



FAMILY HEALTH MINISTRIES

Supporting Haitian communities in *their* efforts to build and sustain healthy families.

October 2016

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The Ministry of Presence: It is All About the Relationships *By Meredith Barkley*

Haiti may be one of the poorest nations on the planet, but folks at Greensboro's Westminster Presbyterian Church are drawn to it year after year.

They have looked past the teeming slums, chaotic traffic and litter-strewn streets and found people who have much to teach about human resilience and dignity. They have found friends.

For nearly a decade Durham-based Family Health Ministries (FHM) has been their guide. FHM has led Westminster groups the first week of October each year to do medical clinics in a poor suburb of the capital, Port au Prince.

Each year new folks go. Each year they come back inspired.

"It has meant a great deal to me. It truly has," said Lynda Purcell, who made the trip for the first time in 2015 and plans to go again this fall.

When friends learned of her trip last year they chipped in \$300 to help. Purcell used the money to buy reading glasses, which proved popular. So this year her friends are buying more reading glasses as well as sunglasses and are making fabric cases for them.

"It's a ripple effect. It just keeps on giving," Purcell said of her friends, who aren't even Westminster members. "It was really an uplifting experience for those people, and for us because we had an opportunity to serve."

Since 2000 Westminster has sent 79 different people to Haiti, most with FHM. The church's lengthy relationship with the organization and its nearby headquarters makes FHM standout, said Ann Morris, who directs Westminster's national and international outreach programs.

"There's nothing quite like that," Morris said of Westminster's other missions partners. And, she added: "Missy (Owen), who has led our group, is deeply inspiring."

The trip's effects on participants can be "transformative," Morris said. "People who go there are really touched. I know I was - just blown away by the poverty. I gets into your blood. It's part of who you are. You carry it with you wherever you go."

That describes David Carter, who has taken a number of Haiti trips with FHM and other organizations. He and wife Melissa had wanted to go on a foreign mission trip for a number of years. Family and work stood in the way, though.

With kids grown and work under control, they decided several years ago to do it.

They picked Westminster's Haiti trip because they'd heard it was medical and, therefore, hard to fill.

"It seemed to me that we were pointed in that direction," David Carter said. Perhaps they were. That first trip hooked them and they've returned most years since.

FHM, he said, bills itself as a ministry of presence. To him, that seems more than words. It seems like a commitment.

"That really resonated with me," David Carter said. "I think it resonated with Westminster. We wanted to be there with and for the local people. It seems to me it's people first."

He has been to Haiti with other organizations. While they have done good work in that very poor part of the world, "they didn't seem to have that same presence with folks."

As Purcell put it: FHM and Westminster make "a perfect combination."

Opportunities in 2017



On behalf of the people we serve, Family Health Ministries welcomes you to join us on a mission trip to Haiti. Whether it is your first trip, or you are a seasoned mission traveler, we appreciate the time and resources you will be donating to our work. We know that your contribution of time, talent, energy, days away from home, and the funds you spend for your trip are sacrifices you are choosing to make in order to serve those in need in Haiti.

Come join one of the teams listed below or talk to us about creating your own group. Check our website for new additions and more details. Haiti is waiting for you!

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| March 3-11 | Duke Presbyterian Campus Ministry Team |
| June 10-18 | FHM Medical Team |
| July 15-23 | FHM Vacation Bible School Team |
| October 7-15 | Westminster Presbyterian Church
(Greensboro) Medical Team |

Partner Spotlight: Family Health Ministries Builds Women's Health Center in Haiti

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Over the last 10 years, Duke Global Health Institute has been in partnership with Family Health Ministries. In April they traveled to Haiti and celebrated with us the opening of the Carmelle Voltaire Women's Health Center. The following article is used with their permission and does a lovely job sharing FHM's vision for this new facility.

New Women's Health Center Dedication Draws Many Supporters

On February 20, the Walmers and more than 100 people celebrated the dedication of FHM's new 4,000-square foot Carmelle Voltaire Women's Health Center—four years in the making—in Fondwa, Haiti. Many people from the local community attended the dedication, including some who had labored on the project, as well as others from United States churches who supported the effort.

Members of the nearby St. Antoine Catholic Church Children's Choir, dressed in their freshly-pressed Sunday best, performed at the event and Father Joseph Phillipe of Fondwa gave the blessing. Emmanuel Lambert, mayor of the nearby city of Leogane, and Delson Merisier, Ministry of Health representative, cut the ribbon, marking the official opening of the Women's Health Center.

Center Houses Space For Exams, Births, Education And More

The Women's Health Center has four exam rooms, two birthing suites, a large, open education and training space and guestrooms that can accommodate eight visitors. There is additional space for the baby nursery, a pharmacy, midwives office, reception and administrative space, and five bathrooms.

Much of the medical equipment at the Center came courtesy of Duke's Global Health PLUS program which makes surplus equipment available free of charge to Duke faculty members working on projects in low-resource settings.

The pastel yellow, two-story Women's Health Center sits in the Haitian countryside, 45 minutes up a steep, winding road from the coast atop a small rise that has 360-degree views of mountains, lush valleys and neighboring farms. Just outside the fence surrounding the compound, children play, two dogs chase each other and a bull tethered to a stake in the ground drowsily munches on grass.

