



SHARE CARE RAYJON

A Week in Haiti

Monique Dostaler-Maddison

This was not our first trip to Haiti but this time, like never before, we want to share our story. As most of you know, since the early eighties Glen (Dr. Maddison, Medical Advisor for RAYJON) has been going to Haiti yearly, working in the RAYJON funded clinics of St. Marc, assuring that the money that is so generously given to RAYJON reaches those we serve. In the past few years I have joined Glen on these trips and together we have experienced the rewards of medical mission work. Over the years, we have increased our knowledge of the diseases seen in Haiti and how best to treat these with limited resources. Our ability to communicate in Creole has also, albeit slowly, improved. Every visit deepened our love for Haiti and its people. We always looked forward to our next trip. But our hearts longed for more. We knew that the plight of those in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, was much worse than that of the St. Marc area. Had our years of work in St. Marc been preparing us for the greater challenge of joining a medical team that provides medical care to the slums of Port-au-Prince?

We had heard of Père Damien Hospital, a children’s hospital in Port-au-Prince. We then heard about Father Rick Frechette. Father Rick came to Haiti in the mid 80's as a young priest to work in homes for abandoned children. He apparently became so frustrated with attempts to get medical help for the children under his care that he returned to America to study medicine and received his medical degree in 1999. Since then he has been busy both as a priest and physician leading a medical team that travels daily from Père Damien hospital to the slums of Port-au-Prince. Could we be part of that medical team?

It all became possible through the efforts of a young Canadian, Elizabeth Marhone, who is herself doing mission work in Port-au-Prince. Elizabeth, who had worked with Father Rick, was able to make it all happen.

On Monday morning, January 24th, 2005 we arrived at Père Damien Hospital. Elizabeth introduced us to Father Rick, this baby-faced 50-year old man with a warm smile and laughing eyes. He was rushing out of the hospital chapel, his mass vestments trailing behind him and soon returned wearing jeans and stethoscope. We loaded up the truck and headed for our first day. It was to be in Mother Theresa’s Missionary of Charity Clinic and Home for the Dying in Pele. Travel from

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Drs. Monique and Glen at Wharf Jeremy

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partnerships through education,
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CIDA Support

RAYJON is pleased to acknowledge the role that the **Canadian International Development Agency** (CIDA) has played in support of the St. Marc Community Development Project, HAITI. CIDA has matched funds for the project since 1989.



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Coming Events

The annual St. Mary's Golf Tournament

Saturday, May 28th at River Valley Golf Club near St. Mary's
Register at 1:30pm. 'Shotgun' start at 2pm, in foursomes
\$45 per person for 9 holes & steak dinner
Buy Tickets in advance from Valerie Tkaczuk 519-225-3239
Come and enjoy an exhilarating and fun day.
2005 RAYJON trip participants most welcome!

Corunna Craft Fair Sunday, May 29th 10am - 5pm

at the Corunna Athletic Park
Come & visit the RAYJON booth & see the latest crafts
from Haiti & the D.R. Vanilla also available
Call Dianne McKillican for information at 862-1963

Annual RAYJON Barbecue

Friday, June 17th at 6pm
at Dave Woods & Linda McDonald's house, 932 Lakeshore Rd.
Park on Westwood and go through gate at the end of the cul-de-sac.
Bring a salad or desert to share, lawn chairs & your own drink.
Hamburgers & sausages will be provided.
Everyone welcome
2005 RAYJON trip participants particularly welcome!

Annual RAYJON Eyeglass Workshop

Monday, June 27th - Wednesday, June 29th inclusive
at Lambton Mall, Sarnia.
If you would like to volunteer at the workshop,
call Eileen Zinn at 336-8277

Condolences to members of the staff at the Urban Development project in Cap Haitien who have lost love ones in the past year: Carol, the intake person, who lost 2 nephews to the violence after the most recent coup. Madame Eves Rose, the activity director, whose son died suddenly in January. Marie Rose, the commerce program director, whose father died in February.

Congratulations & birthday wishes to Elizabeth Ludanyi who celebrated her 80th birthday in April.

Congratulations & birthday wishes to Fr. Tom, one of RAYJON's spiritual directors, who celebrated his 75th birthday in April.

Congratulations to Bro. Anthony, one of RAYJON's spiritual directors, and Bro. Patrick who celebrated in April the 50th anniversary of their community being in Canada.

