



Special Issue

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## Flight Program Serves Orphans in Haiti

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The Flight Program had the opportunity to spend a week serving orphans in Haiti over holiday break with the ministry, Freedom Global Outreach, which is run by Program Manager Matt Reichard. The participants spent their week working in ministry support for FGO. They also spent time in a tent city called Canaan, where Diakon Giving Officer Officer Rob Kivlan and Flight graduate Tom Kemper oversee a school and church.

The Flight participants took care of the needs of the orphanage children and spent time playing, coloring, writing letters to sponsors, opening Christmas

gifts, making bracelets and assisting the FGO nursing staff with the kids' annual physicals. They were very busy in the hot, muggy weather taking care of the kids. Along with working with the children, Flight participants had the opportunity to work alongside other team members in a variety of ways. They assisted the nurses, worked with the builders and even went door-to-door in the tent city to hand out supplies and pray with families. The Flight participants were moved outside of their comfort zones and, through that process, learned a lot about themselves. They learned how strong, resilient and capable



*Cherline, from FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel, Haiti, shows her support for the Flight Program!*

they are. They left a lasting effect on Haiti and with the kids of the orphanages, and Haiti left a lasting impact on all of them. We hope that you enjoy reading about what they did, along with their reflections on their week serving orphans in Haiti.



*Diakon Advancement Officer Rob Kivlan with Francky and Rika at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.*



*Flight participant Mike Lee dances with several girls and Logan Reichard at FH Bethesda in Port-au-Prince.*



### About Freedom House Bethesda Girls' Home:

- Founded in 2006
- Currently houses 27 girls, ages 4-17
- The girls have daily chores and help house mothers with cooking, cleaning and laundry
- There will soon be a Learning Center in the home where the girls will be taught English, sewing and computer skills
- Each of the older girls is assigned to of the younger ones to be a big sister/mentor



## Freedom House Bethesda Girl's Home—Port-au-Prince, Haiti

The group had a lot of fun with the kids at Bethesda. The first day in Haiti, actually straight from the airport, we went to see the amazing kids. Some of us started to make connections with some of the kids right away.

That day we handed out their Christmas gifts from their sponsors. The girls loved getting new dresses, some school supplies, and candy. When we went back the next day we worked on some crafts with them. Some of us spent time making bracelets from both beads and rubber bands. The kids are really intelligent and learned how to make the things quickly!

Two of the men on our team, Scott and John, began to make some shelving and a blackboard for the kids. They are building a Learning Center in the home where the kids can learn English, sewing and computers.

The girls at Bethesda are awesome! The last day we had made some piñatas for them out of grocery bags and decorated them with different colors of ribbon. It was great to watch the kids demolish those bags and see them dive on their bellies to grab as much candy as they could. The kids were great!

- Jordan White

Freedom House Bethesda will always be a special place for me. It was the first place we started as a ministry and the first time I was ever involved in orphan care. I have known all of the kids since they arrived, some as far back as 2006, and it is always a blessing to be with them.

The team assisted our nurses in doing the kids' physicals, with Mike Lee being in charge of the eye exams. They also worked with the builders on the team with the Learning Center. Most importantly, they showed love and care to the kids of the home.

One of the special things that we did with these girls was take them with us to minister in the tent city of Canaan. The girls don't often venture too far out from the home and this was an extra special treat for them. We piled them in the back of our truck, making for a total of 43 people in the truck, and



Sangelica at FH Bethesda in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

headed outside of the city to Canaan. The girls were shocked with what they saw as we entered. Though they live in Haiti and have lived in some awful conditions in the past, they live in a nice safe place now. Spending the day visiting families in the poor tent community with us was a reminder of where God has brought each of them. The Bethesda girls are sweet, innocent and easy to love. It was, once again, a special time to spend with them and to see members of Flight make connections with the kids. They were able to bring smiles and laughter to a group of orphan girls.

- Matt Reichard



Flight participant Jordan joking around with Wideline at FH Bethesda in Port-au-Prince.



