



FRIENDS FOR HEALTH HEADLINES

SPRING, 2010

A quarterly newsletter for Friends for Health in Haiti, by founder and executive director, Catherine E. Wolf, MD MPH

Our Mission

The mission of Friends for Health in Haiti, Inc. is to improve the health status of the people of Haiti through high-quality health care provided in a caring, compassionate and respectful manner, as a means of demonstrating God's love in this world and as a reflection of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Friends for Health in Haiti is on the web!

- Regular updates on our blog.
- Photo gallery filled with photos of clinic site, patients, and life in Haiti.
- Donate online!

FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org

Inside this issue:

Lending a Hand	2
Earthquake Stats	2
Lives and Spirits Changed	3
Clinic Update	4
Final Notes	4

JANUARY 12, 2010 ~DAY OF DISASTER IN HAITI

Shortly before 5pm on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale occurred in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Thousands of secondary school and university students and their professors were in classrooms. Thousands of people were in markets and shops buying food and other goods. Hundreds more were in their hotel rooms, talking and relaxing at the end of the day. Others were walking along the streets of Port-au-Prince and nearby towns, unaware of the fact that in a few seconds their lives and those of their family members would be changed forever.

Dr. Katie Wolf and nurse colleague Cherlie Severe were in the US at the time of the earthquake. They watched, along with millions of others, as the news from Haiti unfolded. Telephone communication was cut off and it was impossible to get accurate firsthand information about friends and family members in Port-au-Prince. They found it difficult to look at photos of the devastation, seeing the presidential palace and government buildings reduced to rubble; old homes, hotels and markets that once stood so tall now collapsed with hundreds of people inside. Reports came through that neighbors and bystanders dug with their hands to free people who were trapped but alive in the early hours after the quake. Some were freed quickly, others after several days, each with their own story of miraculous survival. And then there were the hundreds of thousands of others who lost their lives in the largest natural disaster to occur in a country already well acquainted with the ravages of hurricanes, floods, political instability and economic embargoes.

The international response to the disaster was rapid, but the logistics were nearly impossible to overcome. A country with very little infrastructure to begin with now had essentially no infrastructure. The government and the UN, who should have been the ones to direct the relief efforts, had lost not only many of their major buildings, but their leaders as well. There was an immediate need for search and rescue operations, accompanied by emergency medical care. But, most of the streets of Port-au-Prince were blocked by rubble, hindering rescue crews from reaching most residential buildings and homes. Many of the hospitals in the center of the city had been badly damaged, including the main university hospital. People were warned not to sleep inside their homes, even if they were still standing, leaving millions to sleep in their yards and on the streets of the city, building make-shift shelters of sheets held up with branches stuck in piles of cement blocks.

LENDING A HAND

Six days after the earthquake, Dr. Katie Wolf and nurse Cherlie Severe found themselves in the midst of the above chaotic situation. "We could have stayed in the US, enjoying 24-hour electricity, hot showers, diet soda and TV, but we felt that we needed to be there in Haiti helping out," said Dr. Katie. So, she and Cherlie joined with an emergency response team from Relief International to respond to the initial medical needs of the people in Port-au-Prince. "We heard from friends in Jérémie that very few buildings were damaged there and we expected that our clinic up in the mountains was intact. So, we spent a few weeks helping Relief International in Port-au-Prince, since the needs there were so acute."

With so many people living on the streets, security issues were a concern to the initial relief organizations such as Relief International. For that reason, Cherlie let them set up a "base camp" for their staff at her house in the Fontamara area of Port-au-Prince, and a temporary clinic in a relative's yard next door. Katie and Cherlie saw over 650 patients themselves in 8 clinic days with RI. Some people had traumatic injuries and infected wounds, but many had more routine complaints like colds, skin rashes and headaches. Almost all expressed fear of another earthquake; fear made more real by the multiple aftershocks felt during the weeks following the major earthquake.

Katie and Cherlie,
working with
Relief International



Dr. Wolf examining a patient



EARTHQUAKE STATS

Number of deaths: 222,570

Number of people living in spontaneous settlement sites: 1.3 million

Number of settlement sites: 434

Number of people reported to have left Port-au-Prince for outlying areas: 604,215

Number of people receiving emergency shelter materials: 525,000 (41% of those in need)

Number of people who received initial food assistance: 4.3 million

Number of latrines constructed: 2777 (13% coverage of targeted population)

Ref: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Situation report 3/1/10, 3/4/10

LIVES AND SPIRITS CHANGED

"My life has been changed. I'm now a Christian and I'm never going to be the same again," the young man said to Cherlie. He owns a little business in a market area of Port-au-Prince and told the following story:

On the afternoon of the earthquake, he was sitting in a friend's house talking with several people when he heard a voice telling him to go outside. It was so strong and clear that he first looked around to see who was talking. He didn't see anyone, but quickly went outside anyway. A few seconds later, the ground began to shake and he watched in horror as the house collapsed on the friends he had been speaking with. He began to walk quickly down the street and suddenly couldn't take another step. His feet felt like they were held with glue and he couldn't get them to move. As he stood there, an electrical pole fell over onto the street where he would have been had he continued walking. "It was then that I realized that it was the Lord who saved my life. I used to be a real criminal, stealing and doing bad things", he said. "But, now I've changed my life. To be saved twice in one day is more than a coincidence. God saved me for a reason."

