

# High Mountain



Newsletter of Haiti Mission Connection, Inc.

Fall 2011

## Seeing Haiti through New Eyes

*Editors note: Amy McTeague was a traveler with HMCI. This is her reflection of her first trip to Haiti.*

### Amy McTeague

When people ask me “So, how was Haiti?”, I find myself having a hard time trying to communicate it. There was so much to see, so much to do, and so much to take in, that only being there could people begin to understand how it was. My first response is always “Amazing! The people of Haiti captured my heart and I can’t wait to get the opportunity to get back and give more”. Haiti was able to give to me way more that I can ever repay. It is an amazing country full of hope and heartache, beauty and filth, and most of all potential. It is a country still with so much despair. People still living in tent cities, living in serious poverty, people forced to wash in the same water they drink, people living with the threat of cholera and other disease, streets littered in trash, terrible roads and yet they are smiling and willing to help out one another. This is what gave me a sense of hope and a will to do everything I could to help them out. They are smiling and laughing while living life in the worst conditions imaginable.

While I was there, I didn’t have a specialized field (Nurse, Doctor, Handyman) so I felt a little lost in the beginning. What was my purpose going to serve? I wanted to be able to do it all. The people drew me in the minute I came

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*Schoolgirl from Bodarie; Note all photos are courtesy of Amy McTeague*

## CHECK OUT OUR REVAMPED WEBSITE!

[WWW.HAITI MISSION CONNECTION.ORG](http://WWW.HAITI MISSION CONNECTION.ORG)

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### INFORMATIONAL MEETING AND DISCUSSION

PLACE: ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHURCH

904 EAST LAKE AVE, PEORIA HEIGHTS, IL

TIME: TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2011 7:00PM

CALL SEAN KERWIN FOR MORE INFORMATION (217) 622-4504

#### ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE BREAKFAST

PLACE: 904 EAST LAKE AVE, PEORIA HEIGHTS, IL

TIME: NOVEMBER 20<sup>TH</sup> AFTER ALL MASSES EXCEPT 11:00 AM

HAITI MISSION CONNECTION WILL HOST A BREAKFAST TO BENEFIT OUR MISSION. WE WILL BE SELLING ITEMS FROM OUR HAITI STORE, COOP BOUGHT **HAITIAN COFFEE, AND VANILLA**

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP PLEASE CALL SEAN KERWIN AT (217) 622-4504

### Travel to Haiti?

Haiti Mission Connection will be going to Bodarie on a mission in late January. The date is dependent on the schedules of the diocese meetings and the parish priest so we will not have an exact date for a couple of months.

If you are thinking of a journey to Haiti, consider coming with us. There is an opportunity for daily Mass in the parish church. There is plenty of time for meditation in the evenings and for stargazing at night.. Walks through the village will introduce you to a much different and simpler way of life. You will help us in our work in the village----no expertise required. But tell us if you have some specific skill.

All volunteers raise their own money for airfare and travel expenses---approximately \$1200. HMC will take care of all the arrangements for you. Please call Martha at 674-4500 for more information.

If anyone is interested in a late summer trip 2012, we would like to hear from you. Contact Sean Kerwin at 217-622-4504

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in contact with them, and I wanted to be able to do everything to make life better for them. The only skill I had with me was myself and my camera. While I immediately wished I had some medical training or other skills, but I soon realized that I could make a difference just being me. I was able to help where I was needed; I was able to stock medications, help in the medical clinic, distributing medications to patients, being a runner when needed, and simply giving a smile to those who needed it. It made me feel incredibly blessed to be working with such an incredible team from Haiti Mission Connection.

I was able to use my down time to go out in the village and photograph the beauty of the people of Haiti. I found out quickly how much they love the camera. Many have never seen what they look like and the excitement on their faces, the smiles, and squeals made my heart overflow. We did not need to speak the same language to communicate the excitement they had seeing life captured on film. I hope to get back and to be able to bring them the gift of photographs that they can treasure.