Condolences to Tom & Joanne Atkinson on the death of Tom's sister, Margaret Johnson, in April.

the hospital to the slums involved at least an hour of jostling through the crowded, unkempt roads of Port-au-Prince. On these daily drives we became acquainted with this team of miracle workers. There was Doctor Desir, a Haitian born and trained doctor who had been with Father Rick for almost 10 years. He is a paediatrician by training, however his work in the homes for the dying saw him dealing with every age and every disease. Sister Philomena, one of the founders of the outreach clinics is an 80-year old nun with the wit and energy of a twenty year old who still today continues to work alongside Father Rick. We met Kyra, a young nurse from Ottawa, who every year joins Father Rick's team for three to four months. And then there were 4-5 other Haitian men who performed various functions completing the team.

You know you are entering Cité Soleil by the narrow roads, the mud, the skeletal dogs and the sweaty putrid smell. The home for the dying in Pele was situated within a gated area. This home, staffed by the Brothers of Charity, shelters approximately 100 men dying from AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and cancer. As we approached the building, we saw approximately 50 patients waiting to be seen in clinic. Many, too ill to sit, were lying on the ground or on benches. It was quickly decided that Dr. Desir would see the emergencies,



Fr./Dr. Rick, Sr. Philomena and Dr. Desir

Father Rick would see the clinic patients, and Glen and I would see the in-patients whose condition had worsened since the team's last visit. Our hospital work at Bluewater Health in no way prepared us for these medical rounds!

There were 4 - 5 large rooms each with rows of cots, approximately 25 men in each room. Where to begin! As we saw the ones on our list, we would be called by others to help them out. Let me tell you of a case that touched our hearts that day. It was a 10-year old boy who was sitting on his cot holding an empty juice container between his legs. His mother who was at his side told us that her son had been shot in the lower back several months before. The bullet still in his spine had damaged the spinal cord. He could no longer move or feel his legs. But most distressing to him was that he was unable to control his urine and not wanting to wet himself would hold this plastic bottle day and night. When we examined this boy we found him to have a large pressure ulcer involving almost his entire back. Ulcers of such depth and severity are rarely seen in Canada. These can be prevented with good nutrition and good nursing care...rare commodities in Haiti. This child, who will never leave hospital, is probably still today holding his bottle.

The day ended at 3 o'clock when all the staff met to eat rice and beans. As Sister Philomena reminded us, "rice and beans today, beans and rice tomorrow". The return trip was again rich with stories. The slums of Haiti are known to be areas of great political unrest and so insecure that other missions, including Doctors Without Borders, dare not enter. But because Father Rick was known and respected by all, we felt safe. He was the one that was often called on to mediate when problems arose between different street gangs.

The next day, we traveled to another area called Sans Fil, a home for dying women. This is a larger hospital, run by Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity, young American or East Indian women in their twenties or thirties, radiant of faith and committed to their calling of caring for the dying. One felt surrounded by dozens of Mother Teresa's, her presence tangible. Introductions quickly done, Glen was to work with Father Rick on the ground floor, I was to work with Dr. Desir on the second floor. Once upstairs, the sister in charge handed me a list of patients to see. This list included patients who had been brought in since the team's last visit, as well as the in-patients whose conditions had changed. The set-up was similar to the other home, large rooms with 30 - 40 women per room. Again, in Sans Fil we saw cases unparalleled in Canada. We saw in one day more TB than we will ever see in our lifetime of practice in Canada. TB in Canada is rare but

does occur in AIDS patients, the poor, and the homeless. In the slums of Port-au-Prince, TB is rampant. I saw one such victim as my first patient that day. She was a young woman who lay in a corner cot, underweight even by Haitian standards, too weak to sit up, and coughing into a bucket that was already half full of bloody sputum. The Sisters reported that this woman had been brought to the hospital the day before. Tests had already been done confirming TB, and treatment had been started. What amazing work is being done in such primitive conditions: to have already confirmed TB by examining the sputum under the microscope. Improperly treated, TB is lethal, attacking first the lungs then many other organs. Fortunately, there are effective and inexpensive drugs used to treat TB, and these are available in Haiti, but they must be given over the course of several months. Unfortunately, the patients will feel better long before they are cured, and often stop treatment. Hopefully this patient will remain on medications and be cured.