Flight Program Manager Matt Reichard playing around with Vadeline at FH Bethesda in Port-au-Prince.



## About Freedom House Grace Girls' Home:

- Founded in 2009
- Currently houses 37 girls, ages 3-14
- The girls have daily chores and help house mothers with cooking, cleaning and laundry
- Several girls have sisters in the home and brothers in the boys' home across the street



## Freedom House Grace Girl's Home—Jacmel, Haiti

After we spent a few days in Port-au-Prince at the orphanage there we went over to Jacmel. That was an awesome trip! The scenery over the mountains was breathtaking! The views from the mountain-tops looking over Haiti were amazing to see and showed the country's beauty.

Once we arrived in Jacmel we went over to the girls' home. We were all immediately bombarded with little girls! There were so many it was like we were in a sea of them! I later found out the actual number was 37, but it seemed like more!

The girls were great and they were so much fun. We had Christmas with them and it was cool to see them enjoy their presents. Though they really liked the fun things they got, like jump ropes and candy, they were very excited about the cards and pictures from their sponsors. I loved to see how they cared so much about their relationships as compared to their possessions. For kids that have very little, being more

excited for cards and pictures than for toys and candy was something I will never forget. It made me think a lot about what we value here at home. I loved my time with all of the girls making bracelets, playing tag and coloring. They are simple things, I know, but it brought a smile to their faces and a smile to mine.

- Keith Mutinda

Freedom House Grace Girls' Home is one of my favorite places to take people coming with me to Haiti. The girls that live in our home here are really a special group. They come from lots of different backgrounds, but have become a very neat family together.

Our time with these girls was very special for many of us on the team, and that includes all of the Flight participants. A good number of the girls have lived together since 2009, but a large number just came last fall. These new girls were all under age 7 and all came with major health issues. They came from



Vania from FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel, Haiti.

an area with starvation and major food shortage.

They all came to us malnourished and with a variety of health issues related to that. They are getting better with time, but you can still tell that they are struggling along from years of not having enough food to eat. They are adorable, however, and knowing what they have recently been through in life endeared them all to the team.

We had a great time doing fun projects with them, sharing Christmas with them and getting their physicals done by the FGO nurses. We were able to pinpoint some specific issues and formulate a plan to handle many of them in the coming months. The Flight participants were mostly human jungle gyms for the girls, though they also became expert bracelet-makers. No matter what this group of little girls wanted them to do, the big tough Flight guys jumped in and did it! They were living out Diakon's mission of "Many Hands. One Heart."



Flight participant Keith with Kathiana at FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel, Haiti.



## About Freedom House Grace Boys' Home:

- Founded in 2011
- Boys attend school and church there
- The boys have daily chores and help house mothers with cooking, cleaning and laundry
- Several boys have sisters in the girls' home across the street



## Freedom House Grace Boy's Home—Jacmel, Haiti

One of the many places that we had the opportunity to visit was Freedom House Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel. As soon as I walked in, the boys' smiles and laughter filled the yard. I have never seen a group of boys so ecstatic to see people!

Half of the boys have lived together since 2011, when the orphanage opened, but the other half have been there only a few months. Despite this, the new boys warmed right up to the group just like the others. This speaks volumes to what the other boys have told them about the visitors who come with the ministry. They treated all of us "blancs" (which means "whites," a term used even for Keith and me), as if they have known us their whole lives. It makes me glad to say that these boys are part of something that will change their lives.

I tried to equally share my time amongst the boys while we were there. Sure, I have my favorites, like Garry, Clifford and Rika, but they all have such a genuine love in their hearts

for one another, for their sponsors and for all of us. They all stick up for one another and look out for each other. They are a prime example of "brotherly love".

