



between FRIENDS

News from Friends of the Children of Haiti

September, 2009

Friends team scrambles to save life



Claireus Dumond

CYVADIER, Haiti —The picture was as clear as it was dire: Claireus Dumond would die, unless someone could brainstorm a makeshift way to save the tiny newborn — and fast.

"He was barely responsive," says Dr. Sara Rusch, who first examined Claireus at Friends of the Children of Haiti's July clinic. "I thought he might die in front of us." The Friends medical team rejected that notion and scrambled to save the child, despite a lack of necessary, specialized equipment.

Claireus' precarious case underscored multiple challenges that constantly face Haiti and the clinic.

Eight days prior, his mother had died while giving birth to Claireus at home. That sad scenario happens often in Haiti, where extreme poverty means most births occur outside a hospital. A nationwide scarcity of prenatal care means extra childbirth complications, usually a death sentence in the absence of medical assistance. Haiti by far has the highest maternal death rate in the Western Hemisphere (1 out of every 100 live births), leaving thousands of Haitian children as orphans.

An aunt was left to care for Claireus. But she already had four children of her own straining her meager resources; she was none too enthralled to have another mouth to feed. Also, though breast feeding her own baby, she erroneously believed her milk was too old for Claireus. Thus, she had been feeding him only sweet tea.

When the aunt brought the infant to the clinic, Claireus weighed just four pounds and suffered severe dehydration. He was limp, weak pulse, almost lifeless - with a temperature of over 102 degrees.

His emaciated body was too fragile and small for a standard intravenous line to replenish fluids. A typical IV bag would just force too much fluid into his system too quickly.

So Sue Behrens, an advance practice nurse and the team leader, joined EMT Chris Robinson to figure out a solution.

Robinson says, "I worked with Sue in the ER (at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria, Ill.), and we're used to finding ways to get things done."

Behrens says she recalled her days as a Life Flight nurse, where flying to remote accident scenes often meant makeshift medical care with whatever she had on the helicopter. "We always had to do MacGyver moves, as we called them," she says. "You have to make do with what you got."

"I thought he might die in front of us."

— Dr. Sara Rusch

continued on next page

CALENDAR

September 7-18, 2009

General Practice Team

Cyvadier, Haiti

October 9, 2009

Soseyete Potomitan event

The Butcher Block at Junction City
Peoria, IL

November 9-20, 2009

General practice team

Cyvadier, Haiti

January 18-29, 2010

General practice team

Cyvadier, Haiti

March 15-26, 2010

General practice team

Cyvadier, Haiti

May 10-21, 2010

General practice team

Cyvadier, Haiti

July 12-23, 2010

General practice team

Cyvadier, Haiti

September 6-17, 2010

General practice team

Cyvadier, Haiti

November 8-19, 2010

General practice team

Cyvadier, Haiti

Digging through clinic supplies, Behrens found a tiny needle and affixed it to an IV line. She managed to find a vein on Claireus's arm and delicately slid the needle into the miniscule blood vessel. Then Robinson attached the tube to a syringe and painstakingly administered the solution drop by drop, each with a push of his thumb. "It's right up an EMT's alley, to do something like that," Robinson says.

A combination of fluids and antibiotics began to revive Claireus that very day. Later, he was even able to suck formula and cry weakly. The infant went home with his aunt, who was given specific instructions for feeding and medicine — plus orders to bring him back to the clinic every day for additional care.

By the end of the clinic, his eyes had brightened, and he was looking around alertly. Clinic volunteers patiently explained to his aunt the need for continued care, and a Friends volunteer offered to support the child through the organization's child-sponsorship program.

Dr. Rusch says Claireus has a decent shot at survival. "I hope so," she says. "It'll depend on if the aunt takes care of him. I think he has a reasonable chance."

For Rusch, that case, along with the rest of her experiences with the July team, made for a memorable first visit to Haiti.

"For me, it was quite an eye-opener," says Rusch, the regional dean of the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria. "Though I intellectually understood poverty, you don't understand it until you see Haiti."

Friends names executive, medical directors



Eric Behrens

Long-time Friends board president Eric Behrens has been named Executive Director. Behrens first traveled to Haiti in 1987 as a journalist for the Peoria (Ill.) Journal Star to report on the efforts of noted obstetrician Dr. Paul Blough and Friends co-founder and CEO Dick Hammond, who had already begun work there.

Behrens has since made 50 trips to Haiti working as a journalist and Friends volunteer.

As executive director, Behrens is responsible for the overall management and operation of Friends, in close coordination with CEO Dick Hammond in Haiti.

"I feel a deep responsibility for the well-being of our Haitian patients," says Behrens. "I look forward to working with our volunteers and supporters in strengthening our overall business capacity, to help ensure the continuing success of our mission."

Dr. Bill Edwards has been named Medical Director. Edwards, a pediatric hospitalist at OSF St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria, has been working with Friends since 2006.

"This is a very exciting time to be part of FOTCOH," says Edwards. "The organization and its people, both here in the US and in Haiti, are continuing to make such a difference in the lives of so many Haitians. I am extremely honored to be part of FOTCOH and look forward to helping expand our mission and continue to provide excellent care to the neediest of people."



Dr. Bill Edwards

Just updated:

Soseyete Potomitan event

Friends Soseyete Potomitan members and guests will gather at a member recognition event on Friday October 9, 2009, at The Butcher Block at Junction City in Peoria, Ill. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served from 5:30 to 9 p.m., and an informational program will be provided along with a silent auction. All proceeds will benefit Friends' medical efforts in Haiti. For more information please contact Friends at: 309-369-2634 or email@fotcoh.org.

BETWEEN FRIENDS is distributed 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