

# MATH News

Summer 2017  
Issue 3

M E D I C A L A I D T O H A I T I

Helping Haitians Heal Haitians

## Where would we be without them?

Recently, MATH celebrated the amazing support of our volunteers with a very special Volunteer Appreciation Picnic. As we planned for the event, I couldn't help but reflect on how important our volunteers are and how much they contribute to the success of our organization. MATH simply could not do what it does without the contributions of so many generous people. Whether mission team participants, event helpers, or Board and Committee members, these friends of MATH have freely given their time, energy, and resources to help fulfill our mission *Helping Haitians Heal Haitians*.

A group from the Board recently returned from an annual business trip to Haiti where we met with our Port-au-Prince Project Director, Dr. Wilkens Gilbert. It was a productive trip and I am happy to report that the fixed and mobile clinic operations are going strong with continually increasing patient visits. In fact, Dr. Gilbert anticipates nearly 15,000 patient visits during the next 12 months. This is a great piece of news.

On this trip, we were fortunate to be accompanied by three representatives from our new Corporate Sponsor, Bouvier Insurance. They were a terrific team, and I believe they came away with a profound appreciation for the significant impact MATH - as an all-volunteer organization - is making in the lives of those we serve. The financial support of Bouvier Insurance will fund a full-time anesthesiologist and an OB/GYN physician at our project in Dame-Marie, Haiti. So, here's a big "thank you" to Bouvier Insurance, welcome to the team! Many thanks to all who have supported us over the years.

*Rick Thibadeau, President & Founder of MATH*



## IN MY OWN WORDS

Giuliana Musilli | Board Member, MATH

When a stone is thrown in the water it causes a splash and then a ripple on the surface, the rings growing larger and wider as the ripple builds. This



image perfectly illustrates why I am honored to be a part of MATH and its amazing story. Ten years or so ago, a small group of people from West Hartford traveled to Port-au-Prince and witnessed first hand the desperate need for consistent medical care. Upon their return to Connecticut, this same group met to discuss ways they could deliver a continuum of care to those new friends they had just made. From these discussions and ideas – and the work and generosity of many – emerged an organization that makes a great difference. How remarkable, that what was once but a wish has become a reality! Through its work with doctors and nurses in Haiti, MATH helps hundreds of people each week, thousands each year. And guided by MATH's intended mission, those hundreds and thousands may, in turn, help others. And so on. You get the idea...this is why I am a part of MATH. Splash on!

## An Experience She'll Not Soon Forget

**MATH**  
PORT-AU-PRINCE  
PROJECT

In January, a small team made a trip to the

Neighborhood Medical-Surgical Clinic (NMSC) in Port-au-Prince. MATH Board member and RN, Maggie Levasseur, who works in the Emergency Department at St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center, is a veteran of many mission trips to Haiti. Maggie was accompanied by pre-med student Kathleen O'Hara who was eager to volunteer to be part of MATH's mission. On this trip Kathleen gained an overview of the clinic's operation and pharmacy protocols. Here is an excerpt of Kathleen's experience:



Kathleen O'Hara arrives on her first trip with the mobile clinic team in Port-au-Prince.

"Over the five days I visited four mobile clinic sites and spent the final day at NMSC. The long rides to each site over very rough and bumpy roads in the Karavan Lasante vehicle was a great way to meet and get to know the mobile clinic staff. A camaraderie developed that allowed

continued on back...

## MATH Welcomes Bouvier Insurance



We are proud to welcome Bouvier Insurance of West Hartford as our very first corporate sponsor. Thank you David, Richard, Robert, Nicole and Tom!



**Save this Date: Friday, October 20, 2017**

The 2nd annual Autumn's Palette Fundraiser will be held at The North House in Avon, CT. Wine tastings, great food, live auctions and more... to benefit Medical Aid to Haiti. We hope to see you there!

*Autumn's Palette*  
**MATH**  
Wine Tasting & Fundraiser

(continued from front side)

me to observe how skilled and capable the team is in providing care to some of the poorest villagers.

"Returning to NMSC on Thursday afternoon, I was given the opportunity to observe clinic director Dr. Wilkens Gilbert perform a surgical procedure on a patient under local anesthesia. On the final day, I shadowed Dr. Sherly Pateau, the pediatrician at NMSC, and observed how she cares for younger patients whose maladies range from malnutrition and sickle cell anemia to everyday common colds.

