

# Hospice St. Joseph News

  
Hospice St. Joseph  
March 2010

**Making a difference in Haiti—healing the sick, educating the youth, welcoming the traveler**

## Our presence meant quick response to the earthquake

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank you for all of your past support and your incredible response to the recent tragedy that has struck the people of Haiti. Since the earthquake, our staff in Haiti, led by our Executive Director Max Delices, has organized a relief effort for the families who remained in Christ Roi. This would not have been possible without your help. **Every dime of your contributions since the earthquake has funded the distribution of food, water and medical support.**

Since 1989 our mission has been to work hand in hand with the Haitian community to pursue a better life by providing healthcare, education and hospitality services. In this way, we can utilize our local presence and relationships to immediately deliver services and fully maximize the benefits of all the contributions we receive. During the first week following the earthquake, at a time when many other organizations were struggling to organize relief efforts, Hospice was able to provide critical medical help to more than 1,000 people in the Christ Roi neighborhood.

Relief efforts will continue as long as they are needed. But we must also turn our attention to determining how Hospice can best serve the people of Christ Roi in the future. The Board of Directors is taking steps to create a plan for Hospice that will fit the needs of Christ Roi as it emerges from this

**Our presence** continued on page four

## Medical responders share personal accounts

*Following the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake, the first medical response team arrived. Much gratitude is owed to them for risking their health and their lives to help our sisters and brothers in Haiti. Three members of the group share their experiences.*

*The following was excerpted from Nurse Practitioner Bobi Wall's journal.*

Today we moved the clinic to another location. We passed a much harder hit area. Stench of death was much stronger in this area. En route we passed a canal



*Bobi Wall treats one of the younger patients.*

I traveled with a medical team from Florida to Port-au-Prince. For a week I was involved with a roving medical clinic. We were able to serve/treat approximately 1,000 Haitians ranging from severe trauma to sick babies, and even a week after the event, many had not had any professional medical treatment.

The people we served were very patient, understanding and hopeful, even though when walking the streets of the neighborhood we were in, with the smell of death, they were helpful and very grateful that we were there to give them a hand to help lift them up. Approximately 90 percent of the houses in that area were destroyed or severely damaged. I admire their

with minimal water filled with rubbish which would serve as a reservoir for multiple diseases when the rains came. Large numbers of children and families came to the clinic. Today's complaints, in addition to the ubiquitous wounds, were cough, fever, and stomach aches. Many people had not eaten in days. They had water but not much. Dust was everywhere. A lot of people also complained they were unable to sleep. Every day there were aftershocks. We had to be more creative in dealing with these complaints. Babies were listless. We started multiple IVs. Today we began to feel more overwhelmed. The needs were so immense just for the basics of food and water. I am beginning to feel like I cannot make a difference.

Saturday evening, we heard Haitians singing hymns until late in the night. Even with all that has happened to them, they are steadfast in their faith.

— Bobi Wall



*LeRoy Himebaugh (at right) worked the security detail.*

MacGyver techniques as they have become very resourceful with what hasn't been destroyed.

— LeRoy Himebaugh

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# Life returns to Haiti

On Jan. 12 the earth shook in Haiti for only 40 seconds. When it stopped the destruction, devastation and loss of life was incomprehensible. Over a million people lost their homes. Food, water and essential medical care was difficult to access. Max Delices, Hospice St. Joseph's Executive Director has been in Haiti since the earthquake. He has worked tirelessly to assist the families in the Christ Roi neighborhood with the little resources he had available. We asked him to give us his perspective on life in Haiti following the earthquake. Here is his account:

Three weeks after the terrible earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince, Gressier, Leogane, Grand Goave and Jacmel, Erolde Ezerbe, the education director and I decided to take a drive through some other parts of the country for a brief respite.

As we crossed the first community on the northeastern part away from Port-au-Prince and its surroundings, we started to breathe fresher air. The smell of dead bodies started to fade and the pictures of despair due to earthquake damages began to disappear. Forty-five minutes from the mayhem we entered Mirebalais, the first main community in the Central Plateau. For the first time in almost a month, we saw a Haiti without tents. We saw



The second floor of Hospice St. Joseph was instantly flattened when the Jan. 12 earthquake hit. Third floor guest rooms rest on the crumbling ruins. No one was on the second floor at the time of the collapse.

people laughing and living in pre-earthquake mode. Schools were back open, children were playing, and street restaurants were running normally. The flies that are everywhere in Port-au-Prince were not visible. It was still a poor city in a poor country but it was functioning. Life in that Haiti was 90 percent normal. The only anomaly we observed was the increase in the population; there were more people on the streets than normal.

We continued our journey into the Artibonite department. We stopped in three cities, talking to people, questioning the normalcy we saw and inquiring about peoples' views of the reconstruction of Port-au-Prince. In Dessalines, we slept for the first time in a three-story building since the earthquake. The next day, we went to St. Michel of Latayale, a community near Gonaives, and stopped at a local restaurant under a makeshift tent. There we found a young man, a victim of the earthquake and a native of St. Michel who swears that he will never again live in Port-au-Prince — even if his livelihood depended on it.

