



FLM HAITI

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY MINISTRY OF HAITI
EDUCATIONAL & MEDICAL MISSION

NEWSLETTER, SPRING 2018

Impressive Numbers

In January, 2018, mothers and sons, husbands and wives, four physicians, three nurses, a dentist, a Med Tech assistant, and friends arrived on the FLM campus. They were joined by an arborist, beekeeper, art professor, engineer, pastor, and a retired missionary. The 18 adults were gathered to kick off another season of medical mission to the people of Thomassin, Kenscoff, and Boutilliers in the hills of Haiti.

For 10 days, Jan. 18–27, these volunteers—from Pittsburgh, New York City, Canada and other places—served from daylight to sunset to provide basic health care in isolated, underserved communities. Their efforts provided services needed to keep families healthy. On many days, there was standing-room only for service, and often emergency care.

“It is always exciting to see the team members whom God puts together for us,” says Mary Gregg, a mission coordinator. “Our volunteers give their time and pay their own expenses and arrive in Haiti to live and work together for a common goal. They always leave with new relationships and lasting impressions of Haiti.”

Here are some impressive numbers:

- **404** people were examined and received vision care, which included receiving reading glasses
- **96** individuals were provided dental treatment with care provided by one dentist
- **626** people were examined and given medical treatment, being seen by four doctors
- Almost **2,000** prescriptions were filled
- Prenatal care and education were provided
- On average, **281** adults and children were treated each day
- **171** patients received one-on-one consultations in hypertension awareness and education
- By week’s end, there were **1,126** local citizens who walked way healthier and better able to provide for their families and themselves



Photo by Kenneth Neely

Reading, Writing, and Possibility

By Allegra Battle

About a half mile from the FLM-Haiti campus sits one of its 70 government-certified literacy centers. This education center is not a typical classroom, and the students don't look like typical students.

The center, based in the community of Thomassin, is housed in a small, modest building and offers its lessons for free. On a recent January afternoon, the lessons were outside.

Under a warm, bright blue sky, there were a little more than a dozen men and women seated outdoors in chairs, facing a portable blackboard. The teacher sat in the front of the class. The students are mothers, fathers, grandparents and great-grandparents; their textbooks have the lessons of what a grade-school child would learn with. These men and women are a part of the nearly 40 percent of the Haitian population who cannot read or write.

FLM-Haiti is working to change that.

The literacy centers are a ministry and a refuge for hope, providing the necessary skills to empower a people and a nation. The centers teach basic math, reading and writing skills, and are an education gateway

to young and adult Haitians. The centers offer a 2-year program and upon completion the graduates are able to read at a 5th-grade level.

The Thomassin literacy center is a revelation into the realities and challenges of day-to-day life in Haiti. The men and women, mostly from Thomassin and nearby Petionville, who come here must walk roads that are sometimes long and often very dangerous: there are no sidewalks, and pedestrians share the narrow roads with two-way traffic and the occasional small herd of livestock.

On this afternoon, the participants are getting fundamentals in math. When asked if the center was helpful to them, almost in unison, they all replied, "wi."

The students were eager to learn, and you could see the excitement in their faces. The teacher was passionate about her lessons, and patient with the students she worked with.

FLM's first four literacy centers opened their doors in 1984, and the ministry has grown steadily over the years. Today, more than 100 educators work in the centers, and over the years, more than 11,000 people have received literacy certifications. In a country plagued by natural disasters, economic hardships, and a lack of vital resources—education is the door to a better Haiti, and literacy is the key to unlocking that door.

The Medical Team's Emergency CARE

By Allegra Battle

This story involves a 13-year-old Haitian boy, two doctors, and a circumcision.

The medical team and volunteers of FLM are professionals who deal with physical conditions, but also conditions of the heart. They give their time and expertise to help the people of Haiti.

On a cool Friday morning, nearly 150 people are lined up at FLM's House of David Community Clinic to receive care. Many are returning for follow-up appointments, including 13-year-old Clarens. He came earlier in the week and Dr. Sharon Goldstein, a Pittsburgh-area surgeon, diagnosed him with Phimosis; a condition in which the foreskin of the penis cannot be pulled back past the glans; the only remedy is surgery—a circumcision.

