

Office of Haitian Ministries  
Diocese of Norwich  
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OUR MISSION: Helping Haitians Help Haitians



# THE HAITIAN TIMES



## GALA TO BENEFIT NEEDY CHILDREN OF HAITI

The annual *"For the Love of a Child"* on Saturday, April 17th at the Mystic Aquarium in Mystic, CT, will benefit hundreds of children in Haiti whose lives have been affected by the earthquake. To learn more about this important event, please contact us at: 860.638.1018 or by email at: [info@haitianministries.org](mailto:info@haitianministries.org). We hope you will attend.

### Other events in the coming weeks include:

**Wed., March 24th:** 6: 30 p.m. **Haiti Awareness** night at Xavier High School, Middletown, CT. A light dinner followed by presentations. (Tickets for this fundraiser are available at Xavier, Mercy High School and Haiti's Back Porch, both in Middletown.)

**Sat., April 10th:** 11 a.m.—2:30 p.m. **CT Walks for Haiti** in West Hartford, starting at Saint Peter Claver Church parish center, 47 Pleasant St. A 2.5-mile walk-a-thon to draw attention to needs of the Haitian people and to raise money for the projects of six non-profits working in Haiti. For more info, see: [www.ctwalksforhaiti.org](http://www.ctwalksforhaiti.org)

## Leave a Legacy

To make a difference in the lives of Haitians in need, you might consider making Haitian Ministries your beneficiary.

Here are a few steps to take:

- Discuss with your advisor the tax advantages you can enjoy now by leaving a gift to Haitian Ministries.
- Prepare or update your will, setting aside a gift for Haitian Ministries.
- Name Haitian Ministries as the beneficiary of your life insurance policy.
- Name Haitian Ministries as a beneficiary of your IRA.
- Remember a loved one with a charitable bequest in her or his honor.

For more information, please contact us. We can put you in touch with resources to verify and further explore the rewards of leaving a legacy.



*Nurses Rita Kessing (left) and Maggie Levasseur, both from Connecticut and with the MATH medical team, tend to a sick baby during a field clinic.*



*Valemburd Milord, a 7th-grader in the Tierney-Tobin education program, was not injured in the earthquake, but he is surrounded by devastation. He and other students in Port-au-Prince are out of school indefinitely.*

## ROLL CALL CONTINUES IN WEEKS AFTER EARTHQUAKE

By KYN TOLSON Haitian Ministries Development Director

Person by person, an accounting must be made. Armany Joseph. Annetessa Damas. Pierre Luigi Orilas. Schnidyn Frantzcesse Plonquet. Stephane and Stevens Pierre.

They are six among the 140 students enrolled in the scholarship program run by Haitian Ministries for the Diocese of Norwich in Port-au-Prince.

They are also among the dead, killed during the earthquake on January 12th.

The roll call since the devastation in Haiti could not be more ominous. Yet, so far, 42 of the students in the Tierney-Tobin Memorial Scholarship Program—who range from first-graders to medical school students—are uninjured survivors. As the survey continues in the com-



*A boy who lives in the Norwich Mission House neighborhood wears a paper mask for some protection against foul air.*

*continued on page 2*

## MEDICAL TEAMS HEADED TO HAITI EVERY MONTH

The first of medical teams supported by Haitian Ministries and involved in earthquake relief completed its mission in early March when the 11 medical workers returned from Port-au-Prince after a week there.

"The number of patients was overwhelming," said Nancy Ryan, who supervises the organization of the teams, which will go down monthly through the summer. The first team examined and treated 850 patients and hundreds more who were treated through triage or who appeared well enough to need only medical advice.

The team stayed at the ministry's temporary mission house. The medical groups to follow will also stay there and plan to be in Haiti for a week to 10 days.

The teams with MATH (Medical Aid to Haiti) are supervised by parishioners of St. Peter Claver in West Hartford and include Ms. Ryan and Richard Thibadeau.

