



Team members served lunch to the Haitian people after Vacation Bible School.

loudly before entering the outhouse, so that the geckos would not be there to greet you when you walked in!” Gena said.

The varied professions of the mission team members — among them a librarian/former teacher, a retired special education aid, one pastor, two nurses, and a dental hygienist — allowed them to show love and care to the village’s people in a variety of ways.

“When we met to plan the trip, we were asked, ‘What gifts do you have that you want to share?’” Brandt said, “So for example, the two nurses planned to hold classes for new mothers, teaching them about prenatal and post natal care and birth control. The dental hygienist held classes to teach people how to care for their teeth.”

The team held Bible School in the mornings with the theme of “The Good Shepherd,” offering craft projects and then a meal for all who attended. Gena explained that when given the choice between decorating a t-shirt, flip-flop sandals or a wooden pull toy, many chose the flip flops because they don’t have shoes otherwise. The meal consisted of beans and rice. Because the Haitians typically do not have fresh water, they do not drink much water. So the filtered water offered with the Bible School meal was a treat to many who held out their cups for seconds.

The team also made home visits that included bringing gift packs that contained a solar Bible, hygiene kit, and notebook in a backpack.

A highlight of the 10-day trip was participating in worship services (which typically last 2.5 hours), where every family in the village received a bag of rice, a bag of beans and garden seeds. Then a meal was offered after the service. Food staples are beans and rice. But markets feature plentiful mangos, limes and bananas this time of year.

Other activities the American team members did with the villagers was playing soccer with the teens, and organizing

games that taught them about God’s salvation.

Gena and Gavin have been able to see progress made in various projects, including a composting project where fertilizer is used on crops; beehives for producing honey; a rice mill that employs six and the profits are used to pay teacher salaries; and a food depot which is locked storage for Kids Against Hunger meals being shipped to schoolchildren.

They also delight in seeing their Haitian friends grow and improve, like the teenager who stole Bible School supplies five years ago — and this year assisted with all the VBS activities in a very helpful, very polite way.

The mission organization hopes to someday expand to another village, taking their experiences with projects in Jumelle and applying it in other places.

Gena talked about her perspective on life in Haiti now versus life before the earthquake. Jumelle saw little damage; the school building had a few cracks in doorways that were patched with cement. Otherwise, the biggest effect in the village was people who were mourning because of lost loved ones.

“Such a resilient people,” she said. “There was a lot of work going on. I was amazed at the heavy equipment digging up the rubble, then machines that were grinding that up that would be used to make new cement.”

She said the highway they used to travel to the village of Jumelle from Port Au Prince was in the best condition she’s seen it, thanks to the work of the Dominican Republic.

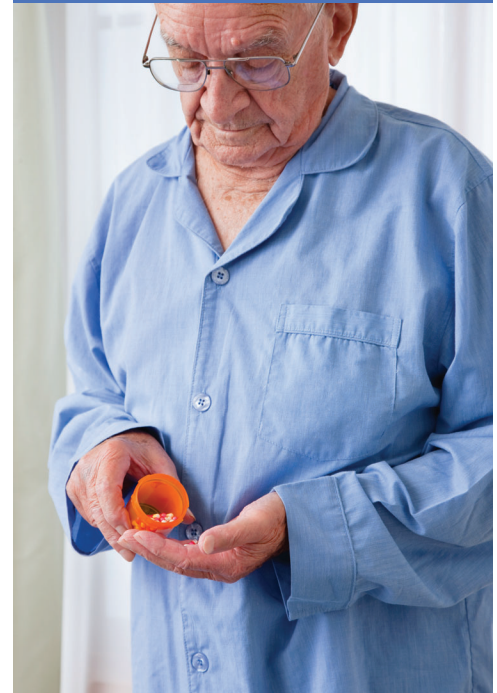
“But you saw lots of blue tarps making up the tent cities. They are not safe just because you have so many people living in a small area,” she said. “Efforts are under way to begin rebuilding with more steel. Buildings that were stable three weeks ago are now not OK to live in. The work has just begun.”

Helping Hands for Haiti organization is currently waiting for their truck filled with supplies to get through customs, so that those items can be distributed to those who need it. The truck contains tents, hygiene kits, quilts and medical supplies, and 500 boxes of “Kids Against Hunger” food (that’s 108,000 meals).

For more information about Helping Hands for Haiti, go to their Web site: www.helpinghandsforhaiti.com

■ by Julie Mooney, P&D Correspondent
Photos Courtesy of Gena Brandt

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