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**Mission of Love seeing results in Haiti as work continues**

By J.T. Whitehouse

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**Photos**



Photos special to the Town Crier  
 A group of eager young boys at the Haitian orphanage unload shipping containers from Mission of Love. The containers were later converted to permanent housing for those affected by the earthquake.

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The Mission of Love, based in Austintown, is continuing its support for Haitian aid to help the victims of the earthquake. For Mission of Love director Kathy Price and her volunteers, it has been a non-stop effort.

On Jan. 13 a major earthquake struck Haiti. A Mission of Love team was on board an airplane heading home after a mission trip to Casa, Guatemala, where volunteer physician Dr. Rashid A. Abdu of Canfield was giving much-needed medical care to some of the 250 children at a jungle orphanage.

"The clinic is on the water," Abdu said. "It has one room for the nurses' quarters, one utility room, one 'pharmacy room,' and one examining room and one room with two beds for anyone who may feel sick, or tired. Most of the patients were children, with upper respiratory and gastrointestinal problems. We treated intestinal parasites, lice, and scabies. Families came from villages on foot, or in little canoes. Some traveled for hours," he said.

Dr. Abdu saw many children and adults during the visit, but he remarked how grateful the Mayan people were for his efforts in keeping the children healthy. Also on the trip, volunteers help build a bathroom at the orphanage as well as giving the building a needed coat of paint. On the return trip, the team learned of the earthquake and in no time the wheels of love began spinning.

"While still on the plane coming home, Kathy was already organizing collections for the earthquake victims in Haiti," Abdu said.

Within a week, Price and the Mission of Love shipped four large containers full of supplies, mostly medical. The shipments included water, tents, medicine, hospital beds, and a large shipment of surgical supplies and instruments, food, and construction material. All shipments went by truck to Florida, and then by barge to Haiti.

Price had already arranged a contact in Haiti that would be certain the materials got to the right place. Realizing the enormous size of the disaster, Price knew she had to work fast. In quickly arranging for Mission of Love drop-off points, Price got some help from Lenny Fisher, owner of Handel's. He agreed to allow Mission of Love to use the Handel's locations throughout the Valley as a collection site. Over a 10-day period, the collections were deemed a success.

"Know that all who donated to our Mission of Love via the Hope for Haiti mission can be reassured that those donations are now in the hands of the Haitian people," Price said. "We have sent four metal containers filled with over 64 tons of aid."

She said some clothing was sent, making up roughly 15 percent of the materials, but most involved medical supplies and building materials, which is badly needed right now. Also shipped was 500 pounds of 2-by-4s, 2,100 pounds of rice, and 5,000 pounds of corn.



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The metal containers were the type that are loaded on semi-trucks and taken to a southern port to be placed on a barge. The barge then went to Haiti and were unloaded. The empty containers were then converted into permanent housing thanks to donated building supplies and tools.

"We are feeding the Haitians, clothing them, and giving them shelter and medical care," Price said. "The basic human rights that they have lacked for some time."

On the ground in Haiti, volunteer Jared Coblentz is helping ensure the Mission of Love donations are getting to where the need is. He said the enormous amount of medical supplies was surely a major need. By contacting medical volunteer groups, Coblentz was able to get the supplies into the right hands.

"They were able to take many of the medical supplies and will use them in their mobile medical clinics, give some to the Miami ground hospital here, take some out to an island they are doing clinics on, and use the rest at an orphanage here in Port-Au-Prince where children are receiving post-op care," Coblentz informed Price via letter.

He told of several stories of hope, including that of a three-day-old baby that was left with a grandmother after being abandoned by his mother after the quake. The tiny boy was given formula and is being cared for now by the grandmother. Coblentz said volunteers are keeping in touch to ensure the little one's needs are met.

Another story of hope concerns a little girl who lost her arm and leg in the quake's aftermath. According to Coblentz, a medical group from Sarasota moved into the city of Soleil and set up a clinic. The nurses are working with the girl to teach her how to walk with a crutch. Doctors with the group took arm and leg measurements and are working with others to get prosthetics made for her.

Back in the Mahoning Valley, Price, Abdu and the rest of the Mission of Love volunteers are working to continue the aid. Price said in Haiti, the problems are far from over.

"It has been over two months now, and updates will be no longer in the news as it was when the earthquake hit," Price said. "Let's make this an ongoing mission of love to continue to help the Haitian people, long term and not just throw a Band Aid on this dire situation. Our Mission of Love motto is 'You are not here to save the world, but are here to touch the hands and hearts that are within your reach.' We have all made our communities part of this humanitarian mission to the poorest of the poor by touching the hands of the Haitian people and children."

Haiti is just a new addition to the list of locations throughout the world that Mission of Love continues to help. Most have orphanages where children have been forgotten, but Price knows how important it is to provide medical care, basic life necessities and educational aid with the intent to give the orphans a chance to someday better their situation in life.

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