



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.

November 2008

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Susan Pleasants RN

This message is written to you from Haiti, which is currently recovering from a series of cyclones, the most recent being Ike on September 6. I was able to come here with generous donations of supplies from Haitian Health Care Foundation Board members Dr. Kurt Elward and Kathy Faw RN, Bon Secours Richmond Health System, Patient First Corporation, and a small HHCF grant to help with travel and to meet on the ground needs of people. As luck would have it, I had accrued enough miles for a free airline ticket. The medical supplies complemented each other and provided a good resource for mobile clinics with first-aid supplies and medications which the medical staff in Haiti were delighted to receive. Dr. Desiré Roland, a Zanmi Lasante medical staff member, said “When you come, it gives us confidence to help the others.” The decision to come to Haiti was correct and I greatly appreciated the Zanmi Lasante staff giving me the opportunity to be a small part of the recovery process.

Zanmi Lasante, Partners in Health’s Haitian organization (www.pih.org), sent a driver to Port-au-Prince to bring me to Mirebalais, where I had the opportunity to see firsthand the devastation from Ike. A small nearby community, Gran Plas, was wiped out. There was only one injury but all of the residents are displaced and in crisis. The next several days I traveled with the Zanmi Lasante assessment team led by Father Eddy Eustache, a ZL psychologist, to evaluate the needs of the communities of Petite Rivière and St. Marc—Fr. Eddy is in charge of the ZL social services department and provides training and counseling services. Petite Rivière, a large city surrounded by farming communities in the Artibonite Valley, sustained massive flooding due to the blockage of drainage systems leading into Lake Peligre, which Fr. Eddy explained, had been targeted for renovation but the funds were transferred to another disaster so the work was not completed. As a result, Petite Rivière was now experiencing its own disaster. We stopped in about ten small settlements in the area to speak with the residents whose homes were severely damaged or destroyed along with their crops. That evening we had a meeting with Petite Rivière Hospital staff led by Dr. Patrick Ulysse, the hospital director.

One of the first Zanmi Lasante interventions was to organize a rapid-response mobile clinic which visited Robis, one of the communities we had assessed [see the mobile clinic article below].

The next day our team headed to the city of St. Marc to meet with the local hospital staff. Dr. Anany Gretchko and

his team were accounting for over 500 patients in their service area and assessing the needs of the community. One of the innovative actions they planned was to organize kits for families, including food, basic hygiene items, bedding materials, used clothes, and water purification materials. These kits would provide rations for a month.

Both Petite Rivière and St. Marc medical teams met to develop comprehensive short and long term plans for their communities, an amazing process to watch. Fr. Eddy is planning to train his social workers to recognize and treat cases of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which they were already beginning to see in some of their patients who were exhibiting symptoms like fear of current and future storms, fear of returning to their homes, and regression in children.

As Haiti emerges from this disaster, we will continue to assess how the Haitian Health Care Foundation can help in the recovery process. It is my goal to continue to develop our partnerships in Haiti and work closely with groups on the ground that are in touch with the needs of the people. It is my honor to serve with our Board as we move forward to work with the Haitian people to improve their health and develop resources for our twinning programs.

MIDWIFE TRAINING PROJECT



Nadene Brunk CNM with some of the trainees

The Foundation, working with a group of American certified nurse midwives who have started an organization called **Midwives for Haiti (M4H)**, has successfully “graduated” their first class of seven Haitian midwives, or *Infimieres Sages Femmes* (ISFs). The government’s Ministry of Health representative has signed their diplomas.

Two of the ISFs found jobs right away at the clinic in Thomasique, and two more will be working for Zanmi Lasante at their clinic in Cerca Carvajal. The others have been interviewed for positions at the Ste. Thérèse Hospital in Hinche, where there is a need for more staff in the Labor and Delivery section, since the obstetrician there is on duty only during the day for five days—the ISFs would cover the other shifts.

