

Wakulla County Commissioner Howard Kessler Lends a Helping Hand in Haiti; Ongoing Blog

UPDATE: Friday, January 22, 2010 2:53 P.M. EST:

Latest News - Earthquake Update

Note: Gruesome. Be forewarned.

Here is an update from the Haiti medical trauma team:

The level of desperation is as high as ever... I think the only real difference is that in Port au Prince, people are trying desperately to get out and most struggle to find a way. Indeed, most have no way.

Days with amputations (Howard did one on a 2 year old yesterday, for example); consistent screaming throughout the [hospital] for the procedures that are performed with NO anesthesia, or for grief related to the loss of loved ones; concerns about aftershocks (many people run out of buildings or jump through windows when they occur); natural fears for one's safety; my going into the ill working stench filled morgue and seeing bodies stacked like cord wood... 3 and 4 high; the faces of hope when carefully walking amongst the living laying on any spare piece of space on the floors or hospital grounds...

This is life, or more appropriately, a primal attempt of the Haitian people to stay alive and our feeble but sincere attempt to help them meet that goal.

Haitians now speak of January 12th much in the way we in the U.S. spoke of 9/11. A day that will forever be etched in the Haitian peoples minds. For Haitians, amongst other things, it will be a day that rendered countless numbers into the realm of life as an amputee, a day to start life over again because of the loss of all their possessions, and a day when it is now essentially unheard of to identify an individual who did not lose a friend or family member to the quake.

Moving forward, the situation is more bleak than ever. The airport is a loss, the one place with jobs and technology (Port au Prince) is a disaster area, and the few with resources or an education are fleeing the country for the US (round the clock US military flights out of PAP)... likely never to return. And, lets not forget that the threat of infectious disease like Cholera and Dengue fever loom like a storm on the horizon.

Wednesday, January 20, 3:17 p.m. EST:

The medical trauma team was shaken out of bed this morning by the 6.1 after-shock. There were no injuries and they are currently working at the hospital. Compassion International has requested to partner with Mission Possible by using one of our facilities as a food distribution point for local communities. Of course, we think it's a great idea. We are looking at additional opportunities for bringing in food by water and also aircraft parachute drop. All the schools in Haiti are closed. All the banks (as far as we know) in Haiti are also closed, creating additional difficulties.

The Mission Possible church in the DR (Ebenezer) is doing everything it can to assist Haitian refugees. We are hearing reports of our scholarship students giving up their personal clothes and all their scholarship money to help out the Haitians. More information to follow soon.

UPDATE: Tuesday, January 19, 2010

Finally got to St Marc an outlying town about 2 hrs from Port au Prince pop 250,000. Remaining portion of team went to hospital and asked administrator (1 wk after quake) (within 12 hours after quake there were 400 seriously injured people most of whom have orthopedic problems) what he most needed. He had received 2 orthopedists and a general surgeon, part of a team put together from Mass General Hospital, Administrator without hesitating said more orthopedic surgeons. I spoke with one of orthopedists and I start tomorrow morning at 8 and expect 12 hr days. Much to tell but we are preparing some of the supplies that got through with us to take to hospital tomorrow. People still dying from ortho injuries a week after the quake. Glad I am here. It is so sad. I don't think I will be taking photos of the devastation. Patients lying on the floor on mattresses. Helped with some bandaging before leaving the hospital. The team in place at this hospital is 22 or 23 with an anesthesiologist. They have done a lot to date. ~ Howard

UPDATE: Tuesday, January 19, 2010 4:56 p.m. EST

Great news: the medical relief team found an armed escort from the airport and is en-route to the hospital where they will work alongside the Haitian doctors and nurses. This team has its own x-ray machines, anesthesia machines, and upwards of 1,000 pounds of equipment and supplies. One concern is several pallets of supplies that are still un-accounted for. We're not sure if they are still in Florida or are somewhere in Haiti. The hospital is treating hundreds of Haitians who have left the capital in search of medical care which is unavailable in Port au Prince. Please keep the whole situation, as well as their safety, in prayer.

UPDATE: Sunday, January 17, 2010

I am traveling with a team that is eager to start our mission's work. I will attempt to describe the group's members as follows:

Mark Atkinson: group leader, Internationally well known diabetes researcher, He has coordinated much help and support and through the Family Church of Gainesville, Who has participated many missions to Haiti (Mission Possible "Ourmissionispossible.org) and other countries.

Carol Atkinson, wife, co-team leader, mother of three and passionate missionary. Brings her organizational skills to bear and well one of her three children – Heather- to this mission; Melanie and Philip are both in school.

Heather Atkinson, UF graduate who has worked on multiple mission trips to multiple countries.

Sherry Meurer, R.N. who has been on countless multiple medical missionary trip to many countries (India, Brazil, Honduras, etc, 5th trip to Haiti). Her husband will be leaving tomorrow with a team from Shands Hospital to western Haiti. Her son has served twice in Iraq as a Marine and in attending college and a daughter Sarah who is also in College.

Sandy Frost, R.N., works in NICU and just completed Nurse Practitioner and has been on multiple medical missionary trips around the world.

David Hopper, M.D., from North Carolina, Family Practice, Married, 4 children, Friendly Hills Christian Church, frequent medical mission trips mainly to Sudan.

Howard Kessler, MD, Orthopedic Surgeon, County Commissioner, first medical missionary trip. Wife and two children. Who has brought his FSU medical school cap.

Dr. Howard Kessler, Wakulla County Chairman, left for Haiti on Sunday, January 17 in order to provide medical aid to earthquake victims in Haiti. We will be updating this article with updates from Dr. Kessler during his time there.

This information originally published on January 19 2010.

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