

Yon sèl dwèt pa manje kalalou

You cannot eat okra with one finger. (We must collaborate).

Tulane/MARCH Newsletter, Issue #3, November 18, 2005

Dear Friends of Tulane-MARCH,

Approaching this Thanksgiving at Tulane and in Mirebalais, Haiti, we are thankful for survival (collectively and individually), but continue to find many causes for concern. I found myself on duty with the HIV staff at New Orleans's Charity Hospital when Hurricane Katrina struck. There we stayed for 6 days, caring for patients, waiting for rescue, and watching as the social fabric of our city came to tatters.



The Charity Hospital HIV team joyously reaches Dallas.

In the hospital with me, enduring the storm and its aftermath, was Dr. Girvede Alexandre, a Haitian pediatrician. She had come to New Orleans for intensive training in HIV and for a break from the social chaos of Haiti. Instead, Dr. Alexandre was engulfed by our unanticipated catastrophe, which separated her from her family, her belongings and her passport. Thankfully, we found each other in the same swampboat as our emergency rescuers guarded us from snipers, and guided us to rickety buses that would eventually circumvent road blocks to the airport. Through the spectacular generosity of our Dallas supporters, a jet flew us to safety.

The experience was one we hope we will never repeat. But as our infrastructure crumbled around us, it was difficult not to notice commonalities characterizing the efforts to provide basic, decent health care in post-Katrina New Orleans, and in rural Haiti. Reflecting on these commonalities as I described our circumstances to a Haitian colleague, he concluded « *Haiti is Katrina everyday!* ». He is right, of course, on many levels. Conditions in Haiti *are* like post-Katrina New Orleans, *everyday*. As disturbing as it was to provide care to people with AIDS for 6 days in a US hospital with no running water, no electricity, no radiology, and limited food, I must concede that my Haitian counterparts face crumbling infrastructure, social unrest, roadblocks and threats of violence in the workplace *everyday*.

Are there commonalities characterizing the root causes of poverty, violence, and AIDS in Haiti as well as in the Southeastern United States? Certainly there are. The legacies of slavery, inequality, poor education, and lack of commitment to social programs can be found throughout the histories of these regions.

Let us learn from history. Join us in our commitment to fight poverty and AIDS in Haiti and in the Southeastern United States. Please choose this Thanksgiving to share your blessings with our unique program.

Sincerely,

Ruth Berggren and the Tulane-MARCH Team

Haitian Doctor Receives HIV/AIDS Training at Tulane

In August, Tulane was proud to host Dr. Girvede Alexandre, a pediatrician from Mirebalais MARCH hospital, for intensive training in HIV. Dr. Alexandre worked alongside Dr. Ruth Berggren on the AIDS ward of Charity Hospital, and attended lectures and seminars in infectious diseases and pediatrics. Dr. Holly Murphy arranged tutorials on topics of concern in Haiti, including management of infant diarrhea, (presented by Dr. Ravi Vadlamudi) and syphilis (Dr. Guesly Delva). Though her time at Tulane was abbreviated by Katrina, Dr. Alexandre states that she has already put to use knowledge gained in New Orleans. Thanks to Cathlen Poulard for being Dr. Alexandre's translator and guide, as well as to Drs. Vadlamudi and Delva for taking time to share their expertise with Dr. Alexandre.

Profile of an accompagnateur

Genese is an accompagnateur with special qualifications.... she is HIV positive and has been on triple therapy for more than two years. Her ex-partner used to travel to the Dominican Republic, buying and selling merchandise. She was unaware that he had other women, but believes she contracted HIV from him. She was struggling to provide for her two small girls, until Tulane/MARCH asked her to be an accompagnateur.



She loves her work and feels good about it. "The job of an accompagnateur is really important to help people that live with this virus. The accompagnateur can talk with them so that they have strength and so that they don't think about this disease too much."

