

Haiti Medical Mission of Wisconsin formalizes partnership with Haiti diocese

MADISON — Haiti Medical Mission of Wisconsin (HMMW) recently formalized its health care partnership with Centre de Santé Sacré-Cœur de Thiotte (CSST) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Diocese of Jacmel.

The MOU establishes a framework and expectations for the health care partnership. Through the MOU, Bishop Glandas Marie Erick Toussaint pledged the “continued use of CSST grounds and facilities for health care programming and service delivery.”

Started as parish twinning project

HMMW is a non-profit organization, founded by Dr. Maureen Murphy, who served as a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary for 13 years. Dr. Murphy was introduced to Thiotte through twinning of the Thiotte parish, located in remote mountainous region of rural south east Haiti, with the parishes of St. Cecilia in Wisconsin Dells and St. Joseph in Baraboo, Wis.

In a call to service and through the imitatives of Dr. Murphy, with the help of Dr. John (Tony) DeGiovanni and other HMMW volunteers and donors, HMMW established, Centre de Santé Sacré-Cœur de Thiotte (CSST).

HMMW received a gift from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Prairie du Sac, that contributed to the ini-



The Haiti Medical Mission of Wisconsin Board of Directors at the Memorandum of Understanding signing, include, front row from left, Dr. Garry Jean-Louis, secretary-treasurer, and Dr. Barry Cash, president; standing from left: Abigail Swetz, Kiersten Frobom, Dr. Tony DeGiovanni, Dr. Maureen Murphy, Jessica Morgan Gehr, and Tamanna Akram. Not pictured are Jane Salinger, vice president, Dr. Bob Zemple, Greg Cash, and Gergens Polynice (immediate past president and board advisor). (Contributed photo)

tial establishment of the Thiotte health care clinic.

At its initiation, CSST was sited under then Thiotte parish priest Fr. Churchill Penn, now of St. Charles Borromeo in Bridgeport, Conn., and then Bishop Guire Poulard, Archbishop Emeritus. Prior to Bishop Glandas, the HMMW-CSST partnership thrived under Bishop

Launay Saturné, now Archbishop of Cap-Haïtien.

Shared vision

The MOU specifies a shared vision for strengthening and capacity building of the Haitian health care facility’s leadership and management, operations, and facilities to improve and expand patient care.

Furthermore, the partners affirm the importance of working to address people’s immediate health needs and the underlying causes of illness and suffering, with peace and restoration of

human dignity, and the promotion of self-reliance and sustainable development.

Volunteer based

For over 20 years HMMW has been partnering with CSST to provide local quality health care. HMMW is largely a volunteer based organization with no formal office and less than one full time equivalent of paid staff here in Wisconsin.

The emphasis is health care delivery in Haiti. Over the years, HMMW has engaged over 70 volunteer medical mission teams providing over \$2 million of medical care to the region.

Today, with HMMW’s support, CSST provides jobs for Haitian health care workers, offering year round care to 8,000 patients annually.

As the poorest country in the hemisphere, life in Haiti is always hard. However, for nearly two years, circumstances in Haiti have been even more challenging, with unpre-

dictable and intermittent periods of civil and political unrest, sometimes requiring sheltering in place for many consecutive days. Receiving quality care close to home is even more critical when travel is unsafe and risks great.

People of faith, and those with a personal connection to Thiotte, remain steadfast in their commitment to the HMMW-CSST health care partnership. With support from St. Joseph Parish in Baraboo, other faith based communities, medical mission volunteers, and individual donors, HMMW is listening, forging additional beneficial partnerships, and responding within means and shared goals.

Raising funds

With a lead gift of \$100,000 from Dr. Maureen Murphy, and additional combined gifts of \$25,000 from HMMW board officers, HMMW is currently on its way to raising funds to renovate and upgrade CSST facilities.

Through the generosity of HMMW donors, HMMW is acting on faith and established relationships to empower its Haitian partners for a more sustainable future. HMMW has engaged the expertise of Build Health International (BHI) to effectively address portable water supply, waste water disposal, efficient power and lighting, and stormwater runoff.

If HMMW can raise sufficient funds, BHI will also make recommendations for overall clinic circulation and efficiency of layout — including better utilization of existing and new space where required for general surgery, eye and dental health, and patient waiting areas.

People like Dr. Maureen Murphy act on their faith and commitment to service through organizations like HMMW. Together, the organization embraces guiding principles for conducting joint health care delivery and projects put forth by the Catholic Health Association: prudence, authenticity, honesty, patience, excellence, and humility.

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