One of the Walmers' primary goals is to staff the clinic with Haitians. They have contracted with a local physician who will provide oversight, and they're in the process of hiring nurses and other staff. "Having a local staff will bring a level of care that has never been present in the community," said Kathy



Members of the St. Antoine Catholic Church Children's Choir, from Fondwa, Haiti, performed a dance routine at the recent dedication of the Carmelle Voltaire Women's Health Center.

Walmer. "Visiting volunteer American medical teams will supplement the care provided, but having a Haitian staff will offer important continuity of care."

At Last, A Safe Place For Women To Give Birth

In rural parts of Haiti, most women give birth in their homes because they don't have access to a health care facility and because that is how it has been done for centuries. In some cases a birth attendant with rudimentary training assists the woman, but often the woman delivers her baby with only the assistance of family members. These local practices and infrastructure realities are among the factors contributing to Haiti's exceedingly high infant and maternal mortality rates.

"Women give birth at home because, at least in this area, there hasn't been a place to go," said David Walmer. "Now there is."



CAPTION??
Birthing Center

The Walmers hope to use the large, airy education space to augment the training of traditional birth attendants and educate women about the importance of prenatal care in an effort to encourage some of them to deliver their babies at the Women's Health Center. Local women will also be counseled about the importance of breastfeeding and how to plan their pregnancies.

The Force That Was Carmelle Voltaire

David Walmer first met Carmelle Voltaire, the Women's Health Center's namesake, in 1986. Kathy met her in 2000 when she first began working Haiti after sending the youngest of their five children to kindergarten.

"Carmelle was the kind of person who always made you feel at home," said Kathy. "She saw herself first and foremost as a caregiver." Carmelle Voltaire received her nursing training in Trinidad and returned to her native Haiti to serve.

Carmelle and a fellow nun began their order in rural Fondwa in the 1990s. The order eventually grew to a dozen sisters serving the area. According to Kathy, Carmelle's focus was the well-being of the children in the community. She checked on them at the local school and the area home for at-risk children, most of whom were taken in because their families did not have the means to care for them. Carmelle nursed more than one child back to health after they were rescued from severe malnutrition at the children's home, including the Walmers daughter whom they adopted in 2001.

"When Carmelle was dying of cancer, she said 'my work here is not done,'" said Kathy. "We named the Women's Center after her so that the work she started in the community will live on. It would have been a dream for Carmelle to witness improved health care for women and to see the safe place we have created for women to congregate and encourage each other."

Carmelle Voltaire died from complications of liver cancer at the age of 49 in March 2012.

Building Goodness Brings Walmers' Dream To Fruition

The Charlottesville, Virginia-based Building Goodness Foundation (BGF) is a non-profit that connects skilled volunteers from the design and construction industries with vulnerable communities at home and abroad. BGF was an integral partner to FHM in the construction of the Women's Health Center.

The Walmers worked with BGF to find and negotiate the purchase of the two-acre parcel of land on which the Women's Health Center sits. The Oakwood Foundation donated the funding to BGF to cover the cost of building the Women's Health Center. Volunteer teams of construction workers



For less than the cost of

- 1 matinee movie ticket
- 1 iTunes gift card
- 1 small pizza
- 1 haircut
- 4 Red Box movie rentals

you can help make a difference in the lives of Haitian families.

Your donation will support Family Health Ministries' programs in Haiti:
Healthcare, Research, Education,
Safe Motherhood, and
Spiritual Support.

\$5



Donate online www.FamilyHM.org

representing a broad array of trades from BGF traveled to Haiti to build the Women's Health Center. Diane Hillman, BGF's board chair and Kelly Eplee, its executive director, participated in the Center's dedication.

John Little, a carpenter from Ellensburg, Washington, with a white buzz cut, is a BGF volunteer. He worked on a construction crew that built the roof of the Women's Health Center and attended the Center's dedication ceremony. "I have been a carpenter since I was seventeen," said Little. "But it wasn't until I came to Haiti that I knew why God made me a carpenter."



Carmelle Voltaire Women's Health Center

Save the Date

Saturday, April 22, 2017

FHM Annual Gala and Silent Auction

Join us Saturday, April 22, 2017, 6:00-9:00pm for our annual gala to raise funds for women's health programs in Haiti. The event will be held at the Levin Jewish Community Center, 1937 W. Cornwallis Road, Durham, NC. We will welcome back Annaus Frankel, FHM partner and notable Haitian community leader. FHM supporters will enjoy an evening of music and dancing to EG Peters Band and fabulous food catered by Soigne' Events. The silent auction will again be hosted by Bidpal allowing for both electronic bidding regardless if you are at the event or away on travel. For event sponsorship opportunities or to donate a silent auction item, give us a call at the office, 919-382-5500.



519 **HAITI** **10k/5k RUN/WALK** **SEPTEMBER 24**

On Saturday, September 24th, FHM teamed up with 519 Church for their annual 5K/10K Race along the American Tobacco Trail in Cary, NC. At the printing of this newsletter over \$10,000 in sponsorships had been raised to support the newly opened Carmelle Voltaire Women's Health Center in Tom Gato, Haiti. We particularly want to thank 519 Church and all our great sponsors for making this another successful event!

Corporate Sponsors of the Race

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