



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](http://FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org)

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## IN THEIR OWN WORDS – MESSAGES FROM OUR VISITORS

This issue of our newsletter is devoted to stories from our visitors – those people who have left their own comfort zone to come assist us with our work in Haiti. They've left the comforts of 24/7 electricity and running water to come work in our little tin-roofed clinic and live in our partially constructed home. Some have come for the first time, some have been here before, but Haiti has left its unique mark on each of their hearts and souls.



Newly whitewashed clinic

The poverty of Haiti, while overwhelming for many, can be a catalyst for reflection on one's own life, as one ponders the things that truly give life meaning and importance. Things like faith, family, friends and career. As you read their words, perhaps they will cause you to reflect on ways that you can be used in this world to help ease the burdens of poverty, illness, and injustice.

## FROM THE PEACE CORPS TO BALTIMORE TO HAITI

*Christy Jele was one of 7 students from Johns Hopkins School of Nursing who visited Haiti in December, 2008. Most of them were former Peace Corps Volunteers. They took a week after exams to help Dr. Wolf and Cherie Severe at the clinic in Gatineau and at the house in Jérémie.*

On Dec 12, 2008, as we disembarked from the small prop plane onto the gravel tarmac in humid Jérémie, Haiti, I think each of us had the same thoughts running through our heads, "Wow, it kind of feels like I'm home and I've never even been to Haiti! I can't wait to see what the people are like, to see what ails them and how I can help in a small way."

I was one of a group of seven from the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing. Most of us were returned Peace Corps volunteers, yearning to get back to a sense of community and adventure. We had decided to independently fundraise traveling expenses, gather medical and construction supplies, and volunteer our time for a chance to go abroad and see what it's like to work in the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

We spent a week with Dr. Wolf and Cherie doing various odd jobs at their home in Jérémie and at the clinic in Gatineau. Our tasks ranged from whitewashing the clinic and painting benches to filling individual bags full of ibuprofen and vitamins and writing instructions in Creole; from painting new signs for the clinic to taking blood pressures and doing finger pricks for malaria and HIV tests.

## FROM THE PEACE CORPS (CONT.)

While these were all worthwhile tasks, tasks that we had freely volunteered to do, I think, as a group, we were more inspired by the goals of FHH, namely striving to improve health through outreach and education that promotes ownership and involvement of the community. We got to watch these goals in practice by Dr. Wolf and Cherlie in their daily interactions with the members of the communities they serve. The clinic experience truly was amazing. To watch as the clinic opened for the day, to listen as Cherlie and Dr. Wolf gave their opening speech about how the clinic is of the community and for the community, to watch the patients and know that they felt a sense of responsibility for paying their bills and returning for future treatment because someone trusted them and is caring for them and wants them to live healthier lives, was profound.

The compassion of Dr. Wolf and Cherlie as they worked was a true inspiration. Each of us has worked before in a developing country and we can appreciate the effort it takes to do such work and we can also appreciate the need for sustainable ventures. And while we left the States with the sole intention of making a difference in Haiti, we each left Haiti with a renewed inspiration, compassion and having gained a refined perspective about why we are going into the nursing profession.

-Christy Jele



Seven Johns Hopkins nursing students enjoy a drink of fresh coconut water

## HOME CHURCH MEMBERS HELP OUT

*Megan Caley, her mother Janet Rubenstein, Robin DeGutis and retired carpenter William Voorhees visited Haiti in January, 2008 to help with carpentry work at Katie and Cherlie's house in Jérémie. They are members of Kingston Presbyterian Church in Kingston, NJ, Katie Wolf's home church. They, and others from the church also made a visit to Haiti in October, 2007.*

Haitians are quite a resilient people. Each time I've visited Haiti, I've been amazed at their stability of spirit and toughness of attitude. Meeting the patients who come to the Gatineau clinic and hearing their stories always sheds profound light on my understanding of the plight of the rural peasantry. This January, I met a man from Leon who had come to the clinic with his wife. They arrived in Gatineau after walking for about four hours. (Truth be told, Haitians are no strangers to traveling great distances for health care: there are about thirty thousand people who could be served by the Gatineau health center that are within a four-hour walk, and for the people of Gatineau, it would be a six- to eight-hour walk to the nearest hospital down the mountain in the town of Jérémie.) When he told Dr. Katie Wolf the name of his village, she seemed a bit surprised, asking, "Have you been to the clinic in your community?" He replied that although there was, indeed, a health center in his village, he had heard such great things about the clinic in Gatineau that he did not even want to bother with the one closer to home. So, this man decided it would be well worth it to take an eight-hour round trip—as opposed to a twenty-minute one—in order to visit the clinic he had heard so much about. In fact, "word of mouth" is the primary way that Dr. Wolf and Ms. Cherlie Sévère, RN, publicize their health center, and word seems to be spreading quickly through the mountain communities. Each time they hold clinic (twice per week), about two-thirds of the visitors present are first-time patients, and the remaining third are loyal, familiar faces dedicated to promoting this resource in their community, repeating openly and often, "This is my clinic. This clinic is here for *me*."