- Mike Blue

It is always a pleasure to visit the boy's home in Jacmel. This is my fourth visit and what made this one extra-special was our entire team having the opportunity to visit the boy's home and spend time playing there. In past years, the boys lived in a rented PINK house down the street that was too small for visitors. We would bring them to the girl's house down the street to spend time with them. This past year, FGO was able to build them a permanent BLUE home of their own. The love that they share for us is truly Christ-like. They don't care who you are, what you look like, what you've done in your life, what shape you are or even how you smell! As always, we go to minister to the kids but we are ministered to by them just the same, if not more.

One highlight was to be with them while they received and opened their Christmas gifts from their sponsors. Each boy received basic items such as underwear, shoes and a belt along with a few toys. One thing that always amazes me is that they quickly set the toys aside and go for the letters and pictures from their sponsor families.

The boys, though they live in a safe home and have access to education, are still in need of prayers. Many of the boys, especially the new ones, are having medical struggles that they continue to be treated for. Though their journey to adulthood is many years away, it is on the horizon and, in a country like Haiti, needs to be planned far in advance. Please keep them in your prayers.

- Jon Geiman



Emmanuel, from FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.



Flight Program Assistant Jon with Adamson and Garry at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.



Flight participant Mike Blue comforting a crying Garry at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.



## About the Tent Community:

- Plots of land given to families displaced by the January, 2010 earthquake
- No water, electricity or other infrastructure
- Rob Kivlan and Tom Kemper founded "Grand College Universal," a primary school in 2011
- The school now has about 60 students attending grades K-6
- The school also serves as a church on weekends



## Canaan Tent Community—Port-au-Prince, Haiti

The day we went to Canaan started off like any other day on our trip. We packed ourselves and 16 kids from FH Bethesda into the truck and started down the road. As we got closer to Canaan, there was less and less traffic and people. We pulled onto a dirt path road. The team started saying, "We're here." I looked around and saw nothing but desert.

I stood up to get a better view to see if I was missing something. As I looked closer I saw small one-acre plots sectioned off by barbed wire or rope. Inside these plots were tin shacks or partial houses with no walls or roofs. A couple homes were tarps or military tents barely held together.

We came to the school and I looked around to see families living in these structures; families displaced by the 2010 earthquake. We broke into groups and went out to visit the families. We took them supply-bags filled with tooth-paste, soap, shampoo and some clothes.

When we delivered the supplies we talked to families and asked them what we could pray for. They didn't ask us for food or for money, just prayer for work so they could support their family.

It struck me on this visit that the people don't value things like jewelry or

money. They value their faith in God and each other. I envied some of these people who tangibly had nothing, but spiritually had everything.

- Mike Lee

Canaan is a place where, despite the terrible conditions, there is hope. After the tragic earthquake in January 2010 people fled the city and headed to the base of the mountain. The government eventually helped settle the land and gave families small, one-acre plots. Families constructed makeshift homes out of what-ever they could find. It wasn't great, but it was better than living on the streets back in the city.

Today, some four years later, Canaan has turned into an established community. There is still little infrastructure. There is no running water or electricity for the community. There are no paved roads and the wind blows up the dust terribly most days.



Flight participants and other team members meeting with families in Canaan.

However, there are beacons of light scattered throughout the tents and shacks. One of those is Grand College Universal, a primary school overseen by Underdog Social Ministries. USM is run by Rob Kivlan and Tom Kemper, and we had the honor of working with them in Canaan, reaching out to the community.

We were humbled to share supplies with families and pray with them. The Flight participants led families in prayer for things that they desperately needed. Mostly, parents asked that we would pray that they had enough food to feed their children each day or that they could find some sort of work and be able to provide for their families' basic needs.

Canaan is a place of despair and of hope, a place where you can see what has already been, while catching a glimpse of what could be someday.

- Matt Reichard



Flight participant Mike Blue leading prayer for a family in Canaan.



### About the Petionville Orphanage:

- Founded in 2008
- Houses 96 orphans
- Was supposed to be a temporary shelter, but many kids stay for years due to the lack of placement options.



