



between

FRIENDS

News from Friends of the Children of Haiti

October, 2007

Friends begins surgical program



— Dr. Garron Lukas

CYVADIER, Haiti – Near hopeless, the woman arrived at the Friends of the Children of Haiti clinic desperate for help.

Since her teen years, a tumor gradually had grown on the outside of her head. Three decades later, it had ballooned to the size of softball, the mass rife with flies and lice.

"It was malignant," says Dr. Garron Lukas of Landrum, South Carolina, a Friends volunteer since 2001. "And any malignant tumor will kill you eventually, if something else doesn't kill you first."

In years past, as with any patient needing surgery, Friends would have had no choice but to send the woman to a government hospital - and pray for the best. However, that method rarely allowed Friends the ability to monitor the surgery and post-operative care.

Now though, after three years of planning, Friends has partnered with a private hospital in Jacmel to begin a surgical program

"This was a big step for us," says Lukas, the chief mover behind the project.

The effort got a huge boost this spring, thanks to a \$45,000 grant from The Carolina Legacy Trust, based in South Carolina. The foundation is headed by Jim Anthony, owner of The Cliffs Communities, a trio of private developments where Lukas now calls home. The generous grant, the first for the foundation outside the Carolinas, will go a long way toward launching the surgical program to a successful start.

"I think it lays the foundation for a lot of good things to come,"
Lukas says.

Meanwhile, Friends found another ally in Dr. Jean-Robert Martinez, who in his native Jacmel runs Centre Hospitalier Christian Martinez, a small private hospital about five miles from the Friends clinic in Cyvadier. During the past few years, Friends gradually has outfitted the five-bed facility with an anesthesia machine and other key pieces of surgical equipment.

Most of the gear and essential supplies have come from Provena Covenant Medical Center in Urbana, Illinois where Lukas used to work.

"We've really tried to upgrade the operating room," Lukas says. "Now we're able to use it pretty much exclusively (during each trip), which is nice."

During the February trip, Lukas had the assistance of nurse anesthetist Bart Shields of Provena Covenant. In July, Friends hired one of Martinez's partners, family-practice physician Frantzo Nelson, to assist during surgeries and handle post-operative care. Nelson has since been retained by Friends as Surgical Liaison Officer.

In February, Lukas performed 20 major surgeries and 10 minor operations. One of the major surgeries involved removing the giant mass from the long-suffering woman's head. The procedure went flawlessly.

"These patients have no medical care," Lukas says. "It's pretty remarkable what you can do relatively simply."

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CALENDAR

Nov. 6-17, 2007

MEDICAL MISSION

Cyvadier, Haiti

Jan 20- Feb 1, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

Mar 24 -Apr 6, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

May 18- 30, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

July 13 -25, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

August 4, 2008

GOLF OUTING EVENT

Arrowhead C.C.

September 7 -19, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

Nov 9- 21, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

Days later, as the woman convalesced in the hospital, Lukas went to check on her. A throng of beaming family members signing songs of joy and thanksgiving surrounded her bed.

"That's very touching," Lukas says.

In July, Lukas completed 16 more surgeries in just three days, thanks to an improving Haitian support staff. "We were able to do a lot in three days," he says. "It's become a system now. They understand what to expect from us, and we understand what to expect from them."

The new program has wowed Friends founder Richard Hammond.

"Everything went well," he says. "I think that it was great. The Haitian people are very happy. I think ... we are going to be overwhelmed with people needing surgery."

Lukas hopes to expand the program to include a surgical effort coordinated with every Friends general practice team. Meanwhile, he will further forge the relationship between Friends and the hospital by leading at least three surgical teams a year.

"I think it lays the foundation for a lot of good things to come," he says.

Friends sees 'firsts' in JULY

This July marked not only Friends' first summer team effort, but also a record number of patient visits during the two-week stint. The team's 26 volunteers, including 12 newcomers, treated 2,643 patients.

"From day one, everybody jumped right in and did what they had to do," said team leader Sue Behrens, APRN, of East Peoria, Illinois. "I am very proud of the work this team accomplished and the patient care they provided."

In yet another first, oxygen was available on-site, which helped to address an increase in severe asthma cases likely triggered by the summer's stifling heat and humidity. One of the many distressed patients spent the night at the clinic, receiving oxygen and respiratory treatments throughout. "Without the oxygen, that patient likely would not have survived," said Behrens.

Meanwhile, Friends' personnel visited a Jacmel prison, at the request of local law-enforcement authorities. The prison houses 400 prisoners (the youngest just 14 years old) jammed into fewer than 20 cells. Dr. Bill Edwards of Peoria, Illinois, and Behrens evaluated 23 patients with various severe illnesses, including tuberculosis, HIV, tetanus and syphilis.

"With that many people in one cell, they were re-infecting everyone in the cell. It was a vicious cycle," Behrens said. "I'm not sure if this courtesy visit by Friends will continue in the future, but I think it would be a benefit for these prisoners."

To view a photograph of the Friends July 2007 team visit: <http://www.fotcoh.org/gallery.html>



Just updated:

Friends Golf Outing - The 9th Annual Friends Golf Outing event held on August 6th at Arrowhead C.C. was a great success. 120 golfers participated and over \$25,000 was raised at the event to help Friends continue to bring medical care to their patients in Haiti. The Friends Golf Outing Committee sincerely thanks all who supported this event and cordially invites everyone to attend again next year (on August 4th) when we will mark our tenth anniversary!

Friends 2008 Schedule - Friends is very pleased to announce that they will send six general practice medical teams to the clinic in Cyvadier in 2008; Jan 20-Feb 1, Mar 24-Apr 6, May 18-30, July 13-25, Sep 7-19 and Nov 9-21. Please contact Friends at: email@fotcoh.org or visit www.fotcoh.org for further information about volunteer opportunities in 2008.

BETWEEN FRIENDS is distributed quarterly to inform supporters about the Friends of the Children of Haiti (FOTCOH) medical missions. Submissions for BETWEEN FRIENDS are welcomed for consideration and should be sent to: email@fotcoh.org. The Friends of the Children of Haiti is a non-profit organization.

FRIENDS OF THE
CHILDREN
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