

LAMP for HAITI

SHINING A LIGHT IN HAITI'S DARKEST PLACES

Spring 2014



Manager Benoit Florestal talks with new staff member Dénold Joseph in the new courtyard area

Relationships — by James Morgan MD

This fundamental concept is a key to successful family life, work, friendships, community. In a very real sense, relationships embody dialogue. Of course any meaningful conversation requires active listening. Paying attention to body language, as well as verbiage. (As I write this I rejoice in my own children's exodus from their teen years!)

Understanding these relationships is a vital and ongoing process for us at Lamp this year as we continue to grow and to fulfill our mission of working *with and for the people of Haiti* to improve the lives of some of the most marginalized persons there.

At Lamp for Haiti, we are continually trying to improve that dialogue, and we are seeing positive results. For example, we are delighted to announce this past quarter we have added two new key personnel ~ Dr Sévere and Mr Dénold Joseph. Their clinical skills and personal demeanor allow us to provide quality, cost effective care. Partnering with other organizations, filling in gaps when they exist, sharing resources ~ these are all continuations of the theme of dialogue. Presently we have working relationships with several other major

organizations working in Haiti, including groups like *AmeriCares*, *Partners in Health* (PIH), and the *St Luke's Foundation* in Tabarre. Boston native Nick Sahagian is a volunteer intern who has jumped in with both feet to assist us in launching our electronic records system (see www.OpenMRS.org for more on this fascinating PIH project). *Midwives for Haiti* is assisting us in our Women's Health Program. SAKALA, a community based organization in Cité Soleil focused on youth, was begun by Lamp Board Member Daniel Tillias. We move ahead to strengthen our official relationship with the Haitian Ministry of Health.

And so as we move into summer, let's take a moment to ponder our own relationships with one another, and with our friends and colleagues in Haiti. Let's think about the genuine solidarity that Lamp for Haiti represents, manifest by the ongoing effort to strengthen and focus that conversation. It is a conversation not always comprised of words, but deeply engaged in listening and in action. Let's remember the work that lies ahead and see it as another challenge, somewhat daunting, but never

insurmountable.

My very best to you and to your families this summer. And of course thank you again for all your many kindnesses and financial support.



Boys of Bwa Nef

To donate to the Lamp go to
www.lampforhaiti.org or send a
check to: Lamp for Haiti, PO Box
39703, Philadelphia PA 19106
Thank You!

Staff profile: Benoit Florestal, National Program Manager



Benoit says that his life has been one big miracle. Sometimes miracles are needed simply to survive in Haiti, as Benoit's story attests.

In 2010, Benoit was on the ground floor of a local school, finishing off his high school diploma, when the earthquake struck. When the building began to shake, the students jammed the only exit. Benoit tried to get out of the window but he could not budge the metal bars. The building collapsed on top of him, the wall dissolving to the level of the window top and the central ceiling crashing to the ground. Amazingly, he was not hurt at all ~ trapped in a wedge of space beneath the window. He broke his way out with a cement block and walked the long distance home, where, later that night, he was reunited with his wife and three young children, also unharmed. This was not the only miracle of Benoit's life.

Benoit grew up in the small town of Deschappelles in central Haiti. Their one room house was home to nine people ~ including his mother and his five siblings. He never knew his

father. So it seemed a good thing when his aunt paid a visit and said she would look after six-year old Benoit in another town. But here an enduring social problem of Haiti stepped in. He became a "restavek" (a "stay-with") ~ a child servant. He was not allowed to go to school and beaten mercilessly if he was slow to do his aunt's bidding. One day, after a year had passed, he was given some money to buy supplies for his aunt's small shop. She spat on the ground; if he was not back by the time the spit dried, he would feel her wrath. But seven-year old Benoit met some friends and got caught up in a game of marbles. When he realized what he had done it was too late ~ he was certain to be beaten when he returned. So, instead of going home he snuck onto a bus and let it take him wherever it was going. Three hours later he arrived in Port-au-Prince. And this is where the miraculous occurred. Amazingly enough, after only two days on the streets he was taken to a "centre d'accueil" - a rehabilitation center for minors, and only six weeks after that he was accepted into the St Joseph Home for Boys, a US funded home for street children. One year later this smart and athletic young man was touring the United States with the St Joseph dance troupe. Benoit grew up at St Joseph's, becoming the chief choreographer for the dance troupe and later taking on the role of director at Wings of Hope, a St Joseph sister organization which cares for physically disabled children.

Benoit has been the National Program Manager for the Lamp for two and a half years now. Finances, logistics, community relations, government liaison, physical improvements, education programming and all manner of administrative tasks are the stuff of his life with Lamp. He is the man that keeps the clinic running, allowing the medical staff to focus fully on their task of assisting patients. Benoit is a committed and compassionate man and a great link with the US side of the Lamp. We are very grateful for the miracles that have brought him to us!