We are convinced that it would be better for the Foundation and Midwives for Haiti to train Haitian trainers than to depend on having Americans in place on an erratic schedule. We will be working with the Haitian ISF Association, which has indentified four potential trainers who will be interviewed by M4H folks this month.

M4H would train the ISFs to be good teachers during sessions which would run for several weeks during the next three months and would hire two of them to run the next group of trainees. Right now we are seeking the funds for this project, which has great potential for providing skilled birth attendants to give prenatal and postpartum care and neonatal care in rural Haiti.

They are also concerned that the graduates of the program are in tune with the spiritual framework of the parishes which employ them to preserve life at any stage and use appropriate family planning methods to this end.

ZANMI LASANTE'S MOBILE CLINICS

Susan Pleasants RN

In response to the recent series of disasters in Haiti, the Zanmi Lasante's Petite Rivière medical staff organized a rapid-response mobile clinic, a model used in Partners in Health programs around the world and amazingly similar to *Patient First*, the urgent care center where I work, both organizations founded independently over twenty years ago.

I had the good fortune to be on the team assembled by Dr. Patrick Ulysse, director of the Petite Rivière hospital, and witness the mobile clinic process, which begins with community education. Each team member was given a specific topic, including nutrition, hygiene, and use of the water purifying product, *Dlo Lavi*. Next, patients were registered and given an intake sheet—some arrived with their MSPP (Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population) health records. Following registration they were routed to the children's or adult intake area where their "vital signs" were assessed (I worked in this area alongside Anita, a nurse from Cuba).

The intake forms were then rotated among the five physicians who were working with the clinic. Each patient received an evaluation and was given a prescription for medicine, if needed, or was routed to the laboratory (the mobile clinic had a pharmacy and laboratory set up). If patients required lab tests, these tests were completed and the patient came back to their physician with the results. The final treatment plan was then determined.

Among the adults the following conditions were diagnosed: parasites, probable malaria, intestinal parasitic diseases, gastritis, pelvic inflammatory disease, HIV (very few

cases), hypertension, upper respiratory infections, and anemia. The children, many of whom were malnourished, received the DPT vaccine. In Haiti, many parents do not understand the importance of a varied diet even when they have access to the foods.

The mobile team worked over for over twelve hours, seeing about 600 patients, and finishing by candlelight. Afterwards, Dr. Ulysses had a short debriefing session during which he complemented his team on performing a "miracle". It was a privilege to be part of such a cohesive, dedicated, and mutually supportive interdisciplinary team during a long and grueling day.

HURRICANE RELIEF GRANT PUT TO WORK

During the aftermath of the recent hurricanes in Haiti, the Haitian Health Care Foundation received a generous donation from Bon Secours Health System, Inc. to help victims in Haiti who experienced tremendous losses following a series of four hurricanes. The HHCF voted to quickly allocate the funds to our sister organization, the Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation, for the recovery efforts at the children's orphanage which was recently flooded, making it necessary to evacuate and all 128 children to a local high school.



The evacuation of the Maison Fortuné Orphanage

The Haitian Health Care Foundation would like to thank Bon Secours Health System for their quick response, which enabled the Orphanage Director, Lefort Jean-Louis, to begin cleanup efforts immediately and get the children back home within a week.

CARITAS RESPONDS TO THE DISASTER

On September 22, Caritas of the Diocese of Hinche distributed food to Hinche area families. Father Jacques Volcius stated that the effects of the disaster were great with many people affected due to home and crop loss. He said that it was difficult to determine to whom to distribute the food when the need was so widespread--an estimated 3500 families were affected in the area. Just outside of Hinche a small community is housing 60 families in 27 tents sup-

plied by the local Rotary Club—Caritas and Zanmi Lasante are working together to help this group.



