

# **Randolph World Ministries, Inc. Team Member Article 2004**

## **MEDICAL MISSION TO HAITI (Or What I Did During My Summer Vacation) By Mona Hebert, MT(ASCP), CLS(NCA) Adjunct Instructor, Clinical Laboratory Science**

This past summer, I joined Assistant Professor, Tim Randolph, and two of our senior students on a medical mission trip to help the people of Haiti. This was Tim's fifth annual trip to Haiti. It was the first trip for Mindy Maske (Clinical Laboratory Science senior), Jenna Wheelhouse (Investigative and Medical Sciences senior), and me. We were also joined by Tim's mother, Patsy, and daughter, Emily. The trip began with a long drive from St. Louis to West Palm Beach, FL., followed by a flight in an old turbo-prop plane to Cap-Haitien, Haiti. Our final destination was the Bethesda Medical Center located in Vaudreuil, Haiti (a suburb of Cap-Haitien). We carried about 27 boxes of laboratory supplies (weighing 445 pounds) with us. Some of these supplies were consumed during the nine days we were in Haiti. Most of the remaining donations will last 1-2 months and be replaced by future shipments while some may last until Tim's trip next year.

Our first order of business when we arrived at the clinic, was to take a complete inventory of all laboratory supplies and to introduce a system to monitor usage and future needs. Ideally with this information, it will be easier to obtain an accurate assessment of and to maintain an adequate amount of laboratory supplies on a monthly and yearly basis. It took us two days to complete this one task. Our next task was to evaluate existing laboratory tests and procedures and to fix three tests that were not working properly. By providing proper equipment, unexpired reagents, and modified instructions, we were able to correct the problems and make the tests accurate again. The Bethesda laboratory performs 25 different tests making it one of the most comprehensive labs in Haiti. While there, we tried to introduce the idea of record keeping and quality control in the lab...a given in our U.S. laboratories! Our final task, and most enjoyable one, was to offer free screening to patients for sickle cell anemia, hepatitis B & C, and HIV.

Interacting with the Haitian patients and staff at the Bethesda Medical Center was a very rewarding and enriching experience. The Haitian people are so friendly, warm and gracious. They have a very laid back and easy-going attitude. Even though there was a language barrier (they speak French Creole and none of us did), we managed to communicate, with gestures and pictures. Haiti is one of the poorest, most undeveloped nations in the world, with very few resources. They are very appreciative of any support that they receive from other countries. I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent in Haiti and the new friends I made. I look forward to returning to such a beautiful country.