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Lamp for Haiti
P.O. Box 187
Montclair, NJ 07042Or click on the
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at the websitewww.lampforhaiti.org**SHINING A LIGHT ON HEALTH, PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY****SPRING****2024****UPDATE****Working in a Troubled Land**

Haiti has faced an unprecedented social, political, economic and healthcare crisis this year. The situation has been very volatile, so that we thought it a good idea to send out fairly frequent updates by email. This article summarizes the situation over the last three months.

February 7th was a watershed day, since it is the day that Haitian political leaders are typically sworn in to office. This year, the day came to symbolize the end of the authority of the unelected Prime Minister Ariel Henry. A coalition of gangs claimed they would take over the government on that day, and while this did not happen, gang activity did increase dramatically. The influence of gangs on day to day life has been overwhelming since that time. In March, Ariel Henry made a trip to Kenya to encourage the deployment of a military force to Haiti. In response, gangs took over the area surrounding the airport so that Henry could not return.

At that point, the US tapped the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to facilitate a process that could lead to national elections. A council of Haitian leaders was formed, and this council recently selected an interim Prime Minister, whose primary task is to prepare the country for elections.

Lamp for Haiti, during this period, was not idle. Gang conflicts in the area of Lamp's health center pushed the organization to consider a long-envisioned second site. In November of 2023, that second site was opened. Regular daily services were provided for three months. At that point, gang efforts to control the area around the airport directly affected Lamp services, since both Lamp's depot and its new second site are close to the Port-au-Prince airport.

Staff took the opportunity to revise programs, update our electronic medical records system, and renovate our Cité Soleil facilities. On that last point, we have been able to continue construction activities in Bwa Nèf, Cité Soleil, throughout this volatile period due to our close relationship with local leaders. Our health center has been made flood resistant and we are well on our way to enabling the installation of a new solar power system there.

For Lamp, the ultimate success of the transitional government is secondary to the reduction of gang activity

Lamp has found ways to maintain services and ensure hope for the future.

near our facilities. This has in fact occurred. Our Medical Director, Dr. Metellus, just called to say that our new venue at Haiti Communiterie is preparing to open. We will begin full services in three days! By the time this newsletter reaches you we should be in our third week of – hopefully – a new era.

As with last year's mobile clinic program, Lamp has found ways to maintain services and ensure hope for the future. It is a future that – we expect – will unveil a need for a much greater scope of care. Haiti today is experiencing a health care disaster, in which the poorest and most vulnerable persons shoulder a disproportionate share of the ensuing hardship. It is within this context that our strategic planning continues to evolve. It is a future in which we remain committed. We will continue to respond not just to this current moment but to the many challenging days ahead. Thank you for joining us in this effort and for being a part of this critical work.

Staff in Haiti

The key reason that Lamp for Haiti has been so successful despite ongoing challenges is the quality of our staff. Without exception, they are committed, capable and caring. A marvelous team! Three of our newest members are Ricard Samson, David Belmond, and Terline Altenor. They have shared some details about themselves for this newsletter.

Ricard Samson has been with Lamp for a year. She is a certified mid-wife and nurse. Prior to her job at Lamp she was in charge of a maternity ward at a hospital in the north of the country for three years. She is married with one young son. She says that what she most loves to do in her life is to care for those in need, in any way that she can. Regarding Lamp she says, "Travay Lamp lan bay anpil posibilite ak moun sitou ki pi mal e ki pa gen aksè a swen, fanm ansent yo ki dwe byen pote timoun yo e pèmèt yo fè yon bon kouch." (Lamp's work gives many possibilities to people, especially those who are worse off and do not have access to care; pregnant women who need assistance to carry their babies well and allow them to have a good pregnancy.") The current crisis has been extremely stressful for her ("strès anvayim...") and the news of violence all around keeps her from sleeping.



David Belmond is Lamp's bookkeeper. He has been a great assistant to the Program Manager, and a boon to the organization. He previously worked at a bank, but wishes he could have been with Lamp earlier, because Lamp is a family for him. The area where he lives, with his fiancé, is relatively

calm but he worries about other staff "paske bò lakay yo pa bon menm ak bal kap chante chak jou moun pa ka soti pou ale regle

aktivite yo" (because their neighborhoods are not at all good, with bullets singing every day; people can't go out to conduct their normal activities.)"

Terline Altenor is the newest member of the team, joining Lamp 8 months ago when our Lab Manager left us to travel to the US on our government's parole program. At that time, our Lab Tech, Mr. Brunel Chipitre, was promoted to Lab Manager and Terline stepped in as his assistant. We will hear from Mr. Chipitre in a later edition of this newsletter.



Terline is married and has a five year old son and a one year old daughter. Before coming to Lamp, she worked for four years in another large shantytown called Titanyen. The nonprofit she worked for ceased operations when the situation became difficult. Terline says, "Mwen

renmen jan Lamp fonksyone a anpil. Mwen santim nam pom lè map travay nan Lamp." ("I like very much the way that Lamp functions, I love working with Lamp"). Terline says the worst thing about the crisis is the current period, because she would like to work every day. Also, her own neighborhood has seen gang conflicts which has forced her family to live elsewhere several times in the last two years. She is hopeful that things will soon improve. She says, "Mwen kwe bondye ap di yon mo nan sa" ("I believe that God is going to say a word about that".)

As you can see, our newest staff very much fit the mold of our veteran team! It is a privilege to work with them.

