

May 24, 2010

HIM Haiti Earthquake Relief Update

It's hard to believe it's been almost a month since we posted an update and for that we apologize. This has been an extremely busy time in both our personal lives and in the various outreaches ongoing in Haiti. As planned, our family reunited in early May to take a trip together for Rotary International's District Conference in Kingston, Jamaica. It was a busy time for Caleb as taught at training sessions but relaxing for the family. While there, Caleb showed me several images from outreaches in the past month which focused on strengthening the fragile economic state of those in our community. First, HIM has distributed several large boxes of seed for area farmers to use to plant in their gardens. In our rural section of the country, everyone has some level of garden which they use to provide for their family. As the rainy season starts in earnest here on the central plateau, we want the donors from "The Seed Program" to know their gifts were gratefully received. Please remember that most of these area farmers struggle to feed their families anyway, and now have taken in thousands of extended family members who have escaped the rubble of Port au Prince to our community. These seeds are providing hope for the future.



Another outreach has taken place with the help of fellow Rotarian Joanna Bartrony who works with Sow a Seed. Caleb saw that she had received a number of small igloos/coolers in the transport of relief supplies. He suggested that the excess igloos be used to give to local townspeople to help them create a cash income by selling cold drinks. While the idea is very simple, it has helped a lot of area women greatly increase their income. These merchants will be held accountable to return a small portion of their revenue back to HIM staff in a few months and then continue the project. Some of the





recipients have proven to be very good salesman and are now creating competition for larger “restaurants”. Instead of drive-through, we now have “walk-through” cold drinks available in our community. Way to go, ladies!

We finally arrived back in Haiti on the morning of May 11. As to be expected, it was fairly chaotic as the main International Airport building remains unusable. We were taken to clear immigration and customs in a warehouse set up to receive the many international flights bringing in travelers. I was grateful to see our faithful staff members waiting in the ministry car to receive our family. Haiti definitely remains a place where you need to know where you are going and hopefully that you are meeting specific trusted contacts with whom to work.

A couple of things stuck out to me on the return trip “in”. As we finished a few errands near the airport businesses, we stopped by a gas station to pick up some sandwiches for the trip home and get fuel. As we waited for Caleb in the car, a young boy of probably 12 years started dusting the windows without being asked. Many youngsters make their “living” this way by picking up a few coins for passers-by. Anyone who lives in an impoverished overseas city knows this experience. When I got out of the car we started chatting. What was different post-earthquake was that he didn’t just ask me for a few coins, he wanted to go home with us! Looking at the blue tarped tent city across the street, I thought about what kind of desperation that must motivate this youngster to plead for a ride to “anywhere”. Our driver gave him some coins, and my daughters and I gave him a portion of our lunches that Caleb had just brought. As I shared with Caleb what the boy had said, he told me that even if we took him, he wouldn’t stay, which I believe is true. Still, this new level of cries for help was a striking difference to the previous 17 years I’ve lived in Haiti.

We then turned to go up and over two mountain ranges toward our home in Pignon. It took us 3.5 hours to travel the 90 miles and it was good to get back. As Caleb went out to the progress of different projects, I had fun reuniting with friends and family after our trip of 5 weeks. It was especially fun to see the kids at the camp who are working hard to finish the school year and remain joyous in spite of all that has gone on in their lives. It was good to see that they remain healthy for the most part and also to see the progress that has been done on improving their living spaces around the camp.

This week we have a group of volunteers from Rock Church of Indianapolis, IN who brought some master electricians and builders to re-wire the camp facilities. This will provide even better lighting for camp residents. Another team from ST. Mark’s Baptist Church of Little Rock, AR is here to build bunk beds and cabinets to fill up the new rooms recently completed. All of this work will be a blessing to all current and future campers. The camp refugees are enjoying having some new friends and co-workers here for the week. Another volunteer that is here for the whole summer is Pearlie Lubin of Dallas, TX at

present. Pearlie is a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate student who is doing an internship with Caleb this summer. Pearlie is of Haitian origin so already speaks fluent Kreyol and has a great interest in ministering to the young women at the camp and in the community. She has already made some great friends this week and will be serving in a variety of teaching and leadership capacities as the summer goes on.

Over the next month, several projects are moving forward, including refurbishing the Children's Home run by Hosean Int'l. The guest house top level was finally vacated (smile) by the Caleb Lucien family. This allowed major roofing repairs to be started this week. A group from Grace Immanuel Bible Church of Jupiter, FL is arriving next week to continuing re-wiring and re-painting work to prepare the home for the permanent re-settlement of the orphans/foster kids we're taking in post-earthquake.

All in all, it's been a busy two weeks and just promises to get busier as the summer and outreaches continue. Caleb flew to Orlando, FL this weekend to speak at a Haitian church revival service there and will return on Tuesday. In the next update, I'll include images of one of the schools and homes he is going to get rebuilt in the next few weeks in Port au Prince. Don't hesitate to write us for any questions.

Blessings from Haiti, Debbie for all

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