## Petionville Orphanage—Petionville, Haiti

Petionville was different than any place that I have ever seen in my life. At home I am used to homes with level, smooth floors and smooth, flat roads. The road to Petionville (like most in Haiti) was rough and bumpy. The inside of the orphanage was not much better than that. It was nothing like at home.

Unlike these conditions, the kids were bright-faced when we arrived. Some of the team had been there before and many of the kids recognized them and ran up to greet them. We pulled out crayons and paper and the kids went to the side of the steps to draw. While the smaller kids (and there were lots of those) were drawing and coloring, some of the older boys started a game of soccer.

There were two soccer games, which was unique. There was a larger group game and then a one-on-one type of game with an old desk as the goal. Later, after both games broke down, they morphed together into a game of keep-away.

I had never been to Petionville before as this was my first time ever in Haiti. The kids, however, treated me as if I had been there several times before. One of the kids particularly liked me and made me carry him around the orphanage all day. He was quite possessive of me and my time. Any time another kid wanted my attention he would try his best to shoo them away. In the end, I had to carry a few kids around at the same time like a human jungle gym.

- Eli Hyndman

The trip to Petionville is one of my favorite ones to take with the teams that we bring to Haiti. Though we don't have anything official to do with this orphanage, they have become our friends and we enjoy spending time with them.

The orphanage is crowded and sort of a patchwork of buildings linked together with hallways and paths. It houses kids with a large span of ages, though mostly under age five. They also

have several kids that suffer with disabilities, mental health problems and diseases like cystic fibrosis and multiple sclerosis.

The reason that we keep going back to visit with the kids is because they need a lot of love. The caretakers are great, but they are heavily outnumbered. The kids love the attention and we are able to spend a little bit of time working on fine-motor skills and some of the other things that babies and toddlers learn through interaction with other people.

I loved to see the Flight participants working with these kids. They were jungle gyms and baby rockers, soccer players and nose-wipers. They took care of these kids with a love and a grace that made my heart smile. They were pulling out all of the "future daddy" skills nursing scraped knees and calming sleepy babies.

We can sometimes stick people in a box based on their gender, race, education or where they live. That happens to our Flight participants often, but no box could hold them in here. They blew away any pre-conceived notions people could have about them and what they are capable of. They were amazing with these kids and showed that they are capable of much more than what society says they are.

- Matt Reichard



Flight Program Manager Matt's son, Logan, with one of his friends at the orphanage in Petionville, Haiti.



Jordan is 17 years old and is from Lancaster, Pa. He is currently in the 11th grade and hopes to attend college one day and become a counselor for at-risk youths.



## Personal Reflection on Haiti

Haiti was the best experience of my life. The group that we went with from FGO was great and the kids were awesome.

Haiti is a great place. The atmosphere is amazing and the people are very friendly and caring. I am so glad that I was able to go on this trip and for the Flight Program to make it possible.

I learned a lot from the kids in the orphanages on this trip. I was able to see that, though the kids don't have a lot of physical things, they are very willing to share what little they do have. They shared with each other and they shared with all of us.

One thing that really touched me was seeing their faces light up each day when we walked through the gates. It was touching and moving to see how much they loved us and appreciated us being there with them. I wish that I

could have stayed there longer and spent more time with all of the kids.

It is very hard to go to Haiti, make connections with the kids, and then come back home. Hopefully, someday, I will be able to return for another week and spend some more time with my new friends.

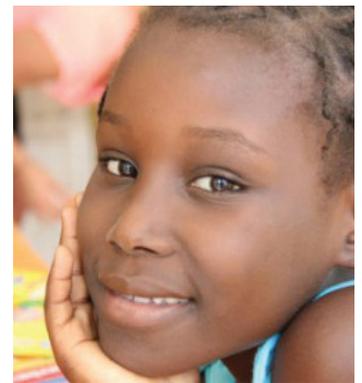
I miss each and every one of the kids that I met and spent time with. If I could, I would grab the same team members and jump back on the plane today.

