



between **FRIENDS**

News from Friends of the Children of Haiti

May, 2008

Low birth weights increasing challenge at clinic



Four pounds at two months old

*“If we can
intervene
we can help,”*

Kramer says.

CYVADIER, Haiti – On her initial trip to Haiti, Dr. Wendy Van Ittersum blanched at the sight of the babies.

“It’s kind of horrifying,” says Van Ittersum, a pediatrician at Children’s Hospital of Illinois who made her first volunteer trip with Friends of the Children of Haiti in January. “These babies are so skinny. I’ve never seen babies that were so little.”

Low birth weights are an increasing challenge at the Friends clinic due to the escalating food shortage in Haiti. Many mothers suffer from medical problems, the most prevalent being poor nutrition, says another volunteer, Dr. Beth Kramer, also a pediatrician at Children’s Hospital of Illinois.

“They can breast feed their babies, as long as they’re eating every day,” Kramer says. “If they’re not eating enough, they’re not going to produce enough breast milk.”

Many mothers in poor, rural Haiti do not understand that connection. They have no access to or knowledge of pre-natal care – not even basics, like vitamins. Such services are rare in rural Haiti. Moreover, those services would be unaffordable for most mothers.

So, when problems arise, many mothers do not know of medical options. In a recent case at the clinic, a mother came in with two-month old twins: one was healthy; the other weighed just four pounds. The mother said she had been feeding both by breast, but one would not thrive. Still, in that she had been faithfully feeding the ailing infant, she assumed there was nothing more to be done. When she got to the clinic, Friends doctors explained that the baby was severely malnourished, and immediately initiated supplemental feedings for the baby with nutrient rich formula. The mother and baby were later transported to the Missionaries of Charity, Order of Mother Teresa in nearby Jacmel for continuing assistance with feedings and palliative care.

Even in less drastic and obvious cases, poor nutrition makes babies more susceptible to diarrheal diseases, respiratory infections and other leading killers of Haitian infants. Those wee ones who survive face further battles: the prevalent problems of disease and malnutrition runs rampant, in part for a lack of well-baby programs.

“If we can intervene, we can help,” Kramer says.

Friends is striving to establish a maternal and child health care program to assist pregnant moms through their pregnancies. That way, mothers stand a better chance of delivering healthier, heavier babies who will have the opportunity to thrive.

CALENDAR

May 16, 2008

SOSYETE POTOMITAN EVENT

Cyd's Gourmet Kitchen
Peoria, Illinois

May 18 - 30, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

July 13 - 20, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

August 4, 2008

GOLF OUTING EVENT

Arrowhead C.C.

Sep 7 -19, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

Nov 9 - 21, 2008

GENERAL PRACTICE TEAM

Cyvadier, Haiti

Friends establishes foundation

Friends has formed a new corporation aimed at meeting the needs of our growing services and goals.

The Friends of the Children of Haiti Foundation will focus on raising funds for operating expenses and capital projects. A separate fund-raising arm has become vital as Friends increases the number of medical teams and formulates plans for expanding clinic facilities.

The Foundation will be run by a new, eighteen-member board, which will function independently of the Friends board of directors. Tim O'Brien, elected as president of the Foundation board, hopes to also raise public awareness of Friends.

"The Foundation was created to broaden the range and scope of FOTCOH," says O'Brien, who is a Financial Advisor and Senior Vice President at Morgan Stanley in Peoria, Illinois. "In addition to raising funds, the Foundation will spread the message of FOTCOH's mission to new donors and new volunteers."

Just updated:

• **Friend's First March-April Team**

The first March-April team reported a successful clinic, with nearly 2,000 patients served.

The team featured 13 volunteers – two physicians, one pharmacist, nine nurses and two non-medical staff – from Illinois, Washington, Kentucky, Minnesota and Texas. One of the physicians assisting at the clinic was Dr. Franzo Neslon, a practitioner from Jacmel who also works as Friends surgical program liaison. In 7 1/2 days, the clinic served 1,904 patients.

This team marked the first time Friends had run the clinic in early spring. This expansion of care means Friends will staff the clinic six times this year, bringing us closer to providing continuous care to the people of southern Haiti.

"Every single volunteer makes a difference," said team leader John Krajewski of Bloomington, Ill. "If someone hasn't been on a trip in years they should consider going again. Many people can't go every year, but they should feel welcome to rejoin us."

• **Sosyete Potomitan Event**

Friends will welcome volunteers and supporters to the inaugural gathering of the Sosyete Potomitan on Friday May 16th at Cyd's Gourmet Kitchen in Peoria, Illinois. Cocktails and ores d'ourves will be served 6-9p.m. with all proceeds to benefit Friends medical programs in Haiti. For more information contact Jane & John Gray at: 309-453-0672 or jag194@comcast.net.

• **Friend's Golf Outing**

The 10th Annual Friends Golf Outing event will be held August 4th at Arrowhead C.C. in Edelstein, Illinois. Please "save the date" now on your calendar and plan on participating in Friends biggest single-day fund-raiser event. Contact the Friends Golf Outing Committee at: 309-691-4846 for further details.

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

FRIENDS  OF THE
CHILDREN
OF HAITI

P.O. Box 789
Peoria, IL 61652

ph. 309.369.2634
email@fotcoh.org
www.fotcoh.org