Flooding in Hinche

Caritas sent a team to the tiny village of Coffa just outside of Hinche to distribute food and meet with families to visit homes and survey the many houses which were heavily damaged. The team (Marie Yolette B. Daniel; Guedry Augustin, an agronomist; and Bylinthe Edgard, a credit officer) distributed rice, beans, water, cereal, cooking oil, and clothes to the families. Caritas has been working with Catholic Relief Services to help as many families as possible during this recovery time.

FIRST MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS TRIP A SUCCESS

The Foundation's first "introduction to Haiti" health care professionals' trip took place last month. Its goal: to visit various sites across Haiti's Central Plateau and learn about systems of health care in place. The group members included Kathy Faw, Anne and Mike Knasel, Glenn Poole, and Susan Pleasants. In Hinche they had the opportunity to meet with Father Jacques Volcius, Director of Caritas/Hinche and also tour Ste. Therese Hospital. The next day they visited several private clinics, St. Joseph's (Thomassique) and the Whitney Clinic (Hinche). As luck would have it, the Whitney Clinic was being visited by a medical team from Georgia led by Dr. Jim Toth, providing a great opportunity to learn about multiple resources and participate in an impromptu meeting with Dr. Raoul Raphael, the government's health care representative for the Central Plateau, who plans to make the Whitney Clinic an official vaccination site for the area--great news for the residents of Hinche.

From there the group headed to Cange to visit the Zanmi Lasante Sociomedical Clinic founded by Dr. Paul Farmer. They were warmly met by Jackie Williams and Fereste Sonneus, who guided the group around the huge com-

plex. Dr. Anne Knasel provided a brief pediatric consult while in the pediatric ward.

Fereste then took the team to see Zanmi Agrikol, the agricultural arm of Zanmi Lasante which provides nutritional products from crops grown at the farm to over 6,000 children. That night the group stayed with Father Bernardin Desras, who took the group to Zanmi Lasante's Sante Fanm hospital the next morning for a brief tour, after which the group headed to Lacolline, where they toured the new hospital and dental clinic and had a meeting with the dental staff led by Dr. Roody Beau-boeuf.

Following this meeting the group headed to Verette to spend the night at the Baptist Guest House. Father Roderick Mital helped the group secure transportation and provided a respite at his rectory in Dubuisson.

The next morning the group visited a women's cooperative group founded by Ton Vriens, who is blazing new trails with his work with the Turtle Tree Trust, a Netherlands-based Foundation. They then traveled to the world famous Albert Schweitzer Hospital for a tour.

Several exciting possibilities have emerged from this trip: the possibility of introducing the Klorfasil water-purifying program to the twinning parishes of the Diocese of Richmond, developing a program of support for Caritas' eye clinic in Hinche, continued partnering and expansion of the relationship with both Medical Missionaries' St. Joseph Clinic and the Whitney Clinic, and continued support of the Child Wellness Program efforts at Maison Fortuné Orphanage.

OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT HAITI

A diocesan immersion trip to Haiti is scheduled for July 15 through 22. The trip is designed for individuals to be immersed into Haiti, giving them the opportunity to learn about its history, culture, economics, politics and religion and to begin establishing relationships with the people of Haiti.

This will not be a "tourist" visit but more in the spirit of a pilgrimage, carving out in our lives a space and time to be open to the gifts Haiti has to offer and to personal transformation.

For an application and more information please call or email Patrice Schwermer at 804-622-5129 or pschwermer@richmonddiocese.org.

Haitian Health Care Foundation, Inc.

Individual and Group Contributors: July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009

Bon Secours Health System, Inc., Marriottsville, Md.

Church of St Therese

Dolores Clement

Frank & Gloria D'Alessandro

Kurt Elward

Angela Gray

Joseph M. & Maria Kelleher

David & Lisa Linnell

Carmella Maurizi

Richard Neve

Pat Pletke

Edwin Sebolt

Richard & Betty Ann Wilson

Support for Dental Clinic

Support for Midwifery Training Project

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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