Photo 1: A tap-tap, the most common form of public transport in Haiti. A kindly tap-tap driver let seven-year-old Benoit sleep in his vehicle on his first night on the Port-au-Prince streets



Photo 2: Dr Morgan and Dr Hyppolite work on the electronic records system



Photo 3: Nurse Flaure and Dr Hyppolite present the Lamp's work at a women's health conference, sponsored by *Midwives for Haiti*



Dr. Sévere takes the reins at the women's health clinic

Several years ago, the Lamp realized there was a large gap in locally available health services, namely that of services for women. We organized a women's clinic, trained one of our nurses in midwifery and have provided specialized services, two days per week, since then. Now, however, we are moving to expand and improve these services.

The first step was to construct a new building that could provide a home for the expanded women's clinic. Despite delays, we are very close to moving in to this new building. Next, we needed someone to take on the role of women's clinic director. We hoped very much that we would be able to find a woman for this role. We have been successful!

Dr Sévere will dedicate her time to the women's clinic and we are very much looking forward to her energy and ideas. Having a dedicated physician for the women's health clinic has been a long-standing dream for the Lamp and is certain to take the women's clinic to a new level of excellence.

Why Support the Lamp?

By Richard Evans, board member

On a global basis, hundreds of organizations work to bring health care to millions of persons living in under-served communities; and, with few exceptions each of these organizations make productive use of charitable contributions. In short, there is no lack of good options for giving. When so many communities and organizations can benefit from your giving, why should you consider giving to LAMP?

We offer continuity of care in a community that otherwise would not be served: LAMP for Haiti is the only medical clinic in Bwa Nèf, a neighborhood of perhaps 15,000 persons, and has been a consistent part of the neighborhood since 2006. A parent or guardian bringing a child or loved one to LAMP can reasonably expect to see the same health care providers each time – even if visits are months or even years apart

We operate to a Western standard of medical practice: LAMP's clinical standards are no different than those of any fully accredited physician's office operating in the United States. We have a qualified clinical laboratory on-site, a 12-lead digital EKG, an electronic medical record system, and soon,

digital radiography. These technologies enable on-site staff to handle a majority of cases independently, and allow off-site physicians to consult and review as necessary

We create jobs and develop careers for Haitians, in Haiti: With the occasional exception of visiting specialists, all of our care is



Whom we work for

delivered by Haitian physicians and nurses. We invest in the continuing medical education of our medical staff in an effort to continuously improve the care we deliver, with the added benefit of expanding career options for LAMP employees

We invest in education and prevention: Because we are a consistent neighborhood presence, we are able to identify and address common underlying causes of the cases we treat. For example, we have a trained midwife that searches for and educates expectant and new mothers, and provides for the nutritional needs of infants. We operate 'well-clinics' at local soccer fields where kids who are not in school and otherwise would not see a physician can receive care. And we built, and financed the maintenance of, shower and toilet facilities – the only plumbing in our neighborhood

We make efficient use of resources entrusted to us: Under some of the most difficult operating conditions in our hemisphere, LAMP for Haiti delivers a Western standard of medical care to a community that would otherwise receive no care, at a cash cost per patient of roughly \$20 – less than the average patient's co-payment for a visit to a US physician

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Homegrown eXpertise

A key principle of the Lamp is to build our organization ~ and the wider Haitian health system ~ by hiring and developing talented and committed Haitian professionals.

The unemployment rate in Haiti is murderously high, estimated at 41% in 2013. Of persons who are employed, only one third have formal jobs. Underemployment ~ where a worker is unable to earn a living wage, unable to provide for the basic needs of their families ~ affects a huge proportion of those who are considered employed.

Given the scarcity of jobs on one hand, and the overabundance of medical needs on the other, it gives us great satisfaction to provide our services with a fully Haitian staff.

The benefits of this philosophy, for the Lamp and the people of Cité Soleil, are also clear to see on the ground: staff with an intimate knowledge of local culture, language and the intricacies of the Haitian health system.

Of course, our focus is not only on the wider health system. We also wish to build capacity right within the community in which we find ourselves. We engage with community groups, provide community services, and assist with community improvements. We provide jobs wherever possible. It is very thrilling, therefore, to welcome our first ever medical staff member (and third staffer overall) from Bwa Nèf itself.

Dénold (picture on front page) has long proved his commitment to the Lamp's cause and his genuine concern for his neighbors by volunteering selflessly at the clinic. With the launch of our

radiology facilities on the horizon, Dénold has taken up training as an x-ray technician at St. Luke's Hospital, a generous and collaborative partner agency. St. Luke's uses x-ray equipment that is very similar to the equipment we will soon be installing. When Dénold returns he will take full responsibility for the operation of the x-ray unit.

Although we could have chosen to hire one of St. Luke's own technicians, we could not pass up this opportunity to "go local". Dénold Joseph is an extraordinary young man, capable and caring; he will make a terrific addition to the team.



Staff and volunteers at a recent mobile clinic at partner agency SAKALA