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Southern Adventist University Master of Social Work Student visits Hopital Adventiste de Haiti.

By Julie Falle

Sunday, as I regretfully entered the airport I left a world that was positively incomparable to anything else I had ever experienced. I thought about the moments before leaving this place of so many contradictions. I was speaking with a Haitian National who said, "Many people portray Haiti as ugly and helpless." Did you take pictures of the beautiful Haiti? Will you tell your friends and family of the mountains and the beaches of Jacmal? No one sees the beauty or the ingenuity of my country. I have lived in FL now for 6 years and I cannot stay away. I was supposed to stay only a month and have remained for three.

What could have possibly enticed this man to hold on to this stinking crumbling city? Was it the people? Certainly it wasn't the food or rudimentary living accommodations. Dare I ask? He sat up in his seat and smiled. All you NGO's will eventually leave and we will have Haiti again. Yes, the people. It is so much more than that. It is the community's hope, faith and trust in a better day.

I was reminded of a skeleton of a wheel chair I had seen while conducting home visits in Carrefour Port au Prince, all wheels and brakes with a plastic lawn chair perched precariously on top. A luxurious means of transport for some who have been bedridden for years due to birth defects and malnutrition.

Haiti is a place where very little is obtained from very great efforts. I remember sanitation workers armed with wheel barrows, shovels and matches; it's no wonder the

foundation of roads and gutters are paved with piles of the byproducts of hard living and disregard.

I digress, the hospital is a refuge of "order" in Carrefour and is continuing to expand thanks to the army of volunteers and donors dedicated to the dream of relative self sufficiency once again. I was told that there are over 3,000 NGO's in Haiti, a statistic that seems impossible when faced with the immediate needs of Port au Prince and surrounding areas. It is not uncommon to have overlapping agencies in some areas with very little local knowledge of services. After interviewing several hospital workers the situation was presented in this way, there is no standardized system of operations yet, we are still working case by case. With limited funding and a desire to return to sustainable practice the hospital seems to be receptive to the idea of standardizing, partially through using social workers, to determine the greatest risks and needs. The hospital spends tremendous amounts of time and energy determining these and recognizes the inefficiencies. "We need an army of social workers" from fundraising to program implementing and education. There is no need lost here. So the idea is to create yet another partnership. One of education, consultancy and brokering. Haiti has social workers of varied abilities needing assistance in risk assessment, program organizing and fundraising. Currently there are no social workers hired by the hospital. The hospital

will, however, soon be adopting several local rehab community workers from another organization, it is currently unknown whether this will be a permanent position. Much of my time while at the hospital was spent writing a proposal for a permanent supervisory social work position. The goal: three fold: 1) create a social work job description for the hospital 2) coordinate a volunteer network that requires very little hospital funding or upkeep 3) Partner with a university in creating intern opportunities for MSW students and offering free SW training and education to hospital community workers eventually including the greater community.

With Southern's new MSW international program, a partnership of this nature could be nothing but positive. With a long term social work volunteer present to supervise social work interns a proposal has been written for \$6,000 which is equivalent to Adventist Health International's stipend volunteer positions. This does not include room and board or airfare. At present we are pursuing multiple funding sources to make this program more affordable for the hospital as well as the social work interns. The present need for social workers is vast; from creating a payment system to conducting psycho-socials. All agree that this should be the work of the Haitian people but as in many developing countries someone must make the first move. It is your move and Haiti's future. I hope you will join us in this endeavor.

Contact: julief@southern.edu for more information.