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# MISSIONARY KID RETURNS TO THE COUNTRY OF HER BIRTH

*Pamela Adams was a "missionary kid", born and raised in Haiti as the daughter of Worldteam missionaries Pastor Don and Evelyn Adams. Don supervised construction of Hopital Lumiere, the protestant mission hospital that Dr. Katie and Cherlie worked at previously in Bonne Fin, Haiti. She and friend Sandra Washburn competed in the River Rat Race on Miller's River, MA, in April, 2007 to help raise money for Friends for Health in Haiti. She visited Haiti with Sandra and Elizabeth Mueller in July, 2008.*



Pam Adams (R) with friends Sandra (L) and Elizabeth (center)

The last time I was personally connected to the birthing of a clinic/hospital in Haiti, I was a toddler running amuck through the construction site of the hospital in Bonne Fin, and my missionary father was the project manager.

It was through the hospital ties at Bonne Fin that my friendship with Katie Wolf and Cherlie Sévère was founded. As I grew up, I watched and pondered upon Katie's love and commitment to her patients and to the Haitian community. No matter how tired or sick she was, she pushed through it and rose to answer her calling. This touched and remained with me through my childhood and into my adult life.

When I learned of Katie's endeavor to start this medical project in Gatineau, it came as no surprise to me.

Her compassion for the health and well being of the Haitian community has been an integral part of her life for as long as I can remember. And what a treasure and blessing for Katie to have nurse Cherlie by her side to assist in this project! Cherlie is a powerhouse of knowledge, skill and enthusiasm – to mention a few of her assets.

It has been exciting for me to be a small part of this project. From that first fundraising day I sat cramped in a canoe, fighting to complete the River Rat Race in freezing New England weather, to the moment I stepped off the little plane in Jérémie, Haiti, I have been bursting with happiness that Katie and Cherlie are bringing medical attention and the love of Christ to a community so desperately in need.

As I hiked through the hills surrounding the Gatineau clinic site in the hot July sun with my culturally shocked

American friends, it was a blessing for me to translate for them the comments from various people we encountered. Many stated that they had heard through the grapevine many good things about the clinic and the doctor there. One woman told me she was going to see the doctor because she had heard that the doctor's medicine was good and worked to help cure illnesses.

My favorite memory of all, however, was when we were jarring our way back down the rugged mountain, this beautiful little girl came running out to the side of the road, calling out to us. We stopped and chatted with her and her mother and all I could see was this child's adoring smile as she spoke with Katie and Cherlie. She wasn't always so energetic and happy, they told me, because months before she was incredibly ill with malaria. However, because of the good treatment she received at the Gatineau clinic, this little girl was now strong and vibrant again, asking shyly for the baby doll that she had been promised.

The ministry of Dr. Katie and Cherlie is one of dedication and hope. There is hope for a better day, hope for better facilities, and hope for the healing hand of God through the gift of medical talent, to touch lives far and wide.

- Pamela Adams

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## Home Church Member...

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Many of those who have experienced the care and attention of Dr. Wolf and Ms. Sévère share this sense of ownership for the health center. Not only are they treated with dignity and respect, with care being taken to explain the causes and effects of individual illnesses, how the medications will help, and how they are to be taken correctly, but the caregivers also take pains to go over how to prevent these illnesses in the future, and address unhealthy lifestyle habits like eating poorly, smoking tobacco, and drinking whiskey.

Another way Dr. Wolf and Ms. Sévère have inspired loyalty among those they serve is through the extended payment plan: patients pay what they can, when they can. The patients are told, "We want you to go home and get better, and when you are healthy and strong enough to work again, then you can make some money and come back and pay your debt." And they do. So they are instilled with a real sense of responsibility, ownership, and pride.

-Megan Caley

# COLLEGE STUDENTS OFFER ASSISTANCE

*Becca Mahn, the daughter of Milwaukee cardiologist Thomas Mahn, is a sophomore at UW-Madison. She visited Haiti with her father in January, 2008 and with a college classmate, Becky Wayman, in January, 2009.*

In January, 2008, during my freshman year at UW-Madison, I traveled down to Haiti with my cardiologist father, Tom. He knew Katie from the time she spent at St. Joseph's Hospital in Milwaukee and had heard about some of the wonderful things Friends for Health in Haiti was doing. After a whirlwind of clinic visits, taking us all over the southwest peninsula, I returned to the States, knowing I wanted to travel back to Haiti.

