

Lending a helping hand and prayers in Haiti

Nanjemoy man pitches in on relief effort after 'quake

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Submitted photos
Wayne Matthews of Nanjemoy, above center and at right, helps Mario Remedore, assistant director at the Mission Ranch Orphanage, clean and bandage a wound.



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In response to last month's 7.0 magnitude quake, Nanjemoy resident Wayne Matthews spent 10 days at a medical clinic in a Haitian city once controlled by warlords.

Matthews, an evangelist pastor from Marbury Baptist Church, was part of a team of seven people with the Famine Relief Foundation. He served as a nurse to Dr. Sem Victorin, a Haitian doctor, at the Mission Ranch Clinic in Cité Soleil.

Cité Soleil, with an estimated population of 200,000 to 300,000, is on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital.

Evangelist Mondrea Jacobs, founder of Never Say Never Ministries, of Silver Spring, was also on the trip.

During the 10 days after the earthquake, Haiti experienced 10 aftershocks. Many Haitians are sleeping on the streets and those who have homes, don't sleep in them, she said. They are afraid their homes are going to collapse on them.

The team spent their days working at the medical clinic and nights sleeping on the pool deck at a hotel.



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Evangelist Mondrea Jacobs holds a little boy outside Mission Ranch Medical Clinic in Cité Soleil, Haiti.



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"The air was consumed with the smell of death," said Jacobs, adding that they had to wear masks constantly.

"By the time we got to the clinic each day, there were about 20 to 30 people waiting," Matthews said. "... All you heard was pain, crying and screaming. We would clean and bandage wounds" and sew up cuts.

According to Mark Dreibelbis, president of the Famine Relief Foundation, when the Haitian prison collapsed, many of the prisoners returned to Cité Soleil to fight for turf and to re-establish their positions there. For the last five days of their trip, gangs battled in shootouts in and around the Mission Ranch Orphanage, he said.

"We had to get the UN soldiers to escort us to the medical clinic [one day]," Jacobs said.

When Matthews left for the trip to Haiti Jan. 16, he had no idea what he was going to do, he said. "I didn't really want to be a nurse." But, he took a step out of his comfort zone, and now after seeing the devastation firsthand he is encouraging others to do the same.

"One person can make a difference," he said. "To be used in such a way is really a privilege. There are no limits to God. We can do so much more than we ever imagined."

According to Dreibelbis, "Cité Soleil is a cancer. Nobody wants to go there. ... It is the lowest of the bottom rung of poverty in that country. People suffer, they are starving."

"They thirst for more than food and water," Jacobs added. "They want to feel normal. They want to feel loved. ... They have no voice."

However, "being poor can also be a blessing because the tin shacks shook, but they did not fall down," Dreibelbis said. "Some of the small cinderblock buildings came down and people were killed in Cité Soleil, but nothing like what you had in town."

The people are "wonderful" and a joy to be around, Dreibelbis said. "... That's why we concentrate all of our attention there."

The Famine Relief Foundation also owns the Mission Ranch Worship Center, Orphanage and Feeding Center, all of which are located in buildings previously owned by a warlord, who died of AIDS in July 2009. He was the leader of the Evans Gang and hired by President Jean-Bertrand Aristide for assassinations, Dreibelbis said.

Since the earthquake, all of the buildings sustained damage except for the clinic.

The Famine Relief Foundation partnered with the Haiti Clinic, a nonprofit organization committed to improving health care in the tiny island nation, to run the medical clinic.

In the days following the earthquake, the nonprofit provided two doctors and 14 bags of antibiotics and supplies. "Then they sent another 18 boxes while we were there," Dreibelbis said. "They were very instrumental in helping the number and the volume of patients we saw. We saw roughly 1,500 to 2,000 patients in the first two and half weeks."

Although the team returned home last week, the need is still present in Haiti.

"It will take a collaborative effort of people to donate funds to rebuild again," Jacobs said. "It's so important to do whatever you can to help. It's good to give money, but it's even better to give of yourself."

Jacobs and Matthews plan to go back to Haiti in April and hope to take quarterly trips to Cité Soleil.

"We thank the Lord for the privilege to serve," Dreibelbis said. "The Lord has saved us and we will continue doing his service in Cité Soleil."

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