In such a short time, I was able to start developing relationships with so many children and their families. They have a way to make you feel so important, so appreciated and so loved in such a short amount of time. Anything you can do to help better their lives is such a gift. I feel so blessed to have been able to meet so many people that have made me dig deep into myself and realize it takes so little to have so much! It was so hard to say good bye to such an amazing place, a place that has changed my life forever, but it feels good to know I hope to be back and give all that I can.

After being home and having some time to reflect on the journey, my mind started filling with so many ideas and ways that we can help better Haiti as a country. I think it is going to take more than short missions, but the teachings from these missions that will make such a difference. I think with the talents of so many, we are able help teach the Haitians to farm rather than just provide food, we can train them to become doctors and nurses rather than just providing the medical care, we can teach them trades in school that can actually be used. This adding to their daily education would get them so much farther in life. Teaching them how to properly use the water sources they have to help them get the most of the water they have, and keeping it as clean and disease free as possible is something that needs to become a way of life. I think we have an amazing start in helping the people of Haiti turn their country and their lives around. It is now my mission to spread the word to help educate people I know about life in Haiti. I think the more people that we can get to help support them even on the smallest level is the biggest gift we can give.

I feel so blessed to have had my eyes opened and my heart opened even more. I have started working towards finding more support to help back our journey and grow the missions to help get such a gem of a country on their feet. I feel blessed that I am able to share my story and can't wait to continue onto the next chapter.

## **Spring Fundraising Support**

Thank you to all those that supported our spring plant sale, wine tasting, and Moss Ave. sale! These three events brought in nearly \$3,000 for the people of Bodarie. These funds will cover nine months of the nurse's salary or eight months of medicines for the clinic, for example.

The spring plant sale was held in conjunction with the Uplands Neighborhood Sale on May 14. It was a cold and rainy day, but green thumb shoppers stopped to purchase sun and shade loving plants. HMCI offered a large variety of plants ranging from herbs to hosta to daylilies. Look for us next year on Maplewood Ave, as we always have something for everyone's yard.

The 2nd annual Wine Tasting to Benefit the People of Bodaire, Haiti was held on June 3 at Wine Country / French Toast in Peoria Heights. Fifty-five people came to Wine Country to taste an assortment of elegant wines, sample specialty cheeses, and socialize with friends. Twenty-seven people continued the fun by having dinner at French Toast. HMCI hopes to continue having this event each year in June, so mark your 2012 calendars now for the first Friday of June!

The Moss Ave. Sale was held on June 11, and HMCI was on the corner of Moss and Copper selling 'Singing Rooster' Haitian coffee. This coffee is purchased from a Haitian co-op and it is delicious! Coffee drinkers flocked to our table to support their morning habit and HMCI's projects. Several people asked for Haitian vanilla, which we did not have at the time, but we have hundreds of bottles now! If you are looking for vanilla, please contact Emily Kerwin at 217-622-4222 or [e.detro@comcast.net](mailto:e.detro@comcast.net).



## Want to Help Haiti Out?

*Here are some ways you can help us!*

### Medical Supplies and Containers

Haiti Mission Connection would like your empty Country Time lemonade (or similar) containers. The sturdy plastic bottles with the screw caps are ideal for transporting vitamins on our trips to Haiti. If anyone has medical supplies or containers to contribute please call Martha 674-4500.

### Prayer

People often ask what they can do to help us in our mission. One of our biggest requests is for prayer for our mission.

How else has a small organization sent a few volunteers into one of the most remote parts of Haiti? We have not had any serious illness, no automobile accidents [thanks to our drivers], and no injuries to ourselves or others in the 11 years we have been going to Haiti. We have been spared from danger during the years of political turmoil. In this good fortune, we see the grace of God.

We ask for your prayers again, as we try to discern the best way to carry out our mission, to bring aid to Bodarie, to make the best use of our time and resources in Haiti, to deal with the realities of life in Bodarie and Haiti.