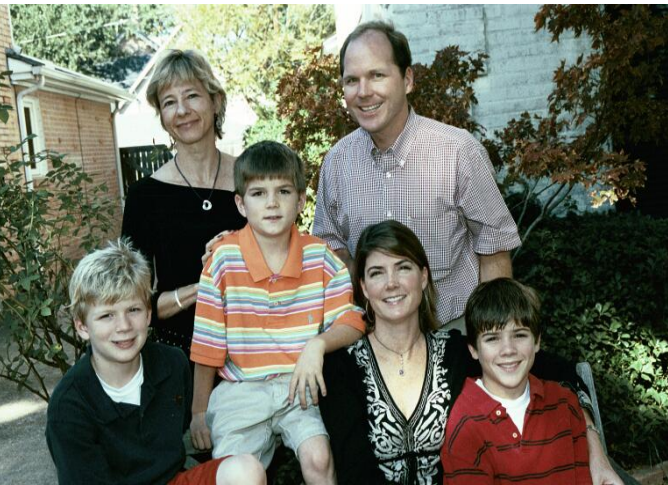
Genese is the accompagnateur of a 2 year old HIV+ boy. She walks twenty-five minutes to get to his house, twice a day. He is too young to swallow pills, so she has to ensure that he receives the proper dosing of medication in liquid solution. If he gains or loses weight, she sees that he goes for an appointment with the clinician to reconfigure his dosage. Genese also helps his mother keep him clean. "If I go to the market, I pass by their house an extra time, and I bathe him. I don't want him to get a skin infection."

In her spare time, Genese performs with a theater group. On World AIDS Day in 2004, her group did a series of skits with HIV prevention messages. Way to go, Genese!



Dr. Alexandre (left) listens as Dr. Murphy and Dr. Delva discuss the syphilis protocol in Mirebalais.

What Tulane-MARCH is thankful for this Thanksgiving



The Collins family with Dr. Ruth Berggren

When the Collins family heard that MARCH/Mirebalais was in dire need of a motorcycle, they instantly stepped up to the plate and made the needed donation. Eddy Philogene, the accompagnateur supervisor who will most use the motorcycle, sent this thank you letter:

“When I received the news that people donated money for us to buy a motorcycle, I was overjoyed. I am very pleased because we have been suffering for the lack of a motorcycle. I haven’t been able to go and see the patients and supervise the accompagnateurs because I haven’t had the means to reach them easily. I have had to use public transport, and walk long distances to reach some of our patients.

This gift will allow us to do much better work. I will be able to see the patients more often and supervise the accompagnateurs on a regular basis. Furthermore, I will be able to go to our farthest site, Savanette. Another benefit of the motorcycle is that I will be able to conduct one-on-one trainings with all the people living with HIV/AIDS in our program to teach them hygiene and how to treat the drinking water, so they can protect themselves and not catch another sickness when they eat and drink.

It is Bon Dieu (Good God) who spoke to the heart of the people to give money to buy a motorcycle for us and for our work to be accomplished.

We pray for *Bon Dieu* to continue to bless these generous people, so that they can have more blessings for their family and friends and progress further in their lives.

I cannot thank these people enough and I will never finish telling them thank you for this gift that they have given us. Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

Mesi anpil, Bruce and Cynthia Collins!

MESI ANPIL!

Due to Katrina, Tulane-MARCH was unable to access your donated funds for 2 months. Thankfully our accompagnateurs were paid and patients continued to receive assistance for transportation for clinic visits and for social needs. All this was possible because generous donors **Ledee and Bill Sachs** and **Gilead Pharmaceuticals** responded to our urgent pleas for financial assistance. A huge thanks to these rescuers! Thanks also to the Dallas Haiti Project for help collecting and transferring the funds to Haiti. Tulane/MARCH is profoundly grateful for your compassion in our time of need.

WOW! Wedding guests of Holly Murphy and Ravi Vadlamudi contributed \$1,500 to Tulane/MARCH in lieu of gifts. **THANK YOU** and best wishes to the newlyweds!



Eddy Philogene with our new Honda moto!

Thanks to caring “**Coffee Moms**” in **Waco, Texas**, an HIV-affected family of five will receive a new tin roof on their house before the next rainy season! An extra thanks goes to Gretchen Eichenberg, whose focus and dedication is an inspiration.

Tulane/MARCH
1430 Tulane Avenue, SL-87
New Orleans, LA 70112



Tulane/MARCH is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization founded in 2003 to provide access to health and HIV care to the rural poor in Haiti. It is the result of collaboration between infectious disease doctors at Tulane University Department of Tropical Medicine and a Haitian organization called MARCH (Management and Resources for Community Health).

Please send your comments and donations to the following address. Checks may be made out to Tulane-MARCH.

*Tulane-MARCH
Tulane Adult Infectious Diseases
1430 Tulane Avenue, SL-87
New Orleans, LA 70112
(504)587-7316*



The West 900 Team from Charity Hospital with their rescuers at a Fort Worth airport. As we have learned in Haiti and in New Orleans, teamwork is the key to survival, sanity and success.