Foundation Board of Directors is a privilege. It is a very creative group of people who are driven by the HHCF mission: “to participate in the healing ministry of Christ among the under-served population of Haiti’s Central Plateau.” Our foundation has three primary working committees: program development, finance and fund raising, and parish relations. The Foundation is participating in some very innovative programs and helping to fill niches in areas that are underserved: training of skilled birthing attendants, eye care, and dental care. In addition, we have formed partnerships in areas to support our twinning programs and help to educate related to health care issues. It is my hope that our experience with treating scabies at Maison Fortuné Orphanage is one example of sharing information, experiences, and resources. We encourage others to do likewise and invite attendance at our board meetings and submission of articles to our newsletter. We are currently recruiting for our committees.

The next several of months hold some exciting events for the Foundation. March 28th we will have several breakout sessions at our annual Haiti Gathering in Charlottesville, and our fourth annual benefit dinner will take place on April 24th. The dinner is both a fund raiser and an opportunity to come together in fellowship. For more information about participation on our committees, or attending these events please contact our Secretary, Brother Cosmas Rubencamp crubencamp@comcast.net or me at yabatt@aol.com.

FOUNDATION’S PARTNERSHIP WITH CARITAS/ HINCHE: A REPORT

Dr. Bill McAveney, a member of the Haitian Health Care

Foundation’s Board of Directors, provided this report.

In 2007, HHCF allocated \$10,000 to Caritas, the social services agency of the Hinche diocese, for medical supplies and equipment needed in their six clinics. Father Jacques Volcius, Director, forwarded us a list of needed medical equipment and supplies, with a particular focus on maternal health, which is also a HHCF priority. During a visit to Haiti in May, I also discovered that the midwifery services had some serious quality limitations in the area of newborn umbilical cord care, with great potential for serious life threatening neonatal infections. There is a nationwide shortage in Haiti of the familiar sterile plastic umbilical cord clamps we use in the US

We could have tried to purchase new items, but on further thought, it was apparent that most of what he needed could be obtained in more cost-effective way through use of items donated to Medical Missionaries in Manassas, Virginia. Dr. Gil Irwin, President of MM, was contacted, and generously agreed to start gathering items on the list for shipment to the Arlington diocese’s Bânica mission on the Haitian border, which is closer to Hinche than Port-au-Prince.

It took a lot longer than I had anticipated, but the MM volunteers were able to assemble items filling most of a sea container, which were shipped in two portions, leaving the MM’s Virginia warehouse in October and February.

Through the generosity of Bon Secours Health System, Inc., we were able to assemble ten boxes of new sterile umbilical cord clamps for \$1000, and these were included in the shipments for use in the six clinics. I have heard from Ginette, the midwife at Clinique de St Joseph in Thomassique, that she has already put her share of the first portion of the clamps to use in their busy midwifery service

At Father Jacques’ request, the \$3000 left over after paying for the clamps and shipments have been re-allocated to the Caritas Eye/Ear Clinic in Hinche.

FOOD FOR THE SPIRIT

This report comes to us from Kathy Faw RN, a HHCF Board member, who was recently in Haiti with fellow Board member Ed Gerardo. Director of Community and Social Investments, Bon Secours Health System, Inc.

I had the pleasure of visiting Haiti during the exciting time of Kanival (Mardi Gras)—in essence, a large street party with lots of music, dancing, straw hats, and festivities of all sorts. Everything (well, almost everything) is at a standstill! Schools are closed the whole week, but the clinics are open to see patients although there are few people at the clinics to be

seen at this time. I arrived at the Partners in Health LaColline Dental Clinic and was met by my good friend Dr. Roody Beauboeuf. Dr. Roody was taking advantage of the lack of patients due to Kanival by performing some “spring cleaning”. The Church of the Redeemer (Mechanicsville, Va.) twinning group and a sponsor of the dental clinic, were visiting at the time and were excited and proud to see the beautiful facility and to meet Dr. Roody. As always, it is always a pleasure to see him and the men and women at the LaColline facility who give so much of themselves daily serving their (and our) brothers and sisters.

