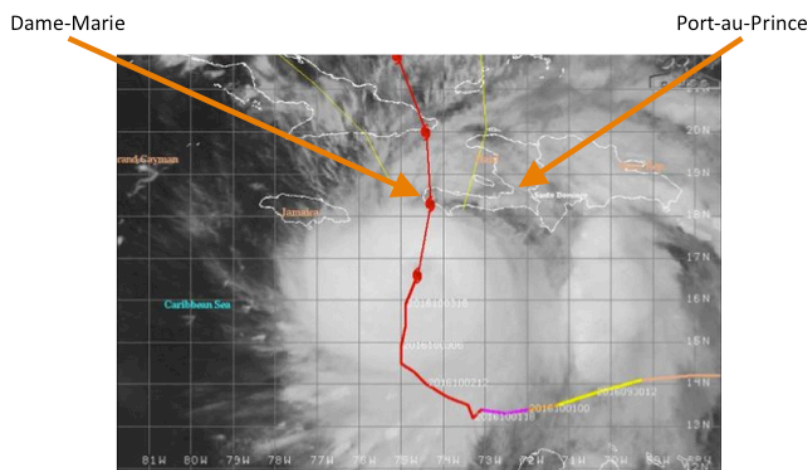


Hurricane Matthew Aftermath: October 4, 2016

The eye of this Category 4 storm sat over Dame-Marie for a day-and-a-half with 140 mile per hour winds, torrential rains and a 30-foot-high storm surge, leaving little intact along the shoreline. All agriculture, livestock, farming, electricity and communications were destroyed, leaving all the southern and western communities from Les Caye to Jeremie to Dame-Marie under desperate conditions.



The best account of the aftermath is the narration by Linda Brooks, a Canadian native and friend of our program, who lived on the Dame-Marie shore in her newly built retirement home – please view the short one-minute-plus interview taken one day after the hurricane – https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_SdYPf4CI8hdmNSWFV3STRXQnM/view

Four weeks after the hurricane, our November team encountered villagers under starvation conditions, an increase in the outbreak of cholera and the probability of no electricity for up to two years. Hôpital de la Communaute Dame-Marienne, the community hospital where we operate, served as the relief center for the community and the local Haitian medical staff had been working tirelessly doing what they could for their people despite the absence of power. The town and our special benefactor, Monsieur Pierre Antoine, was in the thick of things -- donating from his family foundation truckloads of food and supplies, setting up a water filtration system for the town and fixing the hospital generator in time for our arrival.

For our readers who haven't seen the beauty of Dame-Marie, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_SdYPf4CI8hZmd1dUcxNmljT00/view is a link to a video that Monsieur Antoine put together three years ago in the hopes of encouraging tourism and further medical missionary help, and what captured our minds and hearts when we first visited this community in 2012 and what it felt like in September when we served there.

The song “Ayiti Se” by Michael Benjamin has become the unofficial second national anthem of Haiti. In English the first verse goes -- *“Haiti Is...Haiti is a pretty sea, a stunning mountain with beautiful rivers. It is pretty beaches with coconut trees, lovely landscapes with bright colors”*.

Dame-Marie: November 2016

The November team was limited to nine traveling missionaries from the original group of 16 because of the unknown living and working conditions, and the need to travel from Port-au-Prince using a small charter plane with restricted weight requirements to a grass airstrip in Dame-Marie due to the damaged overland road conditions. The seven remaining team members traveled with us in spirit however, as each donated the cost of their trip to help support our community in need.

If you've never landed on a grass strip, the first pass is low to scare animals off the runway and then a steep bank to return in for the landing! Hundreds of hungry Haitians in a makeshift community along the airstrip greeted our arrival in hopes that food was arriving. It took a few tense minutes to convince the villagers (a definite reason to learn the Creole language ASAP) that we had only medical supplies.



Eventually a few villagers were hired to help us carry nine 50-lb. medical bags and carry-ons down the sea cliff to the waiting fishing boat.



Stories from Dame-Marie – November 2016

After the chaotic landing scene and wading in the water to get into the boat, some quiet and peaceful moments were had during the 30-minute ride to the shore at the town proper. No one thought about the lack of a dock at the other end and, although a bit humbling, the fisherman's carry by the strength and generous hospitality of our hosts got us to shore. We do need to be aware, though, that future trips by boat can result in new hazards—getting wet and personal luggage filling with seawater! Luckily, the medical supplies are always packed in plastic bags inside in the canvas bags.



Once ashore, the shock of seeing the devastation left by Hurricane Matthew to the community of Dame-Marie and our friend Linda Brook's retirement home became a reality for us.



Seeing what everyone had lost in the village made any hardships we had to endure seem very, very minor and we quickly got to work and the week was very productive. There were many amazing medical experiences, as well as individual interactions with the medical staff, the patients and their families. This photo of our anesthesiologist, Eric Balch, making a young girl

Stories from Dame-Marie – November 2016

smile with his balloon-animal creation emphasizes the spontaneous gesture of friendship between cultures that says it all about why we do what we do.