The biggest connection that I made was with Wideline at Bethesda. She is a sweet 10-year-old girl who took me under her wing. The first day I was a little homesick and Matt told her that I was missing my mom. She, being an orphan, knew what that felt like, even though I would get to see mine in a few days.

## Jordan White

Wideline took my hand and started to play with me. We talked and goofed around with my camera. She made me laugh and smile and forget all about missing home. I couldn't wait to see her everyday that we went back to her orphanage.

I miss Wideline a lot and I think about her all of the time. The way that she cared for me even though she had never met me before has taught me a lot about how people should treat each other. She has changed my life.



Wideline, FH Bethesda, Port-au-Prince.



Jordan rocking a baby to sleep at Petionville orphanage.



Jordan with Elismene at FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel.



Mike is a Flight graduate currently living with his mom and helping to take care of his little sisters. Next fall Mike will attend college.

## Personal Reflection on Haiti

I learned a lot on this trip to Haiti. There are so many lessons that I learned during the week that it is hard to choose just one or two to talk about. It seemed like I was learning new things every day.

I guess that the biggest lesson I learned during my time in Haiti was to never take for granted the things that we have. There is always somebody who is doing worse in life than you think that you are...and now I know some of those people myself.

I cannot see myself complaining about silly things as before now that I know kids who are without parents, who don't go to school, and who don't always get meals to eat. I have had some tough times, that is for sure, but they have tough times everyday. The circumstances that I saw people living in were shocking and eye-opening. When we walked through the tent city meeting fami-

lies and asked them what we could pray for them about, almost all of them said "that I would have food to feed the children." That was tough for all of us.

On the other hand, the love that all of the people showed even as they went through these trials and tribulations was amazing to me. Though they struggled just to make it through each day, they were always kind, generous and caring about each other and about us. Though they have very little in material things, they have a spirit that is rich.

I made a few connections with kids while we were in Haiti that I will take with me forever. A little piece of my heart will always be with Elismene, or Aqi, her nickname. Aqi and I became good buddies during my time in Jacmel at her orphanage, Freedom House Grace Girls' Home. We sat together

## Mike Blue

and colored, made bracelets, ate candy and played games. Every day when we arrived, her big eyes lit up and she came running over to me.

My heart melted each day when she came over to me and jumped into my arms. I believe that our bond is strong and I am hoping to work with Matt to be one of her sponsors so that I can continue to be a part of her life. She, and Haiti, have changed the kind of person that I am.



*Elismene (Aqi) at Freedom House Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel, Haiti.*



*Mike Blue playing with Adamson and Emmanuel at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.*



*Mike walking with Elismene and Fritznerline at FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel.*





Mike is a Flight graduate currently working for an eye doctor. He hopes to attend college in the fall to complete his degree in criminal justice and eventually work with at-risk children and youths.



## Personal Reflection on Haiti

Over the years, I have traveled often to Haiti and have always returned in awe of how humble the people of Haiti are. They have always taught me about what matters in life—our faith and one another. Though they may lack the possessions or stability that we spend much of our lives in America seeking, their faith, and communal care and concern for one another are greater and more genuine than anything I have ever experienced in the developed world.

Though we bring aid and supplies in hopes of making an impact—which we certainly have—I can't help but always return with the realization that the greater impact is the one they have on us.

While hoping to minister to those in need, we find it is often they who minister to us. Hoping to bring comfort and improvements to them, we find that they often teach us that relation-

ships and dependence on God are far more powerful. In the end, I always receive more from my friends in Haiti than I could ever hope to give.

However, this last experience left another impact on me, one I had hoped and dreamed about for years: for the first time ever, participants and graduates of the Flight Program were able to experience this realization themselves. To watch young men who had had to overcome their own obstacles and challenges in life now be able to reach out and care for other children in need was an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life. Witnessing a Flight graduate tenderly holding and rocking a crying toddler to sleep, or lying on the floor for hours coloring pictures with six or seven orphaned children huddled around...or simply passing a soccer ball back and forth under the hot Haitian sun just to bring a smile to a



Mike Lee looking over pictures with Claudette at FH Bethesda Girl's Home near Port-au-Prince.