A priest friend shared with us another story about a wealthy friend of his who lived in Port-au-Prince. The man and his family needed someone to work for them in the house and yard, so the priest recommended an older couple who were members of his church. He knew they were honest and would work hard for the man. So, the couple went to the wealthy man's house and agreed to work for the family on the condition that they be allowed to go to church each Sunday. That was fine with the family and the couple began to work. In the wealthy family's yard was a large building that had been built as a house for the dogs and it was in this

building that the couple was housed. Their work went well, but there was one problem and that was that the wealthy couple had a teenage son who was very insolent and disrespectful. He would make fun of the couple and treated them poorly, insulting them for the way they dressed and acted. This made life very difficult and they began to think of quitting and going back to their home community to live.

In the afternoon of January 12, 2010, they decided they had suffered enough abuse, so the couple packed up all their belongings, put them out in front of the house and told the wealthy couple that they were leaving to go back home. The wealthy couple was quite upset, so they called their son over and the five of them stood in the yard of the huge, luxurious home discussing the situation. The discussion went on for hours, and each time the older couple turned to leave, the wealthy couple stopped them and continued to try to persuade

them to stay. So it was that all of them were in the yard of the house when the earthquake struck, and all watched in shock as the big, beautiful house fell in a heap in front of them. The teenage son realized that, had it not been for the older couple, he and his parents would have been inside the house and would most likely have perished under all the rubble. He fell on his knees in front of them, asking for their forgiveness for his behavior and lack of respect.

For the next few weeks, the two families lived together in the "dog house", the wealthy couple and their son wearing the older couple's clothing, and all of them sharing food and water together - an amazing story of grace and reconciliation.

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CLINIC UPDATE

The beginning of March saw us back at our own clinic in Gattineau, seeing record numbers of patients and hearing more stories of both heartbreak and miraculous survival. Every family in Haiti has been touched by the events of January 12th and the country as a whole will bear the scars for years to come. For our part, we have increased our clinic sessions to three days a week in order to accommodate the greater patient load from people who have migrated from Port-au-Prince into the country. In addition, we are conducting surveys in the surrounding communities to assess earthquake damage and determine how we can help the local farmers increase productivity in this upcoming planting season. Our desire is for long-term development and sustainability, so while we attempt to meet immediate needs in our local communities, we also seek to strengthen the communities by involving them in the development process.

FINAL NOTES

WITH GRATITUDE

We would like to thank everyone who has made contributions to Friends for Health in Haiti this year. We appreciate your generosity and your willingness to join with us as we attempt to meet the overwhelming health needs of the people of Haiti. Initial earthquake relief efforts are now slowing down and many of the larger relief organizations are turning their work over to local government and private institutions. Long-term facilities such as ours are becoming more and more important, since we have already developed roots in the local communities and have developed sustainable systems of operation that will enable health care to continue in the years to come.

Donations can be sent to us at the address below, or visit our website to donate online.

HOPE FOR HAITI

The 2nd annual dinner and auction will be held Saturday, April 17th at the historic Wisconsin Club in Milwaukee, WI. Invitations were mailed to all Wisconsin area supporters. RSVP deadline was March 19th, but please feel free to email us at friendsforhealth@gmail.com to inquire if any tickets are still available.

NOTES FROM THE HOME OFFICE

If you would like to receive our **newsletters via email**, please let us know by signing up on our website or sending us an email at friendsforhealth@gmail.com

Find us on **Facebook!** Friends for Health in Haiti has a fan page on Facebook (www.facebook.com). Look for us there, become a fan, and connect with us and other supporters. It's the quickest way to find the latest in photos, news and announcements.

Have you been to **our blog** yet? You can read more frequent updates from Dr. Katie Wolf. Meet more neighbors and patients, learn how Haiti is recovering from the earthquake, hear about project updates and more. Dr. Wolf sends updates to the office several times a month which are then posted on our blog. The blog can be found via links on our website at www.FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org, or directly at <http://friendsforhealthinhaiti.wordpress.com>



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