

January 2010

Dear Haitian Hearts Friends,

Haitian Hearts thanks you for the tremendous financial support you have given the Haitian people following the earthquake that destroyed Port-au-Prince two weeks ago.

We have made or received hundreds of phone calls and e mails to and from Haitian Hearts patients, their families, and their friends during the last 14 days.

We have heard from Katia, Caleb, Suze, Henri, Mirterlande, Frandy, Jenny, Katina, Marie, Rodolphe, and Nadia. Most of them lost their homes, relatives, and friends, and almost all of their possessions, including their heart medications. But none of them were physically hurt by the quake. It is very sad and sobering to listen to their desperate voices from the streets of Port-au-Prince. Most are living on the streets. They describe lack of clean water and food. There is no infrastructure that is working well. There is no sewage system in Port-au-Prince.



Katina's father and family fled to the countryside in southern Haiti to live with relatives who have a garden. Katina's father explained to me that he escaped the earthquake "with only his head".

Mirterland's sister Carminne called today and she is living in Liancourt, a village in Haiti's central plateau.

Jenny, a thirty year old girl who needs repeat heart surgery, is living in a car body parked in her yard near her damaged home.

Suze, Henri, Frandy, Marie, and their families are living on the streets of Port-au-Prince.

Maria has been able to wire money via Western Union from Haitian Hearts to almost all of the people mentioned above. Western Union is not charging any fee for our Haitian friends to obtain their money in Haiti.

Haitian Hearts supporters have allowed us to do this and the people and their families mentioned above who lost almost everything are benefiting right now.

Unfortunately, we have lost some Haitian Hearts patients.

We were working on getting Valerie, a six year old girl, accepted to a medical center in the United States for repair of a hole in her heart (atrial septal defect). Valerie, her twin sister, and her mother were all killed in the earthquake. Her recent video echocardiogram sits on the floor of our living room. It is hard to look at it.

Dieula was an eight year old girl that I examined for the first time in 2006. She had a ventricular septal defect and active tuberculosis. We treated the tuberculosis in Haiti and another group was successful getting her accepted into a large pediatric medical center for heart surgery. Dieula had the surgery in 2007 and returned to Haiti.



When the earthquake struck Port-au-Prince, Dieula was killed. Her seven siblings and mother survived.

Several days ago a six year old Haitian Hearts patient that I first examined five years ago was formally accepted for surgery in California. Her name is Widnerlande. She has a ventricular septal defect also. She and her mother Magalene live about three hours by car north of Port-au-Prince. We have been unable to contact Magalene since the earthquake, but we will continue to look for them until we get an answer.

Medjina is the last Haitian Hearts patient that we brought for heart surgery. Medjina arrived in the States in December and is scheduled for mitral valve replacement this spring. Medjina's mother gave the ok for surgery two days before the earthquake and has not been heard from since. If we do find out Medjina's mother status, we will let you know on this site.

As you are following in the news, the majority of search and rescue teams are done with their work. Now Haiti has entered another stage of disaster medicine in Haiti.

This stage will be just as horrific if not more so than the first stage. Infections due to trauma, surgery, and dirty water will be rampant. Haitian mothers will not be able to get their kids medical help quickly due to the Haiti's deficient infrastructure which even became more impossible two weeks ago. Lack of good shelter and sewage systems will cause more morbidity and mortality.

People suffering diseases of tuberculosis and AIDS will go without treatment which will hurt them and possibly others around them.

Many more orphans in Haiti need help right now. And BEFORE the earthquake there was an estimated 300,000 orphans in Haiti.

And what about the psychological help that hundreds of thousands of Haitians need that have survived this disaster? And there will be significant burn out and severe stress for the relief teams that enter Haiti to help out.

Unfortunately both national and international corruption will slow down the aid to the people that need it most. Fuel prices have already been elevated.

The funds that are donated to Haiti need to filter up and not down. There are hundreds of thousands of young men and women that can and would rebuild their country if they were paid fairly and could provide basics for their families. During the last 29 years I have seen Haitians do unbelievable physical labor, and I have no doubt they could rebuild Haiti with their bare hands. The work force is in Haiti right now. Why not use them?

Poor Haitians have had problems for centuries. True justice for the majority of people in Haiti, to enable a basic standard of living, simply does not exist.

Haiti will not be fixed quickly. It will take decades of intense work at every level. But it can improve significantly if the national and international will is there.

Haitian Hearts will do the same work this year that we have been doing for the last 15 years. We will continue to work in hospitals and clinics with Haitian doctors and nurses seeing whoever comes in.

When a young heart patient comes along, we will do our best to examine, diagnose, treat, and determine if the patient is a surgical candidate. And if the patient is operable, we will attempt to find medical centers in the United States or other countries, to accept the child and perform the surgery.



Jenny, Henri, and Rodolphe all had heart surgery about 10 years ago and all three need heart surgery again. We have their exams and echocardiograms done. They sit on our living room floor too, reminding us to work hard. We will continue to search for medical centers to accept them.

In summary, Haitian Hearts work will be challenging in 2010.

The world has now seen the courage of the Haitian people. And from our personal experience we know our Haitian Hearts patients will not give up. And they won't let us give up either.

Sincerely,
John and Maria

www.livefromhaiti.blogspot.com

www.dyinginhaiti.blogspot.com