Ed Gerardo was accompanying me on his first trip back to Haiti after a 23 year lapse. We traveled to Hinche and stayed three nights at the Maison Fortuné Orphanage, always a privilege to visit. Bejman Pierre, one of the boys living at the orphanage, recently had eye surgery and is healing nicely. After I removed the stitches from his brow, he was off with his friends to play soccer. One evening at the Maison Fortuné girls’ building, the Director initiated the treatment of over 25 girls for scabies with Benzoate. One of the older girls also assisted with the treatment. Great job! Just like the boys, once all the girls finished with their treatment off they ran to play. What a spirit!



Ed Gerardo, Kathy Faw and Jude Jean

I tell many people when they ask me “What exactly do you do in Haiti?” I respond by saying “Sometimes nothing—being with the people of Haiti and establishing and building relationships is just as important.” Ed and I visited the St. Thérèse Hospital in Hinche, where we were greeted by the Training Coordinator for Partners in Health Jude Jean. Jude was excited to show us around the hospital and commented “I welcome your visit anytime”. As usual, the hospital was very busy. The staff was performing triage in the “emergency” room and attending to their patients.

Later that Sunday evening we had the pleasure of meeting with the Director of Caritas, Fr. Jacques Volcius, who updated us on the eye clinic St. Thérèse, remarking how busy it is when the ophthalmologists visit from Port-au-Prince for one week each month. Surgeries are performed in May and November. Eye care is important for one’s general health and often neglected due to poverty or lack of availability.

What a breath of fresh air when you visit with Jackie Williams at the Zanmi Lasante Cange gift shop! A highlight of our day was the fabulous tour Jackie gave Ed and me of the magnificent facility in Cange. When that was over she then had a terrific Haitian dinner waiting for us. God’s spirit is alive and well in Cange and the sense of peace and calmness overwhelms you.

As we headed down the mountain to the lower plateau of Haiti we visited Zanmi Agricol, an agricultural project of Zanmi Lasante, providing food for the malnutrition program they run. Seeing the beautiful green gardens gave me hope that these fields will provide food that will nourish thousands of people.

The LaColline Dental Clinic was our last stop, where this time we were able to observe Dr. Roody extremely busy seeing patients. He had four patients waiting on the porch for dental care. We were escorted by a Zanmi Lasante employee around the LaColline Hospital where this particular day, hundreds of people were waiting to be seen by a physician. We were told that they would all be seen that day. We shook our heads in disbelief and gave honor to the men and women who give so much of their time at the hospital treating patients.

As Ed and I prepared to depart Haiti, we said goodbye to many new and old friends and a country that we believe has hope for the future.

HAITIAN HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION HOSTS SCABIES CAMP

Susan Pleasants, RN, President of the Foundation, gives us this report from a recent visit to Haiti. She was there two weeks before Kathy and Ed

Scabies, a skin condition caused by a female mite, *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which burrows under the skin, lays eggs, and releases a toxic substance, is a real problem in Haiti, and children are the most vulnerable. Heralded by intense itching, particularly at night, the first sign is 1-2 cm red papules, some of which are excoriated, crusted, or scaling. Threadlike burrows are the classic lesion and the preferred sites are the interdigital spaces, wrists, axillary folds, ankles, buttocks, umbilicus, and groin. The head, neck, palms, and soles are generally spared. If left untreated, besides continued intense itching and spread of the disease, secondary infections can develop. Children have been reported to develop glomerulonephritis as a result of streptococcal infection within scabies lesions. Some individuals may be asymptomatic carriers with a latent period of one month, but with reinfestation, reactions to mite antigens quickly develop.