Many cases seen in Sans Fil were women with terminal cancer. It all seemed so unfair...to live in poverty, amidst political violence and natural disasters to then acquire cancer. Our work in palliative care in Sarnia made us acutely aware of how little is available in Haiti to relieve the suffering of dying. My heart still aches as I remember one young woman in her early twenties who was 5 months pregnant and dying of advanced liver cancer. I can still see her brother by her side wiping her tears and sweat as she moaned in pain. Mother and baby died one month after we left Haiti.

The following day our team headed for Wharf Jeremy. We were warned that this area of the slums was worse than Cité Soleil, -- and it was ... more crowded, more mud, more stench. Yet as we traveled through the narrow roads, the locals welcomed our arrival, children cheering, adults waving. Again at Wharf Jeremy our hearts were to be torn. As we entered the "clinic" with its tin roof and dirt floor we found a young man who was dying of AIDS on a cot. By his side were his two children ages 6 and 8. Father and children were crying. Every few minutes the young father would undo his embrace and painfully spit into a bucket by his side. We were told that this young man, who lived in Wharf Jeremy had been the one to set up Father Rick's clinic. It had been through his efforts that the team had the humble hut to work in. We were told that he had been in Pele, the Brothers' hospital for several weeks, but had asked to return to the slum to die. His children were now living in the orphanage and as if Fr. Rick did not have enough to occupy his time, he had made a special effort to bring them down to say good-bye to their father for the last time. We saw the horror of AIDS in Haiti on those children's faces that day.

The next day, Thursday, we were returning to Pele. We were anxious to reassess the patients we had seen two days earlier. Were they still alive or had they had been given the only relief from suffering and pain known to the Haitian ... death? On arriving in Pele, the team immediately went to a small hut in the back of the hospital. There lay 4 bodies of patients who had died the previous night. They had been placed side by side, covered with a cloth on which had been laid a few wild flowers. We surrounded the bodies and Father Rick led us in prayer. As never before, we experienced the blending of our faith and our profession. Little did we know that later that day Father Rick and Glen would again be praying over bodies ... but under very different circumstances. Around noon that day Father received a phone call informing him that there were bodies that had been found in the slum, close to our clinic. It was said that as many as twelve men had been shot the previous day and the rumour was that the police were responsible for the killings. Since no one wanted to remove these bodies, Father Rick, as he had done many times in the past, was asked to collect and dispose of them. The men collected body bags and headed out. After a quick search, three young men, their bodies beaten, faces unrecognizable from the bullets to the head were found lying face down in a dump. Father Rick, Glen and the other men, under the glaring sun, surrounded the bodies as Father prayed denouncing man's inhumanity to man and the need to respect all life. As pigs roamed around and little children stared, rubber gloves were passed around and no one spoke as the mangled bodies were placed in bags. The men returned, all of them pale and quiet. We slept poorly that night. The dogs and roosters were not to blame.

Our final day in Haiti began with mass at 0700. Father Rick spoke of the power of faith and how it alone can ease our fear and give hope where there is so much darkness. We witnessed that faith in the workers of Père Damien hospital but most of all in Father Rick. We realize that this time in Haiti we have experienced something exceptional. We will return

“Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils. And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.”
Nelson Mandela

Student Nurse's Trip to the Dominican Republic - March 2005

Marilyn Couture

This trip was highly successful due to an amazing group of extremely dedicated and committed individuals - 5 practical nursing students from Lambton College, 2 BScN students from the University of Windsor, 6 RNs and the rest from our community, including 3 Lambton College faculty. As is previous years, we set up nursing clinics in Bateys (sugar cane plantations) and in barrios (poor neighbourhoods surrounding the city of Bani) We assessed and treated close to 1000 people. Our group was amazed at the people's determination and strength as they struggle with their day to day survival. One highlight of the trip was our gift of music to the people. Cathy Halshall, with her guitar, led us in song wherever we went - to the Old Age Home, the Leper Hospital and the orphanage. We soon found that music is a universal language, even in the midst of despair. "The trip was a memorable experience that made me never want to leave. A beautiful country full of beautiful people that touched me in many ways." *Vickie*

"I believe that Dominican people are much richer than we will ever

know. They have unconditional love for each other and for visitors to their homeland. I only wish I could give them what they need the most ... healthcare, food, clean water, and better living conditions." *Debbie*

"The people of the Dominican gave of themselves: their warmth, kindness and smiles were so uplifting in a world so torn with hate and violence. A wonderful example of how God's love and spirit can be shared." *Cathy*



Nursing student Wesley Green in the D. R.

Tèt Ansamn – heads together!

