

On Jan 1, 2010 my sister Linda, my son Eric, his girlfriend Cori and I started the New Year by awakening at 3:15 am, loading our 400 plus pounds of luggage (350 pounds of items for the Haitians) into our car and headed for the airport for a 6:00 am flight to Florida. Once in Florida we loaded the luggage into our rental van, headed for our hotel for the night and then got up early the next day and headed back to the airport, all 450 pounds of luggage in tow for our flight to Port-au-Prince Haiti. After landing in Haiti, we grabbed our 11 bags of luggage and got into the waiting van from St. Joseph's Home For Boys, our home away from home, which I just learned was flattened in the recent earthquake. Sunday after breakfast, we worshiped with the boys in the St. Joe's chapel, after which we went to an orphanage near St. Joe's where there are currently 34 children. All but 4 have been spoken for adoption. Unfortunately this process can take up to 2 years to finalize. Monday we took a tap tap (Haiti's public transportation) to the baby's hospital to help feed and play with the children, most who are in there for malnutrition, TB or HIV. We learned that 2 - 3 children each week die in there. Volunteer hours are over at noon, so on our way back to St. Joe's we stopped at For His Glory Orphanage where 130 children currently reside. A couple of their latest additions were found left for dead in the river and on top of a pile of garbage. Both are doing fine now. This Orphanage turns away 80 children a month, due to lack of space. Pierre (the director) had a broken foot and I just learned he was injured in the earthquake along with one of the workers, but all the children are safe. Monday night we played darts with the boys and I'm happy to report we did not lose this year. Another group from Virginia took that honor. Tuesday at 7:15 am Pastor Leon Dorleans picked us up to go paint one of the two new houses we built this year and to give each of the 8 families we have now built houses for, the gift bags we brought them. Each of the families gave a speech thanking us for our continued visits and support and let us know they are all praying for us to continue our work there. After 6 hours of painting in the heat with the mosquito's (some which are now permanently painted on the walls) and the spiders, we finished the 3 room house and went to visit the second house we built this year (which was being painted by friends). That night we were blessed with a dance performance by the Resurrection Dance Theater. Wednesday found us up early again for a 3 hour van ride through the mountains to the seaside town of Jacmel and Trinity House. We took the boys from Trinity House to a

nearby beach for a swim in the ocean. We spent the night in a local hotel where we actually had hot running water and electricity, not to mention air conditioning (I felt guilty at times for such luxuries). Thursday morning we made our 3 hour journey back and had the driver drop us off at Wings of Hope (the home for disabled children) up in the mountains. While there we met up with Daniel's wife Rochemine and his 11 month year old son Dwayne. Daniel is currently in Minnesota going to Inver Hills Community College. We took a Haitian bus, which was quite the ride, back down to Petionville to embark on packing up our belongings for our return trip to Minnesota on Friday. Friday morning we gave our hugs to the boys and said our goodbyes until next year. Little did we know at the time, that would be the last time we stepped inside St. Joe's as we know it. Had Cori and Eric not had to get back to college classes on Jan 11th, we would have been in Haiti during the earthquake and most likely in our rooms at the time the quake hit and would now most certainly all be dead. I can't put into words the sorrow and helplessness I feel right now for our friends in Haiti after the devastating earthquake that ravished the country.

The devastation is beyond comprehension and the need is so great. My sister and I are putting together a relief effort. If anyone is interested please contact me or go to our website Housesforhaiti.org

Diane Albright