Despite only nine of us, we were able to minister to over 150 medical patients, perform 18 surgeries and help with several OB emergencies. And equally important, we brought hope for the Haitian medical staff that we would return in February with a full-sized team to carry on.



Stories from Dame-Marie – November 2016

Although, there is no electricity, no running water, no roof on the school and no textbooks, the hope and courage of the Haitian youth is shown in this image taken on one of our last days. School was reopening and they still had a teacher and a desire to learn and try for a better future.



A special photo of our 2016 Dame-Marie mission teams -- Heroes all.



And now holiday wishes and appreciation to all of you very special Hearts who have been a part of our journey since our first mission trip in November 2006.

- To our former missionaries, our present ones, and our future ones reading this story -- family members like no others now;
- To our colleagues running the Port-au-Prince program and our growing number of dedicated volunteers and past and present Board of Directors at MATH;
- To Saint Francis and all the departments that continue to support our efforts with supplies, pharmaceuticals, and so much more;
- To Doctor John Rodis, Fiona Phelan, and Kristen Durocher on their recent support with the Hartford Business Journal Healthcare Heroes Luncheon and the Channel 3 TV appearance -- a special hug to the three of you, and to our Chair Anne D'Orvilliers and Celeste Rockel, a graphic designer without compare, for your help in making my presentation look good and polished;
- To Rick Thibadeau, President and Founder of MATH, John Chapman, Treasurer and Finance, and the entire Board of Directors of MATH that took us at our word that we would help their program grow when we formed a partnership, your trust and your friendship;
- To Sister Judy Carey, my mentor, friend, and Angel whose innumerable skills helped blaze the successful path our vision has taken from the initial conversation where I poured out my professional despair at the fragility of life on my initial trip;
- To the leadership and staff at Saint Francis in our Women's and Infants Service Lines, for your support at our functions and your donation of all that ETO that really turns into valuable dollars for our cause;
- To Donna Collins at Perkins Travel who always seems to pull together our travel plans so we can get to Port-au-Prince on time and with all our gear;
- To those key veterans who have worked tirelessly and without visible thanks over these last ten years into making each of our 24 prior trips run smoothly as possible;
- To our Haitian medical colleagues that I have come to treasure for their dedication, skills, and leadership despite limited resources;
- To my Haitian brother-in-arms, Monsieur Pierre Antoine, and his amazing family of six Sisters and the rest of his extended family -- I continue to be amazed by the 24/7 service they gives to their childhood community, and keeping us safe and out of mischief on these incredible adventures in service;
- To Bette Gebrian and her husband Edwin, our special angels in Jeremie, who have taught us so much about Haiti and its people, and for their amazing compound where we sometimes are blessed to stay and recharge our spirits;
- To the Haitian people in Port-au-Prince and Dame-Marie that I have come to know and respect and have taught me true courage and a view of life I would be hard pressed to match if I had to walk in their sandals 24/7;

- To our supporters, family, donors, neighbors and patients who have reached out to help our program survive and prosper;
- To the future where our hope for the operating room to stay open when we are not there and is starting to become a reality -- six Emergency C/S's performed by Haitian staff hired to support the Delivery Room in the last 3 months -- and the addition of two more Haitian general surgeons to our program who will be on our February trip and we hope will become also a mainstay of surgical availability at Dame-Marie and the surrounding communities;
- And to all of our now 500 missionary heroes recruited and trained by our program from our first day, to the over six thousand patients that we have treated in extremely difficult environments one at a time

My very special handmade Christmas/Holiday card to all of you –



*Happy Holidays and Mission Hugs
to all of you who work and support our MATH mission of Helping Haitians Heal Haitians*

The bus represents the school bus we used in the Dominican Republic our first seven years and the overland bus we now use to travel to Dame-Marie. The handmade Christmas angel, made from a steel oil drum by Haitians with the candle in the back, represents the inner light in our hearts that keeps us working despite the hardships of those with few blessings and glows brighter as we become more aware of our responsibility to do more for the global community in need.

In closing, I offer this special gift about our work in the Dominican Republic and Haiti – poem written several years ago by Sharon Allard, one of our longest serving surgical techs, about her mission experience; song composed by Dr. Hugh Blumenfeld, one of our Family Practice physicians with the gift of music creativity; and video produced by my niece, Erin Holford, from LA -- https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_SdYPf4CI8hcFJFQ2NYTkJucTQ/view.

Listen to her words the first time, watch the images the second time and enjoy the music the third time you play it. The opening scenes are from our mission trip to Dajabon, Dominican Republic, where there is a long bridge that separates Haiti from the Dominican Republic. Armed soldiers patrol on each side, while the traffic of people and goods flow back and forth on special trade days.

God Bless,

Michael R. Bonnyne MD

Medical Director for MATH Dame-Marie



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