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Did You Know?

The Meaning of NOVA

NOVA in Latin means "new." But, for us, NOVA does not have a Latin origin. One of our founding members, Fr. Normand Varrieur, led our first three missions to Haiti. He was our guide, our translator and even once our driver. Fr. Normand gave birth to the medical mission that has grown into what NOVA Hope for Haiti is today. NOVA, or originally, NoVa, draws upon Fr. Normand's first and last names, to honor his memory. Fr. Normand was the cornerstone of NOVA, but more importantly, he inspired those of us who witnessed his life of service, his wisdom and his love for the people of Haiti. Normand passed away but his memory lives on and the seeds of his work in Haiti have taken root and continue to flourish in us.

NOVA's 6th Annual Casino Night was a Huge Success!

On March 4, 2016, NOVA hosted its sixth Annual Casino Night and it was a huge success - drawing over 350 friends together at the Park Ridge Marriott to enjoy a fun-filled night of friendship, casino gaming and great hospitality. This outpouring of support keeps NOVA Hope for Haiti's mission going.



Our annual budget of \$124,000 sustains our 19 person full-time staff, who together, provide medical services, medications and maintenance at our two clinic locations. We are proud to say that we raised just over half our annual budget at our 2016 Casino Night!

With over 100 tricky tray baskets, 44 Silent Auction prizes, tournament baskets for our serious gamers and a record 50/50 raffle prize of \$5,175, so many of our guests went home winners! Thank you to our sponsors, local businesses, friends and family who donated items to make this possible.

Don't miss out on the fun next year - save Friday, March 3, 2017 on your calendar for our 7th Annual Casino Night!



Thank you to Direct Market Designs for the publication and distribution of this newsletter.

Letter from the President

Dear Volunteers, Donors and Friends of NOVA Hope for Haiti,

Haiti rarely makes the news in the United States and when it does, it's usually not good news. Unfortunately, Haiti is back in the press, this time because political quagmire has returned to rock the nation. National elections for the presidency and the senate that should have been completed last December have been delayed multiple times because of rival factions' accusations of election fraud. The streets have erupted into sometimes violent protests, and ordinary people are suffering the consequences of political instability once again.

How does this affect NOVA Hope for Haiti? NOVA's spring mission was originally scheduled for mid-April 2016. When the elections were delayed a second time, the new date nearly coincided with the planned arrival of our medical mission team of over 20 volunteers. While we probably could have travelled to Haiti and conducted our work without incident, the well-being of our volunteers is always our first priority, and we simply did not feel comfortable putting people into a situation where there was even a remote possibility that a large protest would impede our travel, or make it impossible to get from Port au Prince to Cavillon. So, we pushed the mission back to June 2016...that is, at least until Haiti's elections were similarly rescheduled. With a heavy heart, we ultimately made the decision to cancel our large spring mission until the political unrest is resolved.

There is a bright side! Though our large volunteer medical missions are a vital part of what NOVA brings to the people of Haiti, we are able to continue to fulfill our mission through our local, permanent staff who provide medical care five days a week in our two clinics. Until our volunteer doctors can bring a higher level of medical care to our patients, or spend a week training our local Haitian staff, we will find comfort in reminding ourselves that this situation is temporary and we will get back in the saddle with our missions as soon as everything settles down.

Naturally, our staff may need to navigate protests, and Haiti's political uncertainty will undoubtedly leave a mark. But as it does for the vast majority of people in Haiti, life goes on, and medical care goes on, thanks to your support!

In the months ahead, we look forward to unveiling NOVA's new website and a corresponding mobile app designed to bring the news and faces of NOVA to the palm of your hand. In the meantime, stay tuned for details on our annual fall fundraiser in New York City— we hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Joseph Nuzzi
President

Patient Update: Keysha

Just 15 months ago in October 2014, little Keysha arrived at our clinic with a potentially deadly eye infection. Dr. Waseem Hafeez, a pediatric emergency room physician drained the infection and began Keysha on antibiotics to deal with the infection. Her mom was instructed to bring her back to the clinic in the days to come for follow up visits, which she did. By the end of the week, Keysha was out of danger and on the mend.