### Volunteer

There are often small jobs that need to be done in preparation and fundraising for our mission trips. Most of them can be done in a small group or by an individual. Packing of medicines, consolidation of samples, removing items from cardboard, plastic packing, and organizing small fundraisers are a few of the things volunteers have done for us in the past.

If you have some time this fall, please let Martha know. She can be reached at 674-4500.

### Sewing

If you can sew simple things, we are always in need of eyeglass cases, which can be made of scraps and remnants of quilted cloth. We have patterns. If you have quilted material for us to use, or if you are willing to sew, please contact Martha at 674-4500.

### Money

The need for money persists. Out three key areas of service; education, medical, and sanitation all need funds to keep up the services they provide. Please

read below to see how money is used in each service area.

**Education:** Few parents can afford the books the children need. The school has books, thanks to a previous donor, which they lend to the children during the school year. However, school books in Haiti are only paperback and often do not survive more than a year or two due to the hard use and the torrential rains of the rainy season. The need for quality books is needed for quality education.

**Medical:** At the present we can send only a limited amount of money monthly for medicines. With sufficient income, we can increase the amount so that more people can be given treatment. Examples of how a little money can buy lots of medicine are the following:

- We can get prenatal vitamins which will help improve the health of the mother and unborn baby for 3cents apiece---as long as we buy in large quantities---like 15,000 for \$400
- We can get children's chewable vitamins with iron and iodine [both badly needed by the poorly nourished] for 2 cents apiece if we buy them in 25,000 for \$420.
- We can get iron tablets for 1 cent apiece

**Sanitation:** HMCI is currently piloting a new bio-sand water filter. The filter is made entirely in Haiti, employing Haitians, and can last for 30 years with proper care. The cost of the filters is around \$30. This can supply a family with clean water for dollar year for the life of the filter.



Please join our e-newsletter for more articles or go to our website [www.haitimissionconnection.org](http://www.haitimissionconnection.org) to find out more information about the work HMCI is doing in Bodarie, Haiti.

To join the e-newsletter email [hmcinewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:hmcinewsletter@gmail.com) and put subscribe in the subject line.



### **The Bad Luck, Good Luck Day**

*Liz Rickert*

The light in the clinic had already begun to fade when the young man was helped in by family members. He was limping, with a bloody rag wrapped around his ankle. Dr. Jumna propped his leg up to catch the remaining light and unwound the cloth. There had been an accident; an ax had slipped and gouged into the man's inside lower leg, opening a triangular chunk of flesh and cartilage. Dr. Jumna called for the lanterns and the assistance of our nurse and proceeded to repair the wound. I held a lantern and watched as the doctor explained the suturing process, teaching as she coaxed the damaged tissue back into place. On our way out of town a few days later we made a house call on our patient. He was following Doctor's orders and his prognosis was positive.

It was his good luck that we were there on his bad luck day. But should preserving life and limb depend upon luck? We don't think so, and that is why we are supporting a year round clinic in Bodarie and providing additional training to our nurse so that she can better treat what comes through the clinic door. Year after year we see people whose complaints can't be helped – the injury or infection was months or years earlier, and left untreated caused permanent damage. How hard it is for the hopeful patient to hear that nothing can be done. But with help available the “bad luck” of injury or illness does not have to become a lifetime of pain and disability. Our young man was blessed to have Dr. Jumna Patel in Bodarie on that fateful day, and very dramatically we saw what accessible health care can mean.

Our resolve to provide health care for Bodarie, even after the “good luck” team has flown home, grows stronger.

*Above:* Patients wait to be seen at the clinic.

