



# 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.richmonddioocese.org/haiti](http://www.richmonddioocese.org/haiti).

May 2009

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Susan Pleasants RN*

Spring is a time of new beginnings, and as I leave Virginia Tech (VT), I have seen the beginning of a relationship between Partners in Health's Haitian arm, *Zanmi Lasante*, and Tech. Dr. Paul Farmer spoke to 3000 VT students for 90 minutes about the importance of global partnerships and service. Dr. Farmer left the university with support for future partnerships in health and agriculture—a beautiful relationship to watch unfold.

VT continues to try to fund the Diocese of Richmond's sustainable development project in Maissade and has a strong loyalty to their friends in the Diocese of Hinche and Richmond. I am hopeful that VT will also bring its considerable talent to the table to work with *Zanmi Agrikòl* to support and facilitate their efforts as well. There is no place in Haiti for competition or the development of separate systems. We must remember the faces of the poor and use all available resources to tackle the problem of food insecurity. It is important to create one strong centralized system for health and agricultural development so that one day all Haiti's children will be relieved of the feeling of hunger in their bellies.

At HHCF's annual benefit dinner, it was very comforting to look at the audience and see familiar faces that have come to our dinners in the past, especially the representatives of the dinner sponsors, Bon Secours Richmond Health System. We look forward to a long term relationship with them to provide health resources for our brothers and sisters in Haiti.

As we seek to assist our twinning parishes throughout the Central Plateau, HHCF will make available a free health education video at the diocesan regional meetings next fall. This video, recorded in Kreyòl, has proven to have great appeal to Haitians who have seen it.

In addition, HHCF will ask the twinning parishes to consider a toothbrush and toothpaste drive to support these efforts to improve dental health for the people of Haiti. As Dr. David Walton has said, we need "pragmatic solidarity" besides the other resources we provide.

HHCF continues to work with our health care partners to develop resources for our projects. By standing together, *Kole Zepòl* (Shoulder-to-Shoulder), with the guidance and strength of *Jezi* (Jesus), many things are possible.

## 2009 ANNUAL DINNER

A beautiful April evening at the Hermitage Country Club in Manakin-Sabot, Virginia, was the setting for the Haitian

Health Care Foundation's Fourth Annual Benefit Dinner.



Setting up for the dinner

Sponsored by Bon Secours Richmond Health System, the dinner raised over \$18,000 for the Foundation's projects in maternal and children health, dental care, eye and ear care, and for the wellness program at Maison Fortuné Orphanage



Nadene Brunk explains the Midwife Training Program.

Susan Pleasants, HHCF President, outlined the 2009-2010 plans. Nadene Brunk of Midwives for Haiti reported on the results of the first two years of the midwife training and the hopes for the current class of trainees [see her article below]. Robert "Bo" Short of Charlottesville was a powerful pleader for the donations needed to make the plans become a reality.

## MIDWIFE TRAINING PROGRAM

*Nadene Brunk, CNM, MSN*

March 9<sup>th</sup> marked the beginning of the second class of Haitian women to be trained in life-saving midwifery skills. Waiting for their teachers in the courtyard of Ste. Thérèse Hospital were six women (nine by the end of the day), neatly dressed

and eager to start the journey. It was obvious that they were thrilled and nervous at the same time, and we had many of the same feelings.

As we put out the supplies for each student—two texts in Kreyòl, notebooks and pens, gestational wheels and tapes, blood pressure cuffs and stethoscopes, pink scrubs and black bags—I could not help but think about how we started the first class with none of this. We met then under the trees at Pandi-assou with no textbooks, no recognition from the health administration of the area, no clear curriculum or idea where we wanted to go.

When Midwives for Haiti began in the fall of 2006 we knew only the facts that women and babies die in Haiti from lack of access to health care and that the World Health Organization determined that a significant difference can be made by the presence of a skilled birth attendant. It took us two years and a lot of struggles to complete the first class.

Of that group, two were hired by *Zanmi Lasante* and are delivering prenatal care and babies in a clinic in Cerca la Source. One is working for Medical Missionaries in Thomas-sique. Two have been hired by the government-owned Ste. Thérèse Hospital to work the night shifts when before the housekeeper and one untrained nurse did all the deliveries. Those same two and another graduate run a prenatal clinic at the Whitney Clinic in Hinche. Another student went to Port-au-Prince for further university training. We lost one student to a disabling stroke, and one was waylaid by family illness and pregnancy but plans to finish her skills checklist this year.

The journey to this special day included many meetings with Dr. Raoul Raphael of the Ministry of Health, Father Jacques Volcius of Caritas, a meeting with the Bishop of Hinche before he was transferred, and meetings with the *Zanmi Lasante* midwife, a representative of the WHO and the president of the *Association of Infirmières Sages Femmes*. There were the countless letters and e-mails with our supporters and detractors in the U.S. We formed an advisory board. Over thirty midwives, four doctors, and a medical student traveled from the States to assist with the project. We were ever conscious of Haitian Health Care Foundation's support in prayers and finances, with what they had taught us about cultural awareness, and our responsibility to a higher power.

Both Caritas and *Zanmi Lasante* sent candidates to start this second class. In the end, in accord with our agreement with the Ministry of Health, only those with the correct diplomas and documentation could come to the class. Since we have earned the respect of these organizations in Haiti, it is important that we continue to maintain high standards.

Last fall we began an expensive, but necessary, process of choosing a Haitian midwife with university background to teach for us. At the beginning of the new year we started training two teachers and then let one go because of unmet standards. In February we completed the training of Danise Delva, ISF [*Infirmière Sage Femme*], a very competent and motivated woman.