## Mike Lee



Mike Lee administering eye exams in Jacmel, Haiti.

child's face...are the moments I cherish and continue to reflect upon. Warm embraces upon meeting and teary-eyed goodbyes when they had to finally part from one another will never be forgotten.

In those moments especially, our young men of Flight embodied the mission of the program. Then and now, they reflect Flight's core values more fully than we might ever have imagined when launching the program five years ago. They have become great men, living honorable lives and helping others in need.

The impact that Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries had on these young men is reflected in how they now care for others...bringing that dream of five years ago to life.



Keith is a Flight graduate, originally from Kenya. Keith currently works as a computer technician at CAIU. He hopes to gain his U.S. citizenship this year.

## Personal Reflection on Haiti

I grew up in Kenya so this trip to Haiti was something very special to me. Haiti is very much like Kenya, in a lot of ways, and it reminded me of home. I was struck at the similarities between Haiti and Africa; Haiti is really just like a piece of Africa dropped off in the ocean.

I loved to see the kids and the culture. The kids were simply amazing. I have never experienced anything like the orphanages that we worked with and the kids



*Kathiana from FH Grace Girls' Orphanage in Jacmel.*

who lived in them. They were such an amazing group filled with love and joy in the midst of the despair all around them. They cared about each other and about each one of us in a way that reminded me of the culture back home in Kenya, people over possessions.

I know that we sometimes get that reversed here at home. We try to keep up with everybody else and what they have. It can cause us to miss all of the really important things in life. I had forgotten a little bit of that since living here and being in Haiti brought me back to a place where I could see the importance of people.

One of the things that I got to do with a lot of the kids was make rubber band bracelets. I had never done that before in my life, but here I was surrounded by a group of kids expecting me to show them! I was out of my comfort zone, but the kids didn't care about that, they just wanted to

## Keith Mutinda

do the project with me. I quickly found that they were happy to watch me stumble through the necklaces and try to figure it out with me. It wasn't as much about the bracelet as it was about the relationship and of doing the project together. That is what I remember life being about at home in Kenya. I felt right at home with the kids and in the culture.

One of the kids I had spent a lot of time with and really built a relationship with was Kathiana at FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel. She is so sweet and loving. She came right up to me and, though working with kids is a little out of the norm for me, we bonded quickly. She and I became friends and I am so happy that she is a part of my life. I am now one of her sponsors through FGO and cannot wait to write her and, hopefully, see her again. His trip, and the kids like Kathiana, changed my life and reminded me of what is really important.



*Keith Mutinda and Mike Blue making bracelets at FH Bethesda Girls' Home in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.*



*Keith racing cars with Francky and Anjenor at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel, Haiti*



Eli is 14 years old and is currently in the ninth grade. He is a wonderful artist, and hopes to use his gifts to change lives in the future.



## Personal Reflection on Haiti

My trip to Haiti was memorable, to say the least. The showers were cold and short; the roads were long and bumpy; the travel was long; the streets were loud; the people were welcoming; the sights were beautiful; the colors were vivid; the streets were full of vendors; the games were long; the sun was hot; the food was great; the nights were warm; the night sky was star-filled and the day sky bright blue. It was amazing. In other conditions it could be a paradise.

We spent most of our time at the three orphanages. At FH Bethesda we played soccer, and the nurses did physicals. We also taught the kids how to make bracelets from rubber bands. They were neat with them and got everything put back in the right place. When we did the same at FH Grace Girls' and Boys' Homes, they were not

nearly as neat! It was still a lot of fun to do it with them though.

At the Grace homes we had a little more space to play with the kids, which led to some great games of soccer. In the afternoon the sun wrapped around the girl's home just right and gave us great shade to play in.