Goldstein's operating room is a sectioned-off area of a hallway at the clinic, located below the Kay D'Esperans guesthouse. Goldstein and Dr. Chae Life, a resident at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, prep for surgery. They search for sterile gloves. Finding sterile gloves wouldn't be an issue in America, but in Haiti, even the most common medical equipment and tools are hard to find, sometimes even impossible.

A cool breeze moves through the room, rippling the dusty sheets that Goldstein has draped over a frame to give her patients some privacy.

Working with her translator, Goldstein carefully and gently tells Clarens' mother about the procedure. She shares the health benefits, and also the risks. Goldstein comes from a place of care and concern. Her level of respect is direct, making sure to make eye contact with Clarens' mother,

even though she can't understand her. "Do you agree to consent?" The mother answers, "wi."

There's a side table with an assortment of scissors, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and alcohol pads. Bandages and examination gloves are underneath, Clarens lies down and Life covers his body with a sheet. "We are going to take good care of you," she says. Halfway through the surgery, Goldstein says things are looking good. She tells Clarens to relax and stay still, he's shaking a bit. Life's translator says that Clarens is just scared, and he is not in much pain. But the procedure looks painful; there's blood and a lot of removed skin.

Phimosis is a common issue, and both Goldstein and Life have treated patients with the condition before. Phimosis can be painful, and cause infection; and in rare cases penile cancer can develop if the condition goes untreated. For U.S. patients it's not a pressing ordeal, but for a young boy in Haiti, it can be a death sentence, and that's why the work of the medical team is so vital.

The hour-long surgery is successful, and Clarens is expected to heal and recover.



Left to right, Dr. Goldstein with a local translator, and a patient.



Vitamin Angels Spreads its Wings to House of David

For years, Dr. Dionne Catule, the lead physician and director of FLM's House of David Community Clinic, noticed the malnourished mothers and sickly toddlers and children who came for treatment.

The physician did what she could to help, but she knew that a simple cure of providing the mothers and children with vitamins could go a long way to improving their health. This was especially critical in Haiti, where nearly 70 percent of its population does not have access to health care.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Joyce Penrose, a concerned volunteer on the FLM medical committee, knew these statistics. She had also heard stories of the mothers' challenges and the barriers to better health that they and their children faced in Thomassin, Boutilliers and Kenscoff, in the isolated communities high in the hills of Haiti.

From Pittsburgh, in the fall of 2016, Penrose, a nurse, heard about Vitamin Angels, a global nonprofit that provides lifesaving vitamins to mothers and children up to age 5 to reduce the risk of preventable illness, blindness, and death.

Penrose applied for a grant to seek vitamins for FLM. She worked through email and long-distance calls with Catule and Dr. Minaud Dacius (administrator of Vitamin Angels in Haiti).

The grant was approved in spring of 2017 and it took a year to work out arrangements with Haiti's customs officials to get the vitamins to FLM.

Finally, in January, 2018, Catule heard from Vitamin Angels. She received an initial order of 700 bottles of multivitamins. The free Vitamin A supplement and deworming medication will be administered at the clinic and to the preschool children attending FLM's school, MIPADEP. The clinic received 675 doses of these medications. Vitamin Angels requires detailed documentation on distribution in order to requalify for the grant each year.

In the fall of 2017, Catule went to a two-day session on vitamin distribution and education. It advised that vitamin recipients hire and train two community health agents who visit local homes and churches informing women of the program.

Each pregnant or lactating mother who comes to the clinic will receive a six-month supply of the multivitamins for free. If they continue to qualify, they can return every six months for more.

Vitamin Angels reaches more than 61 million children and mothers in need in 74 countries worldwide. FLM is proud to be a part of the Vitamin Angels family as its reaches toward the goal of ending newborn mortality because of malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies by 2030.

For more information, please visit: flmhaiti.org

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