At the beginning of Lent, the students at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Sarnia were given a slide presentation on RAYJON and the Community Development Project in St. Marc, Haiti. They heard how the people in Haiti, especially the women, are making incredible differences in their own lives by working together. The women meet together to identify their own needs, then, with the help of Dieudonne (RAYJON's Project Director in Haiti), they work out how *they* are going to meet those needs. By putting their *heads together* they are able to achieve so much more than if each one worked alone.

During Lent, the students of Sacred Heart put their *heads together* and organized a weekly coin collection; one week they collected dimes, one week nickels, one week quarters, etc. By Easter time, the amount of money collected for the people taking part in the Project in St. Marc, had gone beyond \$1000! Very many thanks to all those who contributed their nickels, dimes & quarters and helped some of the people of Haiti to discover their potential and improve the quality of their lives.

Here are a few comments made about the slide presentation by Carol Hall's Grade 4 students.

"WOW! \$250 ... for a whole year? To take care of themselves, their kids, food, clothes, school and a house? I could never do that with an average income of \$250 a year. I make 7 times that doing newspapers. In Haiti, that small half an island, there are 8 million and in Canada, being 16 times bigger, we can neatly spread out 11 million people. Look at us with our sports cars, big screen TVs, high speed Internet and fast food. Look at all the NHL players fighting like school kids over how many millions they have when the people in Haiti, not saying a word over how many cents they have or if they will get fed tonight. That is why my title is: WOW!" *Jay*

"Something that struck me was how much work the women do and how all the people in Haiti care about each other. The women cook, do the laundry, sew and take care of their family. They even built a High School! The people of Haiti are also very respectful. When a family member dies, they wear black or white for a whole year as a sign of mourning. The Haitians work together and persevere even though many of them are tired, sick or hungry." *Mary*

"I feel horrible for the kids in Haiti. They did nothing wrong and they are dying of starvation and dehydration because they were born in a country with poverty and sickness. This makes me very grateful that I was born in Canada. I am going to help by giving money every week (to the coin collection)." *Chris*

"Everything at the presentation was surprising; how difficult things are yet how much progress they are making and

Impressions of Haiti from 2005 Awareness Trip Participants

“That is the best trip I have ever been on! I have been on cruises, been to Cancun and other “paradises” around the world, but I have never returned home feeling so full of joy and accomplishment.”

Nevin McVicar (student) March trip

“This trip was thought provoking for an “all inclusive” Caribbean holiday. I wouldn’t be so bold as to suggest it is for everyone, but those who journey will be all the better as a result of it. Whether it serves as a spiritual awakening, humanitarian inspiration or personal conversion of heart and soul, hopefully all who pass this way will grow to make the world a better place.”

Dave Robertson – January trip

“I saw poverty; I saw how small the homes people live in are; I saw garbage everywhere; I saw and met merchants trying to make a living by selling their wares on the street. Although I saw these things everyday and they have left a lasting effect on me, the beauty, goodness and wealth of Haiti stand out more for me. Those who live in Haiti have a beautiful way of living out the Beatitudes. I witnessed people thirsting for righteousness and justice. Most of all, I became aware of the beautiful poverty of spirit that exists in the people of Haiti. They have a wonderful understanding of the fact that we are the workers and God is the Masterbuilder. Haiti left me with a changed heart.”

Lisa Moynihan – March trip

“Everything in Haiti is broken down except for the spirit of the people’ I believe that statement is most certainly true. The spirit of the Haitian people is one of the main reasons that I decided to return. (this was Ryan’s 3rd visit to Haiti) They have a joyous and very generous spirit that they share with us willingly. They welcome us in and share as best they can. We are privileged to go there, and I do hope that one day all that is broken will be fixed! The following, written by photographer *Maggie Stebbins*, seems to capture most of my feelings when I’m in Haiti, and I’d like to share it with you.”

“When one is in Haiti, one walks in a dream. Time is telescoped and one jumps erratically from one scenario to another without any links to join them and no interpreter to explain them. Sometimes the dream is one of excruciating beauty and sometimes terrifying. Haiti is like an ache in the bones, bittersweet and seductive, addictive. People go there and either hate it, being repelled by the immense poverty and daily violence of living, or they fall in love with it. I’ve always thought that Haiti did the choosing. Whomever it wanted on its shores was welcome. If it didn’t like you or need you, it did everything to repel you, to send you flying. But, if it saw in you a kindred spirit, capable of empathy and dramatic hyperbole, it allowed you to remain. It captures your heart, breaking it daily with its *mélange* of beauty and suffering, and its narcotic of political dueling and the spirit world’s mysterious magic.