Tackling this condition in Haiti can seem overwhelming. Treatment consists of using a topical insecticide, removing infected bedding, washing clothing and bed linens, and treating all infected individuals simultaneously. I was initially met with a causal response to my desire to eradicate, since scabies is somewhat of an “accepted” condition in Haiti which children seem to out-grow. At the Maison Fortuné Orphanage, the older children generally do not complain of it. Those I have seen with it are just entering the orphanage, malnour-

ished, and perhaps also suffering from intestinal parasites. The majority of children with scabies live in the small cottages on campus.

I thought of the concept of “scabies camp” as a way to tackle this problem. The last straw for me was seeing one of our children suffering from an advanced case of scabies during his surgical stay at Cange. Upon my return to the orphanage I was “anraje”—a word I learned meant “beyond crazy or very crazy.” So, arriving back at Maison Fortuné orphanage in my “anraje” state of mind, and tired of seeing the children suffer with intense itching, I felt we could tackle the situation. Several of the girls had developed secondary skin infections, known as impetigo, requiring antibiotics to clear the infection before the scabies could even be treated. I was also highly suspicious that one of the children, who had had a strep kidney infection requiring a hospital stay in Pignon, had developed it due to a case of scabies.

The Maison Fortuné Orphanage medical team came to the rescue and after listing all the reasons why we could not provide the treatment, they tackled the problem with me. Noë, as always the patient leader and proactive member of the team, led the efforts to help all of the young boys to receive treatment, which consisted of three nights of cold showers followed by application of Benzyl Benzoate from the neck down (no girls allowed during this process). The next morning they had to rinse the Benzyl Benzoate from their bodies. (A couple of the boys became wise after the first night and tried to avoid the treatment!)

On the morning after the third day we dragged all of the mattresses out into the sun and removed all clothing and linen from the cottages. The MFO laundry staff took it all in stride with my profuse apologies for all the extra work to eradicate the scabies mite forever. Kathy Faw, a nurse and member of the Haitian Health Care Foundation Board, was more recently in Haiti and donated a gallon of Benzyl Benzoate so that she could have scabies camp at the girls’ campus. She personally supervised its application. So, with a little luck and the hard work of our medical team, we have made some progress eradicating scabies at the orphanage.

Benzyl Benzoate can be obtained for about \$28 a gallon at the Caribbean Canadian Chemical Company [see box below].

A MEDICAL TEAM VISIT TO SALTADÈRE

The Foundation serves as a resource for US parishes which have twinning relationships with parishes in Haiti which have clinics or dispensè. Dr. Anne Knasel, a member of the Foundation’s Board of Directors, was with a group from St. Thomas Aquinas parish in Charlottesville, Virginia, visiting the parish of St. Michel in Saltadère last month and sent this report.

The travelers included Joan McDonald, Kathy Smith, Janet and John Stack, and Anne and Mike Knasel. They came to Haiti through Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, staying overnight at the Arlington diocese’s St. Francis Mission in Bánica, DR, on the Haitian border.

The next day all got to Saltadère, and after a welcome meal at the rectory, the group worked in the clinic staging supplies

and materials for the vision screening to begin Monday. Janet, an audiologist, set up for hearing testing and amplifier fitting and Anne, a physician, prepared for seeing clinic visitors.



Roody Beauboeuf DDS (LaColline Dental Clinic), C. Milens MD (Medical Director of the Lascahobas Hospital), and Anne Knasel MD (Foundation Board member)

For the next three days, the group was busy. Most folks came for medical, hearing or vision problems (148 were seen for medical problems; 223 for vision screening). Several people who had been identified with hearing loss last year were provided with an amplification instrument to wear. The Saltadère parish nurse, Gertrude, will keep the spare batteries in the clinic for these persons to request as they need them.

Of those seen for vision problems, those suspected of having cataracts were advised to come back when the doctor from the Eye and Ear Clinic in Hinche will be doing a mobile clinic in Saltadère. Some with ear or related problems were also asked to attend the mobile clinic.