SAMDI

Recent internet pictures of Haiti depict the most grave and violent scenarios. It is difficult to envision the war-torn country in any other way, but beauty is there. Beauty lies in the high hills above Port-au-Prince, in the soft, pillowy sand and crystal clear waters of Gele and Akabay beaches, in the swelling coconut palms, chalk cliffs and jungle-clad rolling mountains, but mostly and importantly, beauty is found in the heart of Haitians who still believe in the country's beauty and allow that beauty to manifest itself in music, poetry, short stories, and other artistic forms. Samdi, is one such artist who believes in love ... love of self, others, and his country. Though Port-au-Prince, his birth home, is tormented by violence, Samdi, a cubist style abstract artist, remembers his love for Haiti and people in his paintings. Of his work, he says he "creates a space where self is looking inwards and possibilities are endless." His work can reflect deep emotional trauma and at the same time express the beauty of love. We hope you too will remember and seek the beauty that still exists in Haiti. #dontgiveuponhaiti www.samdiatisla.com



Volunteers Power the Run

By Noreen Connolly
(Lamp Volunteer!)

Lamp for Haiti's third Annual 5k Run & Walk on April 28 in Newark's Branch Brook Park was a huge success. The success was due in part to the help received from our extraordinary volunteers. This year, the Lamp was fortunate to have an abundance of volunteer assistance including, 21 student volunteers from Montclair High School, one each from Montclair Kimberley Academy and James Caldwell High School, five from Seton Hall University, and, from Montclair State University, Samantha Eloy, a young Haitian-American woman working toward a Master's degree in Public Health. Also, for the first time, Lamp's volunteer crew included representatives from TD Bank.

“Without volunteers these events would not be possible”

With only two paid staff members in the U.S., the Lamp relies on the heavy lifting provided by young and not so young volunteers from around northern New Jersey. According to the Lamp's Director of Development Kelli Devon Herd, “Volunteers

are the backbone of all our fundraising events, and ultimately, Lamp's ability to provide essential healthcare to a population whose medical needs are staggering.”

At the race, which had over 275 entrants and 200 runners, volunteers checked in registered racers, registered walk-in participants, cut fruit for refreshments, set up tables with Haitian artwork, gave out race souvenirs, manned the mid-course water station, took pictures, and distributed T-shirts.

Suzanne Evans, D.V.M., herself a volunteer, who has been recruiting and organizing volunteer help since 2014, said the volunteers were at the park at 6:30 a.m. and got right to work. “We could not have done what we had to do without them,” she said.

Lamp for Haiti's journey with volunteers goes back to its experience after the earthquake of 2010. The devastation in Haiti was all over the news and people looked for ways to help. By 2014, the Lamp's

fundraising was ramping up; Ellen Cunningham, M.D. and Dr. Evans made a presentation about the Lamp's work to the Social Justice Club at Montclair High School and a partnership was born.

For a number of years, local churches and synagogues have provided support for the Lamp, with young volunteers starting a very successful student basketball tournament at St. Cassian's school and summer neighborhood concerts featuring Montclair High School musicians and singers.

Although Dr. Evans has long been reaching out to schools and colleges to recruit volunteers, some volunteers find Lamp for Haiti themselves and become regular, reliable helpers. Members of Seton Hall University's Division of Volunteer Efforts (DOVE) reached out to Ms. Herd and helped with the Annual Gala in 2023. When Dr. Evans asked them for help with the recent 5K race, they were eager to step up.

Kaylen Glover, a member of DOVE who also helped at the November Gala said, “I love this organization and I loved this race - especially the kids and the runners with dogs!”

“It was great - well worth getting up at 5 am!”

“Volunteers are not only crucial to the success of our events, but without them, these events would not be possible,”

Ms. Herd said. Dr. Evans commented on the energy and optimism the young volunteers

bring. “Our supporters love them,” she said. Asked how she felt about the success of this year's Race, Ms. Glover smiled and added, “It was great - well worth getting up at 5 am!”

To find out more about volunteering, or for information about hosting a Lamp for Haiti fundraising event, please call Ms. Herd at 973.619.3302 or email kelli@lampforhaiti.org.

S A V E T H E D A T E

BACK for its 8th Year! It's Hoops for Haiti

This 3 on 3 basketball tournament for teams ranging in age from 6 to 60 (and beyond) was born from then 12-year-old Toby Baer's desire to support the Lamp. He and the Baer family put together this fun-filled afternoon which has since



grown and has become a highly anticipated Lamp event! Hoops takes place 9am to 3pm on **June 15th**. All proceeds directly benefit Lamp for Haiti. Location TBD, please check website for updates.

For more information and to register your team please call or email hoops4haiti@lampforhaiti.org, or click on the Events tab at www.lampforhaiti.org

The Annual Lamp for Haiti Gala and Silent Auction!

JOIN US, November 8, 2024,
at the Glenridge Women's Club.





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P.O. Box 187, Montclair, NJ 07042

Email: admin@lampforhaiti.org

Telephone: 973-866-0060

Website: www.lampforhaiti.org

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This year, our Spring Appeal is a simple request,

Don't Give Up on Haiti! For almost two years now, Haiti has experienced, and continues to experi-

ence, unprecedented political and economic instability, along with an extreme increase in gang activity.

Normal, everyday outings – going to work, school, grocery shopping, visiting family and friends – outings we



take for granted, are near impossible for the women, children and families in Haiti. We are cautiously optimistic that a positive change is near. We know our services are needed more than ever before. We will continue to provide life-saving and essential medical care to the families that look to us and to the many more we are certain will seek our services. For over 18 years, with the support of our community here in the US, Lamp for Haiti has stood as a beacon of hope for the people living in Cité Soleil. We need your help to continue to shine. We haven't given up on Haiti and we ask you too, Please Don't Give Up on Haiti! The Spring Appeal will be extended a bit, until June 17; it is a pillar of our financial schedule! **Make your donation today!**

— Spring Appeal 2024 —

DON'T GIVE UP ON HAITI!