Haitian Ministries has pledged up to \$30,000 in medicine for these special missions. The volunteer members of the teams—doctors, nurses and pharmacists—will take other donations of medicine and medical equipment.

In Haiti, the teams will follow the procedures set up by MATH over the last couple of years by working with the clinic established by Paula Thybulle in Port-au-Prince. (Mrs. Thybulle also runs the girls' orphanage *Le Foyer des Filles de Dieu*, which is adjacent to her community clinic.)

The teams will visit three sites in the outskirts of the capital and will likely spend at least one day at the clinic. To learn more, please contact Nancy Ryan at: [ryaner@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ryaner@sbcglobal.net) and Haitian Ministries at: [info@haitianministries.org](mailto:info@haitianministries.org)



PARTNERS FOR HAITI

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### WE'RE JUST A CLICK AWAY

You can learn more about the work of Haitian Ministries and how your support aids those in need. Also, you easily donate online. Just visit us at: [www.haitianministries.org](http://www.haitianministries.org)

## Roll Call continued from page 1

ing days, the ministry can only hope that the news will be good.

At least 200,000 people are estimated to have been killed and thousands more seriously injured. Until the extensive rubble of a ruined city is removed, a more exacting number remains elusive.

The relief and rebuilding efforts by the ministry and thousands of others involved in bringing aid to survivors in Port-au-Prince and beyond will extend into years, even decades. Today, the ministry is fully engaged in providing financial assistance and food to the projects, programs and parishes it has worked with over the last quarter of a century.

The year 2010 was to have been a year of celebration for Haitian Ministries; it marks the ministry's 25th anniversary. And, for the last 23 years, it has had a mission house in Port-au-Prince: Norwich Mission House. It was destroyed in the earthquake.

Although Haitian Ministries has its headquarters within the Diocese of Norwich, the mission house has been at the heart of its work in Haiti. From there, the ministry has introduced thousands of Americans and others to the people and culture of the Caribbean nation. From there, the ministry has engaged with and supported: two orphanages; a meal program for 70 children; a community clinic and medical missions; the scholarship program for 140 students; and reforestation projects. It has supported artisans in Haiti through the purchase and subsequent sale of art at its non-profit shop Haiti's Back Porch in Middletown.

Also, the ministry has at its core a mission to bring Haitian and American communities together. Today the twinning program counts 12 partnerships—creating bonds between parishes in the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince and churches and a school in Connecticut and Wisconsin.

In all that it does, Haitian Ministries intends to "help Haitians help Haitians." The work is one of advocacy,



A street painting in the shape of Haiti sends a plea to all who pass by.

support and partnership.

"Initially, so much work has to be done to help those in need," said Emily Smack, the ministry's executive director. She and others travelled to Haiti after the earthquake to assess those needs and to help establish a temporary mission house. That house, in the same Petionville district of the capital as the destroyed Norwich Mission House, is being run by Dominique Georges, a 36-year-old Haitian who has worked with the ministry for more than a decade. He and four other full-time staff members are providing emergency funds and food to orphanages (*Le Foyer des Filles de Dieu*, also known as Paula Thybulle's orphanage, and *L'Arc-en-Ciel*); Madame Samson's meal program for about 70 children in a slum neighborhood; and to priests in the nine parishes in the twinning program.

The regular immersion trips organized before the earthquake are cancelled for at least eight months, but the mission house will host monthly medical mission teams.

"As a ministry, we realize that the earthquake has dramatically changed the needs and priorities of so many individuals, families, communities and parishes," said Mrs. Smack. "We stand ready to give support in what is needed to be done, now and in the future, when rebuilding will be the focus."

## REBUILDING LIVES, CHURCHES AND COMMUNITIES

Bishop Joseph Lafontant tries to see the silver lining.

That can be hard in a city where an estimated 200,000 were killed and nearly two million more left homeless. In Port-au-Prince, people are lucky if they have much more than the shirt on their back, food and water, and a tent.

