



HEALING *Haiti*

On January 12, 2010, a massive earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale struck Haiti. The Haitian government reported that up to 230,000 people died in or shortly after the quake. An estimated 300,000 others were injured, and 3 million more were directly affected in other ways. Also according to the Haitian government, more than 1 million people lost their homes and up to 280,000 other structures were either destroyed or damaged during the quake.

In the aftermath of the quake, government and relief organizations from around the world sent disaster response personnel, emergency supplies and money to support relief efforts. Private citizens and organizations responded as well. ASC Association members were among the many who contributed to the earthquake relief efforts in significant ways. A few highlights from some of the stories they reported to us follow.

Above: Marcy Sasso, Ray Arthurs of First Care Medical Supplies in Manalapan, NJ, and ASC Administrator Peggy Baffoni of Kingley Health in Piscataway, NJ, flanked by donated wheelchairs, crutches and more bound for Haiti in early 2010

- **Ambulatory Surgical Center of Union County, Union, NJ:** This ASC had collected more than \$1.2 million worth of medical supplies by mid-February and sent two doctors and a nurse to assist with relief efforts. It also worked with other surgical centers, community groups and nonprofits to set up statewide donation networks to expand its medical supply/equipment collection efforts. (For more information, see page 41.)
- **Ansell Healthcare, Inc., Wilmington, DE:** This ASC Supporter Member shipped medical supplies and work gloves to Haiti through Direct Relief International, a nonprofit humanitarian medical relief organization.
- **Baptist Ambulatory Surgery Center, Nashville, TN:** Administrator Jenny Bloebaum spent 10 days in Haiti to provide nursing assistance to the victims of the quake.
- **Blake Woods Medical Park Surgery Center, Jackson, MI:** Orthopedic surgeon Nimr K. Ikram, DO, spent a week in Haiti during February to perform surgeries, and vendors affiliated with the ASC donated supplies and medications.

Anatomy of a Relief Project

To help the victims of Hurricane Katrina, which hit the US Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, the Ambulatory Surgical Center of Union County sent 25 pallets of medical supplies. So, when the Haitian earthquake struck, Marcy Sasso, director of operations at the ASC at the time and now administrator at Raritan Valley Surgery Center in Somerset, New Jersey, said she didn't think twice when the ASC's director of anesthesia asked if she would be willing to step in again to coordinate the collection and delivery of medical supplies for Haiti. Initially, says Sasso, she was surprised to learn from the American Red Cross and other nonprofits in the area, that no organization was set up to collect emergency medical supplies. "Even the Red Cross doesn't officially take crutches and wheel chairs," said Sasso. "They take them if they have room."

Soon after her ASC's director of anesthesia approached her about coordinating the ASC's efforts to provide assistance in Haiti, Sasso started spreading the word to New Jersey media outlets and everyone she knew about the need for medical supplies and equipment in Haiti. She also spoke with doctors associated with NJ4haiti.org, a group of government and faith-based agencies, nonprofits, businesses and citizens, to find out what supplies medical responders needed most. The American Red Cross, the United Way and Inspire Haiti assisted in the collection drive. With assistance from local media, says Sasso, people with relatives in Haiti donated

supplies as did other ASCs. A Girl Scout troop provided 900 sets of scrubs.

As of February 13, more than \$1.2 million in supplies had been collected by the ASC and others.

Sasso also worked with Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops in her area to collect non-medical equipment, such as tents and flashlights. She also contacted companies that make bracelet identification bands. "I heard [the relief workers] were using tape on foreheads for identification," she said.

Next, Sasso got in touch with the New York City-based AID for AIDS and Housing Works, which was working to set up three medical clinics in Haiti. Together, that organization and Sasso arranged to send an aircraft full of the supplies the ASC had received to Haiti. Some supplies were also loaded on a plane that took former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton to Haiti for a fact-finding mission there. Two of Sasso's ASC's doctors and a nurse also volunteered to go to Haiti to provide medical support.

"I think this may be the most rewarding part of my successful career in ASCs," Sasso said after coordinating the Haitian relief efforts her ASC sanctioned. "We ran a health fair and collected for Katrina, but there's something about Haiti that drives me full force."



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—Marcy Sasso, former director of operations, Ambulatory Surgical Center of Union County

■ **Blue Chip Surgical Center Partners, LLC, Cincinnati, OH:**

Within a week of the quake, one of the ASC's partners traveled to Haiti to perform surgeries at a Port-au-Prince hospital. The ASC also worked with Christian Service International, a relief organization, to arrange to send medical/surgical teams from the ASC to Haiti in the future.

■ **Physicians Endoscopy, LLC, Doylestown, PA:**

This ASC management company posted a link on its web site to appeal for donations. The money is being used to support Partners in Health, which has assisted more than 620 doctors, nurses and nursing assistants working in Haiti for more than 25 years. As of September, the ASC had raised more than \$7,000 to support earthquake relief efforts. (To contribute, visit www.endocenters.com and select the "Stand with Haiti" button.) In addition, one of the ASC's physician partners who hails from Haiti returned there to assist in medical delivery efforts after the quake.

■ **Project C.U.R.E., (Commission on Urgent Relief & Equipment), Centennial, CO:** Project C.U.R.E, which partners with the Colorado Ambulatory Surgery Center Association, sent eight

shipments of medical supplies and medicine worth nearly \$3 million to Haiti.

■ **Salt Lake Surgical Center, Salt Lake City, UT:** This ASC Association member's "Teammates of Salt Lake Surgical Center Program" donated \$500 to the American Red Cross International Response Fund.

■ **Texas Orthopedics Surgery Center, Austin, TX:** This ASC worked with other ASCs in its area to receive and ship medical supplies, antibiotics and analgesics to Haiti during the first few weeks after the quake. The ASC also organized doctors and nurses who volunteered to provide medical care to victims.

Although much time has passed, earthquake relief efforts in Haiti are ongoing and are expected to continue for some time. For example, Dana Pierson, RN, of the Pacific Surgical Center in Longview, WA, plans to travel to Haiti next year to provide medical assistance. In 2009, she joined a nine-member medical team that traveled to Port-au-Prince.

If you or your ASC has more information to share please let us know. Send your stories to ASC@association.org or call our Membership Services Team at 703.836.8808. **ASC**

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