Ryan Devries in Haiti

One must be very careful not to romanticize Haiti, neither its poverty nor the exotic lust and violent adventures early writers have described in travel books. It is a real place with real people, the majority of whose lives are engaged in a daily struggle of survival to eat, to work, to live. Haiti is the daughter of Africa and France. It grew up in isolation because it was too strong, too independent, too strange. This land and people have been so violated by so many who had a hand in its formation. Its lands are haunted and drenched in the blood of great heroes and of small children.

It is as though the fates pointed to Haiti and declared, “There is Haiti. Shall we put the portal between Heaven and Hell?” Everything in Haiti fits neatly into that concept of extremes.

Haiti is a place filled with lessons. It chooses you because there is something you need to learn. It is a living parable, a Shakespearean epic in which you are supposed to participate. And the experience changes your life forever.”

Submitted by Ryan Devries – March trip



Mrs. Szabo's Grade 4's



Dustin Kelch serving classmates

Pencils, Pencils, Pencils

Dustin Kelch, a student at St. Michael's Elementary school in Brights Grove, had the idea of helping school children in Haiti and involving all the students in his school. He challenged every class to collect as many pencils as they could; the class that collected the most would be treated, by him, to an ice-cream party. The students took the challenge, and during Lent, they collected more than 5000 pencils! Mrs. Szabo's grade 4 class were the winners and enjoyed bowls of chocolate and vanilla ice-cream with whipped cream and lots of sprinkles. Thanks Dustin for taking the initiative! Well done.

So Sorry!

Last September, we asked those of you who would prefer receiving your newsletter electronically, to send in your e-mail address. Unfortunately, the addresses we did were absorbed into the general e-mail address list and we had no way of identifying them. Please bear with us! Those of you who would, again, like to send in your e-mail address for newsletter purposes, please send them to jbarnfield@sympatico.ca. If your address changes, it will be your responsibility to contact RAYJON so that we can keep our files updated.

Wanted

The high school students in the Urban Development Project in Cap Haitien, Haiti, are in need of French/English dictionaries. If you have one that you would be willing to donate, please call Marjorie Paisley at 344-9190.

"Let us do now that which will profit us for all eternity." *Saint Benedict*

Thank You All!

Maggy Barnfield- newsletter editor

Have you ever wondered how your newsletter is processed before it reaches you? Who does the folding, the stuffing and sealing of envelopes and takes them to the Post Office?

Well, there is a special group of high school students who make my life so much easier when it comes to newsletter time. Mike Voisey's Grade 10 English students at St. Patrick's High School here in Sarnia, have willingly taken on those jobs, and I can't thank them enough. All I have to do is to drop them off at the school in the morning, all 800 of them, and by late afternoon they are in the mail. It's like magic! Very many thanks to you all.



Grade 10 English students

Creator God,

The world I live in is a beautiful place.
Thank you for the trees and all the good fruit they give us.
Mangoes, bananas, pineapples, coconuts and papayas.
Pineapples are my favorites.

Thank you for the beautiful flowers,
I like their colors and the way they smell.
I like giving flowers to people and seeing how those flowers make people smile.

Thank you for the ocean and the fun I have playing in the cool water.

Thank you for the fish. There are so many different kinds.
I like to eat fish with rice and red beans and tomatoes.

Thank you for the music; the music of birds and the music of people.

I like to make music on the drums.
I like to sing. I like to dance.

I like living in this beautiful world You created.
What kind of world have You created in heaven?
I know it will be a beautiful place because I know You love me.
I love You too!

Figinole (9) St. Joseph's Home for Boys, Port-au-Prince

Grocery Store Cash Tapes

After many years of sorting and counting cash tapes collected by members of our community, Ino Thompson has decided to take a well earned rest. Thank you Ino for all the hours spent in helping to raise funds for RAYJON projects. A job well done!

Ann Postma, an enthusiastic and willing volunteer, has taken over the job, and we wish her well. Tapes can be dropped off at Ann's home at 859 Lanark Crescent, Marjory Paisley's home at 818 Pineview and Lynne Shannon's home at 1443 McCrie, all in Sarnia. For every \$100 spent on groceries from A & P, Wright's Valu-Mart and Zehrs, all in Sarnia,