Since our objective for the night was the Central Plateau, we crossed a deserted area to Maissade, an hour outside of St. Michel. It is a town where we have both worked and many friends and colleagues awaited our arrival. From the elders to the youngest to the village priest, everybody welcomed us. Schools have been open there since the first of February and lives have returned to normal for most people.

Early Monday morning as we headed back to Port-au-Prince, we saw children going to school in their ironed uniforms in an unbelievable normalcy. We stopped to chat with them and with instructors and principals.

Back in Port-au-Prince, we held our first meeting since being recharged. We refocused

and began to address the ways Hospice can move forward. Since the clinic never stopped, how can we make it more efficient? How will we rebuild our pharmacy? How will we re-establish our local medical team to provide services to the neighborhood?

Addressing the needs of the children was essential. We had to put our sponsored children back in a setting where they felt safe. We decided that, starting the week of Feb. 15, the youngest children would come to Hospice and we would set aside a place for them to talk, draw and play. In March, we will start having educational sessions for all the grades. By then, the building should be down and the area will be available for the children. Meanwhile, many of our sponsored children have gone to a province where schools are open and we sincerely encouraged these moves so that they do not lose the school year. We contacted parents to find out where exactly their children's new schools were located. We requested direct contact with the school principals to understand their operations and to make sure our assistance goes directly to the education of the child. In the near future, we will also visit these schools to review their curriculum and address our education programs with the principals. This will help our sponsored children receive a more adequate education and will also benefit the children of those communities.

We requested and received some tents from Catholic Relief Services. We gave away over 150 tents in a single day to community organizations for distribution. We soon realized that some of people in the Women Child Health clinic many not have been beneficiaries. We quickly refocused to mostly touch children and

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## **Responders** *continued from page one*

Our stay at Hospice St. Joseph was, to me, a luxury. Max made sure the compound was secure and safe. He made sure we had proper toilets, privacy for bathing and a hot meal each night. Not one of us expected this, yet Max made sure everyone was comfortable. This did not just



*Thomas Reichert joins others in the closing gathering.*



*The medical teams manned a stationary clinic at HSJ and a roving clinic that went out into the neighborhood looking for those needing medical care. The first week, they treated more than 1,000 Haitians.*

*photos by Dawn Pinder and Laura Ford*



include those of us who traveled there, he made sure his staff was properly cared for, too. I know in my heart that this little piece of the world, the area around Hospice, is a bit better off because of Max.

*—Thomas Reichert*



## **Earthquake** *continued from page two*

their mothers. With some volunteers, we visited the campsites to see the living conditions of families with children. For three nights from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m., we witnessed hundreds of children sleeping in the open air and made hard choices, deciding who would receive tents based on age, the number of people willing to share and our availability.

Providing services to the most vulnerable

among us is our priority because of limited financial, human and other resources; however putting lives back in order is the major task at hand. While our building in Christ Roi is gone, our commitment to the people of Haiti remains strong. We will not abandon our decades long presence in Haiti. Hospice St. Joseph is determined to continue being the brother, the sister and the friend that supports the people of Haiti

as they regain control of their lives.

With your help, we will continue our efforts in education and medical support. As the vision for Haiti's future develops, we hope to work closely with reconstruction efforts to create a Haiti full of promise for years to come.

*— Max Delices, Executive Director*

## **Groundhog's Day event nets \$43,000**



The fifth annual Groundhog's Day Fundraiser for Hospice St. Joseph was held on Saturday evening Feb. 6 at historic Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Conn. The event included entertainment, a silent auction and a raffle, and a brief pictorial presentation of post-earthquake relief activities and conditions at Hospice and the surrounding Christ Roi neighborhood. Auction and raffle prizes as well as food and beverage were donated by local vendors and friends of Hospice St. Joseph. More than 250 people were in attendance and total proceeds from donations, the auction and raffle exceeded \$43,000. Guests enjoyed the hopeful and positive atmosphere and affirmed their partnership in the relief effort and the eventual restoration of programs and services that have been identified with Hospice for over 20 years.

*Hospice supporters included: Pam Smith (l.) and Kathy Gaylord.*

## Students' penny wars raise \$1838 for HSJ

Students at Silver Lane Elementary School in East Hartford, Conn. participated in a penny war to raise funds to aid in Hospice St. Joseph's Earthquake Relief. Cara Quinn, a first grade teacher who helped to organize the fundraiser shared how impressed she was with the generosity of her



students. "The day after the fundraiser was announced, several students came to school with their piggy banks in tow ready and willing to give every last bit to help the people of Haiti. One student in kindergarten had no money to donate for the fundraiser but placed a note inside the water jugs that read 'Dear Haiti, feel better soon.' Many of our students struggle financially themselves and to see this incredible outpouring of support was extremely heartwarming and touching. It challenges us all to go above and beyond and to truly sacrifice to help others." The students raised \$1,838 for Hospice St. Joseph.

**Our presence** continued from page one catastrophe. We will keep you informed as our plans develop.

Once again on behalf of the families that we serve, thank you for your remarkable generosity.

*James Michel,*  
Chair

Visit our website at  
[www.hospicesaintjoseph.org](http://www.hospicesaintjoseph.org)  
for more ways  
to help us continue  
our fundraising efforts  
and for up-to-date  
information on  
current events.

Note: we have  
a new address!

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