In fact, tents are so scarce, people have used sheets, strips of plastic, even pieces of cardboard stitched together with twine to craft crude shelters. Tent cities abound. Some fill open fields. Smaller ones are wedged between the remains of buildings.

And now the rainy season makes muck of the ground all around. Even some of the priests of the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince, which is twinned with the Diocese of Norwich, have been left homeless.

"Maybe it's good for them to be out under the stars, living and sleeping with the people," reasons the bishop. He has seen so much misery since the earthquake rocked Port-au-Prince. Archbishop

Serge Miot, the head of the archdiocese, was killed.

Bishop Lafontant is now the archdiocese's administrator. He has lost not only a leader but a good friend, and he must tend to dozens of priests in need. Haitian Ministries, which assists in the twinning relationship between the archdiocese and the Norwich Diocese, has given him emergency funds and hopes to do much more.

Bishop Lafontant met with a small ministry group when they visited Haiti in early February. Dozens of parish churches and rectories must be rebuilt and all the belongings of priests replaced, he said.

The bishop also needs computers and other office equipment to re-establish the archdiocese's secretariat. It was destroyed, as was the grand Notre Dame Cathedral across the street. Only portions of walls and sections of stained glass windows remain.

The bishop also needs cassocks, chalices and all other materials for celebrating Mass.

So much of life must be re-built from scratch.



Bishop Joseph Lafontant

For all nine parishes within the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince that are twinned with churches in the United States through Haitian Ministries, the ministry will give emergency funds to each priest for the next several months. Some of the twinned parishes have received more emergency money from their twins in the United States

At Our Lady of Lourdes in the Cite Militaire section of the capital, an expansive field in front of the church has been turned into "Emergency Shelter Area #31." There, some 2,000 families have made a vast encampment.

For a visitor familiar with the Haitian parish—twinned with St. Mark in Westbrook—the transformation is dramatic. As one man living there in a small tent with his family said, "Haiti is a different place."

## HEROES EMERGE IN HAITI'S DARK NIGHT

By KYN TOLSON Haitian Ministries Development Director

Lanitte Belledente remembers the heat.

Waves of heat.

And the violent pitching of the ground, the shake of the mission house, and the collapse of the world around her.

Ms. Belledente—a cook for almost 20 years at Norwich Mission House in Port-au-Prince—was just outside the building, holding onto a railing that leads into the first-floor kitchen, when the earthquake struck.

Details of those seconds when the earth shook apart a city will be forever etched in the minds of the survivors. Ms. Belledente is one of them. Indeed, the 45-year-old Haitian woman is nothing if not a survivor.

Today, Ms. Belledente spends her days and nights on a cot, in a large tent where she and at least 50 others badly injured in the disaster have received treatment for weeks. Her left foot, ankle and shin were crushed, and she underwent an amputation four days after the earthquake. She has had another operation because of infection.

Determination, along with good medical care and therapy in the coming months, will perhaps put some balance back in Ms. Belledente's life. Her co-workers from Norwich Mission House await her return.

The others in the staff have a new base now. The mission house was destroyed, as were many of their homes. The temporary house rented by Haitian Ministries for the Diocese of Norwich now provides the five men and some of their families safe shelter from the streets and a place to continue work.

Dominique George is in charge for the ministry in Port-au-Prince, and he organizes the relief assistance. He has had little time to relax since the early evening of January 12th. He was driving when the



Dominique Georges

Milor Luxama

earthquake struck. The magnitude was so great, he thought his car had been hit from behind by a truck.

In the hour or two immediately after, Mr.

Georges walked to his mother's home, because the roads were impassable. She had survived, unhurt. But at least four others in her building were killed. Once assured she would be alright, Mr. Georges set out, again on foot, to make his way back to the mission house. He suspected that at least two people were in the building.

He was right. Charles (Chuck) Dietsch and Jillian Thorp, both Americans working with the ministry in Port-au-Prince, were trapped beneath the flattened concrete of the two-story house.