"As a pre-med student with no clinical experience, this unique experience was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I could not have asked for more from this unexpectedly heart-warming experience."

Kathleen was so taken by the work we do in Haiti that she joined our recent medical mission to Dame-Marie, led by Dr. Michael Bourque, and observed the surgical work this team provides. "I can't wait for my next opportunity to visit and observe the amazing work of MATH medical teams!" she said. Thank you, Kathleen! We welcome anyone who has a passion for our work like Kathleen's.



Kathleen enjoys some down time with Maggie Levasseur, RN, who is one of MATH's veteran mission team members.

## Upcoming Events Calendar

**September 9-16**  
**MISSION TRIP:**  
**DAME-MARIE**

**September 16-23**  
**MISSION TRIP:**  
**PORT-AU-PRINCE**

**October 20**  
**AUTUMN'S PALETTE**  
a Wine Tasting & Fundraiser  
at The North House in Avon

**November 4-11**  
**MISSION TRIP:**  
**DAME-MARIE**

**November 11-12**  
**CRAFT FESTIVAL**  
**& MARKETPLACE**  
in West Hartford

**October 1**  
**ROCHELLE BARD**  
AND FRIENDS PRESENT  
*MUSIC FROM THE MOVIES*  
at Northwest Catholic High School

# Shoulder-to-Shoulder and Saving Lives

by Dr. Michael Bourque

Our return to Dame-Marie this past February was filled with some anxiety about the physical conditions and the state of recovery from Hurricane Matthew, as well as the health of our Sisters and Brothers in this resilient fishing community. But of course to get there, we first had to travel those difficult hours on the bus. The final part of the 10-hour ride entails traversing mountains in endless switchbacks, and I always count off in my head the six peaks that are in our way before the sea beckons.



I have stood on the mountainside just outside Dame-Marie looking back on the route of our journey. It does give credence to the legend that Haiti is a land of mystery and wonder. However, the reality of crossing over those peaks means that the roads are very difficult. The road is rutted volcanic rock with no base and there have been no repairs done since the hurricane. Hence, the two flat tires along the way were not unexpected!

This trip marked a major achievement for our program and for the community of Dame-Marie. For the first time, we had a 50-50 mix of Haitian and U.S. doctors and nurses serving together on our team. The mission of MATH is *Helping Haitians Heal Haitians*, and this trip was a testament to that guiding ethos.

A total of twenty-three surgeries and six procedures under local anesthesia were performed. This trip was particularly dramatic for the two obstetrical emergencies we experienced. Two young, pregnant women each presented with seizures and dangerously elevated blood pressures. Mothers and babies were at risk of death if they were not delivered quickly. The team stabilized them and both had emergency C-sections. Success is measured by the faces of the staff who took care of them after, as well as the cries of new life in Dame-Marie.

Running a surgical service, it is sometimes difficult to ease the suffering of a patient when there is a language barrier, even though we have talented interpreters. The difference between winning and losing a patient under these conditions exists on a razor's edge. Several times it was God's helping hand or grace that I believe resulted in the patient doing well.

Dame-Marie has the only working Delivery and Operating Room in the western portion of Haiti. The only other facility is the Cuban hospital, an hour's drive away but unfortunately, still out of commission from hurricane damage.

As our service to this community enters the fifth year, our hospital administrator and benefactor, Mr. Pierre Antoine, also has raised funds to renovate and furnish with cribs an area for a new Pediatric ward. When I asked him how he can get money when there is none, he smiles and says, "You just have to be able to get blood from a stone." I now call him Saint Pierre.

Through all of this, you can see how skilled medical and non-medical personnel, not "American" or "Haitian", but regular people with exceptional hearts, can come together for the first time and work miracles. Our good reputation is growing with the Haitian government and local communities. The future is bright with your support. The greatest light we shine is the light of hope. We hope that Haiti's future will include clean water, electricity and sufficient food. In this hope we continue on toward better health for our sisters and brothers in Dame-Marie.



(L-R) Dr. Michael E. Bourque (OB-GYN), Dr. Joseph Glavylove (OB-GYN), Dr. Djovensky Mathurin (General Surgery) and Dr. Patrick Charlorin (General Surgery),

## TO DONATE, VOLUNTEER, ADVOCATE OR FOLLOW US:



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