*Right:* Dokté Nick is being checked out by health agent Jasmin Chery

### **My Time as Dokté (Doctor) Nick**

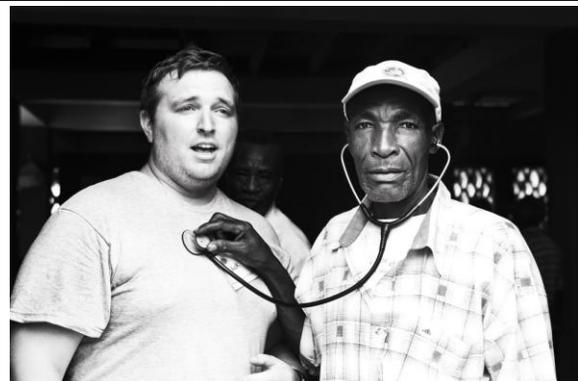
*Nick Nedza*

For the first time in the years that I've been traveling with HMC to Boadaire I was used as a clinician. I was thrilled to be given this tremendous opportunity. While normally I am about four years of medical school and many years of residency away from being a practicing doctor, I do play one in Haiti. In an effort to keep the patients Dr. Patel saw to the most serious, a triage system was developed. Thus, the Dokté Nick walking wounded station was born. As we know, most Haitians are happy having someone of light skin take even a few moments to evaluate them medically. I was ecstatic to fill this role.

With the help of Amy and either Emmanuel or Ausner I saw roughly 160 patients in the few days of the clinic. Most of the patients I saw have never seen a doctor outside of the week a year that HMC is in Bodaire, so I was glad to be able to provide that moment with a “doctor”. While the chief complaint may not have varied from patient to patient neither did their appreciation for what we do for them. All were very thankful that we took the time to treat them. In my line of work I have the unique opportunity to see the best and worst of humanity, rarely is it this good.

One of my favorite moments from the clinic was being able to teach the health agents auscultation of a blood pressure. This is one of the most basic skills that any medical personnel is taught. Yet when I instructed Mr. Jasmin Cherry and the other health agents it was as if I was giving them the secret of life. None of them wanted to leave before I demonstrated this skill to each of them. After I had shown each how to perform this skill they practiced for quite some time on each other, they couldn't get enough. When Mr. Cherry was asked to take blood pressures on the days for the clinic the incredible pride that he had being given this menial task is unmatched by anything I have seen in a long time.

It is the attitudes exemplified by Mr. Cherry wearing a stethoscope like a badge of honor, among countless others, that rejuvenates me each time I return from Bodaire. As always, I look forward to the next opportunity I am given to return and resurrect my role as Dokté Nick.



## Eye Clinic Report

*Dr. Martha Willi*

Report from the Eye Clinic, Bodarie, June 2011

The eye clinic functioned for 3 and ½ days in Bodarie. During this time I examined 122 patients. Many needed glasses for reading. Approximately 106 pairs of glasses were dispensed by the Haitian agents

24 people had cataracts. Several were referred for surgery. 16 people had glaucoma. They were begun on medicines and referred for follow-up examinations. I will re-examine them on the next visit to Bodarie

I saw people with a wide variety of conditions including eye infections, retinal detachment, corneal inflammation in a child, a woman with an orbital tumor, trachoma, retinal edema from injury and one person with a detached retina.

We had a repeat visit from a young man whom I had seen in 2009 with severe inflammation of both eyes after an injury to one eye. At that time I referred him to Port au Prince on an urgent basis. We gave his family money for transportation and consultation. He told us that he was robbed of the money and his father died suddenly and he never saw the doctor in Port au Prince. At this time he has no light perception in either eye. It was a very difficult to tell him there was nothing that modern ophthalmology could do for him and overwhelming for him to hear.

The Haitian Society of Ophthalmology has begun to communicate with visiting eye teams and is interested in providing follow up care to our patients. I regard this as an important step in developing some co-ordination of care with the Haitian doctors.

## June Trip Highlights

- Eye Clinic saw 122 patients in 3 and ½ days.
- 160 patients were seen by Nick Nedza at general complaints station.
- Dr. Patel saw and treated many serious injuries and ailments including a leg trauma, burn victim, and numerous babies and mothers.
- A water committee was established and goals were established between HMCI and the committee.
- A pilot program was discussed and Oberne from Helping Haitian Hands educated the committee on sanitation and bio-sand filters.
- We met the new pastor of St. Benoit, Fr. Elano Charles. We did not know at the time he was to be named the new pastor.
- Rectory and church were re-wired from generator.