On two days, Kathy and Joan went to the school to work with a group of students on a project to design cards. The students designed some beautiful images. These “Sketches of Saltadère” cards will be available for sale at the Haiti Gathering on March 28 and at the Alternative Giving Fair in November at St. Thomas Aquinas.

On our fourth day Anne, Kathy, Janet and Joan went to the school to check vision for the 7th and 8th graders and a few younger children, a total of 31. Three teachers were also checked and referred to John and Mike who remained at the clinic evaluating vision and providing glasses. One child was found to have decreased vision and received glasses.

Our group brought supplies of toothbrushes, dental floss, and some toothpaste for the school. An instructional video on dental hygiene was shown to the teachers, who plan to use the video to educate the students, distributing floss and brushes at the same time.

Thank you’s are due to:

In Saltadère: Manno and Théard our translators, Velouze and Mazi our cooks and Ramain Exil and all the teachers at Lekòl

St. Michel as well as the pastor, Père René Blot.

In Virginia and beyond:

Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center of Northern Virginia for a refractometer and glasses.

PRVAIL of San Rafael, CA (Partners in Restoring Vision and Improving Lives) for reading glasses and sunglasses

Lions Club of Northern Virginia for hearing aids.

Matthew Harpin, O.D., Kathy Clark, O.D., and Richard Morton, M.D.

Lisa Childers of Pfizer Ophthalmics

Emery Taylor, D.D.S., Jack Kayton, D.D.S., and Jody Yeargan, D.D.S.

Mani Aguilar, AuD, UVA Speech-Language-Hearing Center

Marian Fredner, M.A., CCC-A, Albemarle Audiology

Al King, Bioacoustic Instruments, Inc.

PLASTIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGEON DONATES TIME IN HAITI

Susan Pleasants provided us with this account.

During my last trip to Haiti, I was very fortunate to meet a very special surgeon, Dr. Stephen Sullivan. He is a plastic and reconstructive surgeon at Children's Hospital in Boston (affiliated with Harvard Medical School), who is donating two weeks each month for a year to the people of Haiti. In December he evaluated several children from Maison Fortuné Orphanage while working in Hinche. I did not know it at the time but I would be spending a week in Cange with one of these children, Bejman Pierre, age 10.

While in Hinche he asked that Bejman come to the Zanmi Lasante Sociomedical Complex in Cange, when he would be there in February. Bejman had sustained a serious injury to his face after falling out of a mango tree. He had come to the orphanage after his recovery where his family, who could not take care of him, left him. Dr. Sullivan wanted to revise his facial scars and place an orbital implant to lift his right eye up and outward to correct his facial deformity.

The Haitian Health Care Foundation has partnered with Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation to assist with the medical care of the children, and due to my involvement with the program, I have been able to learn about the needs of the children and try to develop resources through our two organizations to meet these needs.

Bejman and I spent six days in Cange while Bejman received his surgery. I witnessed the amazing care that he received and the dedication of the Zanmi Lasante (Partners in Health) staff to their mission of providing the highest quality of care to the Haitian people.

MEDICATION PURCHASE RESOURCE IN HAITI

FYI: the Caribbean Canadian Chemical Company, located at 286 Rue du Magasin de l'Etat, Port-au-Prince, has an extensive formulary of commonly-used medications. Their phone number is 011-509-2-249-4000. Most of the guest houses where our groups stay are familiar with it.

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 the Central Plateau of Haiti

Friday, April 24, 2009

6:00 p.m. Social Hour
7:00 p.m. Dinner

The Hermitage Country Club
1248 Hermitage Road
Manakin-Sabot Virginia

The Dinner Is Sponsored by Bon Secours Virginia
Health System

For invitations, contact the Foundation Secretary, Br. Cosmas Rubencamp at:
crubencamp@comcast.net or 804-358-6210

Haitian Health Care Foundation, Inc.

Individual and Group Contributors Since July 1, 2008

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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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