Taking advantage of a long winter break, a friend and I headed back down this past January. This time, traveling without the "specialiste cardiologue", we had less reason to trek through the mountains to far off clinics, so we spent more time in Jeremie. It was great to get to know the community better, meet the neighbors and learn about the lives unique to an inhabitant of Jeremie. There is always plenty going on downtown; I could spend hours walking through the streets. In a matter of days we met dozens of Haitians, from storeowners to pastors, as well as a handful of internationals working on long-term projects.



Becca and Becky with Haitian friends

We also spent much of our time organizing the ever-growing, transportable pharmacy for Centre de Santé Gatineau. Although the physical building hasn't grown at all, the clinic has certainly permeated the community in many ways. Katie has become quite skilled at navigating the degraded mountain road to the clinic, yet the journey lasts longer than ever because of all the impromptu conversations with new friends along the way. At the personal level, Katie and Cherlie's

vision for community health is coming to fruition. I was floored by the increase in the number of patients being seen since my last visit. Paging through the pharmacy records, I came across clinic days logging upwards of forty patients in one day! Fueled by granola bars and lemonade, Katie and Cherlie work straight through the day into night if needed. It will be such a blessing when they can remain up there after a long day- not to mention the tranquil, mountainous scenery they'll have at their door!

Staying in the home of Katie and Cherlie is always such a joy. Oftentimes I forgot that I was there to try to help them because everyone in the house served us so diligently. Once again, the time ended too quickly. However, I am all the more excited to see what further growth and change occurs before my next visit.

-Becca Mahn

Friends For Health  
I N H A I T I



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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](mailto:friendsforhealth@gmail.com).

## OVER 230 GATHER AT *HOPE FOR HAITI*

By Tracy Bernhardt

The historic Wisconsin Club in Milwaukee, Wisconsin was the scene of ***Hope for Haiti***, the first-ever fundraising banquet to benefit Friends for Health in Haiti on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup>. Over 230 guests joined Founder and Director Dr. Catherine Wolf and members of the Board of Directors to celebrate the mission of Friends for Health in Haiti to improve health and change lives in Haiti.

Dr. Wolf addressed guests by first sharing a motivation behind her ministry in Haiti, "If you love the Lord, you love His people." She then described the firm foundation in medical work that the organization has already established in Gattineau, Haiti, and her hope to expand those efforts. The goal is to build an outpatient clinic building and a small staff house, followed by a maternity center as funds become available. Providing high quality primary health care and maternity services will significantly impact infant, child and maternal mortality in this area of Haiti.

The goal of the event was to raise awareness and financial support for the work of Friends for Health in Haiti. A committee of eight members came together last August and volunteered their time over several months to coordinate the first-ever banquet. All involved with the planning were thrilled at the outpouring of support for the event, resulting in attendance beyond expectation and net dollars raised of over \$33,000 for the organization.

Committee member Carla Von Roenn's comments reflected the excitement of the evening, "After months of planning and organizing it was very rewarding to have such great attendance at our first-time event and receive such positive feedback. It was a gratifying experience to know that I could help the people of Haiti in some way."



Dr. Wolf addresses guests



Committee member Jeanine Heuer, Board of Directors President Dr. Dale Heuer, speaker Dr. Mildred Olivier and Dr. Oswald Olivier



Members of the Rodrian Family getting ready to enjoy dinner



## Hope for Haiti, continued...



Musicians from Ko-Thi Dance Company

The event featured the music of the Ko-Thi Dance Company, as well as a live and silent auction. The unique "Haitian Market" allowed guests to purchase a wide variety of original arts, crafts, and products straight from the markets of Port-au-Prince.

The event was a great success for the organization thanks in large part to the generous sponsorship of Dale and Jeanine Heuer, firstedge Solutions, Greg and Carla Von Roenn, the Blackwell Family, and Rogers Memorial Hospital, along with 13 table sponsors, 11 table captains, and many individuals who donated their time, talent, and treasure.

Arriving from rural Haiti only days before the event, Wolf later commented about the event "It was amazing to see all those people there and their excitement was humbling to me."

Check out [www.FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org](http://www.FriendsForHealthInHaiti.org) to view photos from the banquet and a PowerPoint presentation illustrating the needs of Haiti that preceded Dr. Wolf's talk. If you are interested in hosting a fundraiser for Friends For Health in Haiti in your area, please contact us at [FriendsForHealth@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsForHealth@gmail.com) or (262) 227-9581.



Guests browse the Silent Auction and Haitian Market



The Mahn family and their guests enjoying the evening. Read Becca Mahn's article about her experience in Haiti on Page 4 of this newsletter.