Danise Delva will live at the rectory in Hinche and will work for us full-time. She has worked to improve the exams and curriculum and cemented relationships with government offi-

cial and hospital administration. She has mapped out a schedule of instructional time and clinical rotations so that the class should finish in only six months.

So it was no wonder that when the students took their places around the table for the first day of their "Sage Femmes Pour Ayiti" class, we were feeling very, very blessed. One student led a prayer and then all began singing "How Great Thou Art" in Kreyòl. While the Kreyòl and our English words blended in song, there were few dry eyes among the Americans present. Each woman there will touch hundreds of women in her lifetime with compassion, education, and the gift of a safe delivery of a healthy baby and family.

Our gratitude to all of you who support us through HHCF!

## HHCF IS LEAD SPONSOR FOR HINCHE OUTPATIENT CLINIC

In January 2008, Dr. Raoul Raphael, Minister of Health for the Central Plateau of Haiti, asked for a new outpatient clinic building at Ste. Thérèse Hospital. Hinche, the heart of the health care and administrative systems for the area, serves a population base of 100,000 (recently verified by Dr. Farmer). It provides vaccines as well as prenatal, pediatric, general medical and dental care.

The facility, however, is woefully inadequate. Located in the right front corner of the hospital campus, it was built in the 1940s, reportedly by a team of US engineers, but it is structurally unsound. In the States it would be condemned. It is without water, septic, ongoing power, or adequate lighting.



This picture of the clinic shows a beam in danger of collapsing on top of a child waiting for care.

Dr. Raphael's request led to the development of a very exciting partnership to build the new clinic: the Ministry of Health, *Zanmi Lasante*, and the Virginia Tech chapter of Engineers without Borders. HHCF participates as the lead sponsor, having given the first donation, and serves on the fundraising committee. HHCF's connections and knowledge of potential partners in Haiti have proven to be a valuable support for the building project.

As Susan Pleasants mentioned in her message above, Paul Farmer spoke at Virginia Tech in support of the clinic project and agricultural development in Haiti. His appearance was a boost for the Tech chapter of Engineers Without Borders' project team who must raise \$600,000.00 for the new clinic. Their website about the project is [www.clinicsforhaiti.org](http://www.clinicsforhaiti.org).

Several members of the HHCF Board, especially Dr. Greg Pudhorodsky, are working to obtain equipment for the clinic, which, when built will provide essential services to the people of Hinche and over thirty Richmond diocesan twinning parishes located in its service area.

## TO THE RESCUE!

*Kathy Faw RN, Chair  
Dentists for Haiti*

The LaColline Dental Clinic now has an air conditioner!

Dr. Roody Beauboeuf voiced his concern about the extremely hot temperature in the dental office. HHCF heard this concern and acted! The dental clinic received an air conditioner the second week of April.

Dr. Roody was concerned because the heat made his patients very uncomfortable—and their anxiety was high enough already because of the loud noise made by a generator outside. Now, the windows in the dental clinic can remain closed and the patients can relax in the dental chair without those distractions.



**Dr. Wesley Joseph is the new intern at the dental clinic**

Dr. Roody reported that the week of May 20<sup>th</sup> over 70 patients were seen in the dental clinic, which opens at 8:30 a.m. Mondays and closes Fridays at 7:00 p.m. (and is often open on Saturdays).

Kudos to Dr. Roody and his team for working long and dedicated hours serving our brothers' and sisters' dental needs.

In turn, Dr. Roody is grateful to everyone who has supported the "Dentists for Haiti" efforts—we are making a difference!

## PARTNERSHIPS AT WORK FOR THE KIDS

Maison Fortuné Orphanage has a strong relationship with the Whitney Clinic in Hinche and the Haitian Health Care Foundation. Both share resources to achieve the desired outcome: health care for all the citizens of Haiti—as Dr. Paul Farmer insists, "Health care is a basic human right."

In February, a medical team led by Dr. Jim Toth came to Hinche from the Duluth, Georgia, parish which supports the Whitney Clinic, and graciously provided dental care to the most needy of the Maison Fortuné children. One child had to have six baby teeth extracted due to advanced caries. In addition, the team provided toothbrushes and toothpaste to all of the children.

One of the team members, Mark Coughlin, a very gifted musician, has made a musical video about dental care and hand washing, which has become very popular with the Haitian people. Using music recorded in Kreyòl, it has proven to be a valuable way to educate about basic health care. Many of the children have watched this video and are better able to understand the importance of dental hygiene to prevent caries.

Over the Easter season, the children of MFO received their second round of hepatitis-B vaccines—donated by Dr. Cruff Renard through *Zanmi Lasante*. Dr. Cruff remains a strong advocate for the children of MFO. Fortunately, two nurses, Sheila Pace and Amy Clarke, were visiting from the US with the Midwives for Haiti program and volunteered to help give the vaccines. They did a beautiful job of making the children as comfortable as possible in the process. Sheila's daughter Connor was also very helpful as a resourceful trouble-shooter!



**The hepatitis-B clinic at the orphanage: Amy Clarke (nurse practitioner), Sheila Pace (nurse midwife), & Connor Pace.**

Their help with the vaccination was another example of folks working shoulder-to-shoulder in addressing health care needs in Haiti.

The children at Maison Fortuné are a major motivation for our interest in the development of a new Hinche outpatient clinic at Ste. Thérèse hospital, which serves them as well.

# Haitian Health Care Foundation, Inc.

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