The journey by foot was long. By the time he arrived, Mr. Georges discovered that another staff member at the house, Milor Luxama, had been at work for a few hours, driving a pick ax into what had been the concrete roof. Mr. Luxama, with the help of the night guard, had located the sounds made by the two survivors. Even though he had just arrived at his own home when the earthquake hit, he returned to the mission house, suspecting people were inside.

For several hours in the dark, and with chaos and wails throughout the neighborhood, Mr. Luxama swung the pick ax. He left for a short while to find more help. When Mr. Georges arrived, the

number of rescuers had grown.

Mr. Dietsch, in his description of that night, wrote: "The second floor of the mission house and the concrete roof collapsed onto us. We were protected, through the grace of God, by the way in which the debris fell. We found ourselves in a small air-pocket. I was pinned on my back and unable to move. Jillian was lying partially across my body, but she could not move ... because one of her feet was caught in rubble. We spent 10 long, frightening hours in that small space. We owe our lives to Dominique Georges ... and two other employees, who found us two hours after the quake struck and worked through the night to dig us out, literally with their hands. We were finally freed at 3 a.m. on Wednesday."

Ms. Belledente was discovered behind the house right after the earthquake. She was taken to two makeshift medical spots before being transferred to the large tent hospital near the international airport, where she has been attended by medical personnel from the University of Miami and others. It remains unclear where she will go for mid-term recovery and therapy. Even before the earthquake, Haiti had a feeble public health system, and the disaster has created an enormous population of amputees needing special care and equipment.

The ministry will continue to monitor Ms. Belledente's care and provide for her needs.

After their rescue, Mr. Dietsch and Mrs. Thorp were med-evac'd to the United States. Both are well.

"Haiti has once again been thrust onto the world stage as the result of unimaginable tragedy and horror," Mr. Dietsch wrote. "I pray that, this time, the world will take action—yes, to bind up the wounds that are now so raw and bleeding—but also to work together to solve the problems that plague Haiti and her people."

## AT ORPHANAGES, RAIN BEATS DOWN IN HARD TIMES



Naika Douce

For almost five days after the earthquake, 5-year-old Naika Douce and the 62 other girls in her orphanage wondered whether anyone would discover them.

Although not trapped under the rubble of a collapsed building, they had been sequestered in the courtyard of a neighbor, across the street from *Le Foyer des Filles de Dieu*. The orphanage, run by Paula Thybulle, is the only home the girls have. The building had been damaged in the quake, and a tiny concrete courtyard there does not provide space for even a small encampment.

Today, the girls are still spending the nights at the neighbor's yard, in tents with tarps to provide extra protection against the downpours of the rainy season. It started in late February.

Mrs. Thybulle thinks that her orphanage might have to be re-built; some of the walls have deep cracks and fissures run from the ground to the second floor.

For now, the ministry is collecting tents to be taken to them and to the children at another orphanage. In the mountains outside of Port-au-Prince, the orphanage *La Maison L'Arc-en-Ciel*—also known as the Rainbow House—is run by Robert and Danielle Penette and their son Robert Jr. They badly need tents.

*L'Arc-en-Ciel* has been the home for 44 children affected by AIDS/HIV. Since the earthquake, the orphanage has taken in 17 more orphans, and the influx has strained an already tight budget. The costs for food, propane gas and water have risen, and the Penettes must buy in greater quantities.

The Penettes had planned to soon move their orphanage from the house they have rented for years to a new site, which they own and where construction of a building is well underway. The



A tent city covers the grounds of Our Lady of Lourdes in the capital's Cite Militaire neighborhood.

new place should be able to accommodate as many as 100 children.

With the earthquake, however, the Penettes are re-examining the "anti-seismic construction" to try to ensure all safety measures have been taken.

"The estimated cost to complete the facility before the earthquake was \$200,000. Now we fear it will increase, due to shortages and price increases for the materials that include iron and cement," Robert Jr. reported, adding, "We need to find funds. And we need tents, but they are impossible to get in Haiti."