In January of 2016, some of NOVA's volunteers took a 30 minute walk from the clinic to find Keysha's home. Without an address, they asked local people about a little girl who had been treated for an eye infection at NOVA's clinic and were able to find out where she lived. It was wonderful to see the recognition about what NOVA does for the community. After locating the family, the team found a healthy, happy little girl!

Because of your continued generosity and support, Keysha is running around like any other healthy three year-old. Thank you for making a difference!



Creole Corner

Fun Facts About Haiti

1. Haiti is the most mountainous country in the Caribbean with the highest peak being Pic la Selle at 8,793 feet (2,680 meters).
2. The national sport of Haiti is soccer. Haiti first participated in the World Cup in 1974.
3. Since Haiti's independence from France in 1804, Haiti has had four national flags.
4. Haiti provides for half of the world's supply of vetiver, which is a root plant used in the production of perfumes, essential oils, and soap.
5. Twoubadou and Compas are the main genres of music in Haiti. Each genre reflects African, Spanish, and French rhythms.
6. The most common form of local transportation in Haiti are Tap Taps. Tap Taps are Haiti's version of ride sharing. They are very colorful buses with the name 'Tap Tap' deriving from the sound made by the passenger as they tap on the bus indicating their arrival to their destination.



Spotlight On: Volunteer Chris Cavagnaro



How did you find NOVA?

While I had an interest in global health, it was one of my coworkers and friends, Sarah Wren, who first introduced me to NOVA. Almost immediately after our discussion, the 2010 earthquake whose epicenter was close to Port-au-Prince

occurred. By chance I had a number of days off from work, and by good fortune had an extremely supportive group of coworkers willing to cover me, so my first mission with NOVA was just a few days after the earthquake.

What was your first mission like?

January 12, 2010 was a truly horrific day for the people of Haiti. There were extremely severe medical conditions including crush injuries, open fractures and wounds and amputations. On top of that, an already impoverished nation had to now manage worsening homelessness, hunger, mental illness, and lack of access to health care.

Three months later I returned to Cavaillon, Haiti with NOVA for a more routine medical mission. The lack of access to proper health care, food and clean drinking water became even more apparent. It was extremely eye opening to see the advanced and chronic medical conditions that could have been easily cared for in a nation with more resources. We set up our makeshift clinic and saw as many adults and children as we possibly could over a week's time. While some of the advanced illnesses were at times heartbreaking, the ability to make a significant change in some of the patients' lives and the hope and resilience that they displayed was enough to make me want to return.

Who was a memorable patient?

One of the most memorable patients I helped care for was a little boy named Joseph who had suffered an infectious illness that then spiraled into severe wasting and edematous malnutrition. He was unable to walk on his own, and had stopped feeding and talking. With the aid and understanding of his extremely devoted mother we were able to treat his infectious illness, supply the calories he needed and correct his nutritional deficiencies. Eight months later, many of us were brought to tears as a healthy young boy walked into the clinic smiling and playful. To this day, his mother still can't look at his initial photos, but she too has tears of joy when she looks at her son now.

What keeps you coming back?

I suppose more than anything, it is hope and a sense that we are at least making a difference in the lives of the people in our small community of Cavaillon. NOVA has done an amazing job over the years of growing from simply an idea to supply medical care, to being a presence in a small community, to now running a fully staffed, year round clinic for this community. I have seen the difference that a group of good intentioned volunteers with a vision can make. There is still so much care and education that Cavaillon and many other Haitian communities need – how could you not want to return?



Joseph, before and after treatment for severe malnutrition. 5/2011 and 1/2012.

What was unexpected about your NOVA experience?

What was most unexpected was how the NOVA family would become such an important part of my life. I get such a feeling of pride and belonging when I'm in Haiti; I get a sense that I've found my purpose. What began as an interest in participating in global health and the horrific timing of a natural disaster has now developed into a life-long passion. It is unlikely that there will be a time in the near future in which Haiti's widespread lack of access to proper health care and resources will be improved. It is just as unlikely that my desire to help will waiver.

* * *



How Can You Help?



Donate today:

Help NOVA continue to provide medical care in Haiti

Medical Volunteers:

- *Pediatricians, internists, adult providers, OB/Gyns
- *Licensed R.N.s / Nurse Practitioners & P.A.s
- *Pharmacists

Non-Medical Volunteers:

- *Creole translators
- *Fundraising / event organizers