

## **WFWP USA's Haiti Medical Mission Trip organized by Stand Up to Poverty Inc.**

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At a time when medical care and illness prevention awareness have come to the forefront of global attention, a team of medical professionals and volunteers ventured on a special medical mission trip to the Caribbean nation of Haiti in mid-March to provide much-needed care to its impoverished population and help save lives.

Thanks to the generous support of WFWP USA donors, I was able to join the medical mission as WFWP USA senior vice president, together with Rose Gbadamassi, a WFWP member from Minnesota, and we supported a team of hardworking doctors, nurses, medical technicians and other volunteers from March 14 to 24, 2020.

The trip was organized by Stand Up to Poverty Inc. (SU2P), a humanitarian nonprofit that focuses on providing medical services to vulnerable populations through free community health fairs and medical missions such as this one to Haiti. The nonprofit is also a Global Friend of WFWP USA as of this year. Co-founders Astrid Fidelia (who is also CEO) and Jean Alfred, while US citizens, have roots in Haiti and were giving back to their country of birth with love, service and medical aid.

"We are so happy and grateful that Mrs. Angelika Selle, President WFWP USA and Mrs. Fujiko Paul, President WFWP Haiti, collaborated with our medical mission team to serve the Haitian people at this time," said Astrid.

The need for medical care and healing for Haiti is clearly a priority. The country has struggled with poor health for generations, and conditions were vastly exacerbated by the 2010 earthquake that demolished valuable infrastructure including many health centers and a major part of Haiti's primary teaching hospital. Attracting and retaining qualified health professionals is a chronic struggle, which makes SU2P's medical mission trips crucial for the local communities. Each of their three missions to Haiti has served more than 700 to 800 families. Anyone can see that their presence has made a difference in the lives of the people they serve.

The main focus of this particular mission trip was to promote health and oral hygiene, as well to combat chronic diseases and provide gynecological care. In addition to WFWP, SU2P partnered with Stony

Brook Physician Assistant (PA) Program, the Haitian American Kidney Association (HAKA), the Haitian American Veterans Association (HAVA), the Centre Medical de la Communauté Chrétienne (CMCC), Sante Nou and the Salesian Missions in Haiti.



Although the Stony Brook PA students were forced to withdraw from the trip after the New York State Department issued a Level 4 "Do Not Travel" advisory, the rest of the team were determined to continue as planned and set up at the CMCC medical center in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, equipped with a lot of valuable donated medical supplies.

A total of 850 individuals received treatment over the course of the week. We worked with the families at the clinic, directing them to services set up for them. Whether it was to get a pair of eyeglasses or see a general practitioner, I saw many smiles among the people who were waiting to be seen for treatment, including minor surgeries.

The mission was well coordinated and staffed. The dental team, which did a superb job, was headed by Dr. Fritz Fils Aime, who extracted 7 crumbling teeth from an 18 year old male. Many people have poor dental hygiene and had never been seen by a dentist before, which is why the team also provided important hygiene education.

Speaking of education, in a public health session one doctor gave the community vital information about the novel coronavirus. He emphasized the need for social distancing and handwashing, which was well-received by his listeners.

While Astrid focused on the medical aspect of the mission, I focused on the healing. Haiti needs spiritual healing in addition to physical healing. As a pastor I prayed before all the services started; as a holistic

healing advisor, I offered and suggested ways to stay healthy and naturally heal. I gave lectures on how to heal ourselves, and how God has given us everything we need in order to do this -- we just need to know how to cultivate and develop this ability. Air, water, food, and sunlight are essential to life so that our body, mind and spirit can continue to grow. As I taught the kids how to breathe deeply, they had fun standing to breathe.



Although Haiti is struggling with poverty and other challenges, the spirit of Haiti is beautiful. I felt so much heart there. As I was introduced to many different and unique communities of Port-au-Prince, I was intrigued by its people and culture. I see Haiti as a rising star, if a God-centered leadership prevails.

My husband (who is from Haiti) and I adopted a child from Haiti 21 years ago. On my last trip to Haiti, I had witnessed a lot of painful situations; there were many children on the streets and families without homes. However, this visit was very different. I saw hope in the eyes of the children and their parents, especially the babies. I could also see light in the eyes of the mothers. We know when a mother knows that her children are receiving the help they need, her heart is content.

As we left Haiti at the end of our mission, the Salesian Fathers at the CMCC bid us farewell, and hoped to see us on the next mission in October. I would have to say this was the most successful humanitarian mission I've been on, and everything I saw revealed the power of WFWP's vision of people working together to establish a culture of heart. This is the age of the mother, and I believe we can absolutely change the world with that kind of heart. I will conclude with these words from Astrid: "With love, poverty will become history."