One thing that we did there that I liked was face painting. I really enjoyed that, though I could have done a little better painting than I did. Thankfully, there weren't many mirrors for the kids to check out our attempts at painting crosses, butterflies and other things on their cheeks.

At each orphanage the kids opened their Christmas bags from their sponsors back here at home. All of the kids have a sponsor family or two that they

## Eli Hyndman



*Eli helps Clifford make a bracelet at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel, Haiti*

share letters and pictures with throughout the year.

The ministry had collected gifts for all of the kids from their sponsors for us to hand out. They had some supplies they needed for home and for school, along with some fun stuff that the sponsors included.

One thing that really moved me was when the kids got those bags and opened them. They were grateful for everything they saw and tried out every toy right away. They also dove right into the letters and pictures and were excited to read them and see what their sponsors had to say. It was very heartwarming.



*Eli holding a toddler at the Petionville orphanage.*



Tom is a Flight graduate who completed his degree at Messiah College last year. He also co-founded Underdog Social Ministries, which works with the school in Canaan.



## Personal Reflection on Haiti

*Tom Kemper*

From the very first time I traveled to Haiti with Rob and Matt, four years ago, I have been looking forward to the day when Flight could serve there. I knew what the experience did for me in my life, and I knew that it would change the lives of my Flight brothers, too. When we finally decided that this was the year to bring them, I was excited for how they would serve the kids and what they would learn about themselves and about life while on the trip.



*Tom with Joelle, at Petionville Orphanage.*

We have been telling the guys stories about Haiti for years. We are always telling them how awesome the kids are and how they will steal their hearts. I am not sure if they always believed us. Tough young adult boys sometimes don't readily admit that they even have a soft side. When we finally got them to Haiti, it was very clear that we were right and their hearts were stolen by the kids.

It touched my heart to see the Flight guys getting down on the level of the kids and spending time with them doing the things little kids like to do. Our tough Flight guys melted when faced with a group of little girls wanting to make bead bracelets or a little boy wanting to pass the Matchbox car back and forth over the tile floor. Flight guys spent hours with three kids on each of their laps playing clapping games, braiding hair and beading strings for necklaces and bracelets. They were amazing with the kids and left a lasting impact on them.

The experience also left an impact on all of the Flight guys. As we talked during the week, they shared with us about how this trip and these kids have changed the way that they look at the world. They can see that the world is bigger than their town or their school. They know there is so much more out there and that there is more they can do in the world than they ever thought. They know that they can make a difference, that what they do can and does matter in the world. They can make a difference to those who need it the most, thanks to Diakon and the Flight Program.

My life was changed in 2010 by a little boy, named Joelle, who stole my heart and changed my life. It was heart-warming to see kids like Aquil changing Mike's life and Wideline change Jordan's. Like I said, the kids steal our hearts and, in doing so, show us how to be better people.



*Tom giving Clenock a ride at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.*



*Tom, coloring with Nerline at FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel.*



Rob is the former program manager of the Flight Program. He currently works as a giving office for Diakon. Rob co-founded Underdog Social Ministries, which works with the school in Canaan.



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While hoping to minister to those in need, we find it is often they who minister to us. Hoping to bring comfort and improvements to them, we find that they

often teach us that relationships and dependence on God are far more powerful. In the end, I always receive more from my friends in Haiti than I could ever hope to give.

However, this last experience left another impact on me, one I had hoped and dreamed about for years: For the first time ever, participants and graduates of the Flight Program were able to experience this realization themselves.

To watch young men who had had to overcome their own obstacles and challenges in life now be able to reach out and care for other children in need was an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Witnessing a Flight graduate tenderly holding and rocking a crying toddler to sleep, or lying on the floor for hours coloring pictures with six or seven orphaned children huddled around...

## Rob Kivlan

or simply passing a soccer ball back and forth under the hot Haitian sun just to bring a smile to a child's face ...are the moments I cherish and continue to reflect upon. Warm embraces upon meeting and teary-eyed goodbyes when they had to finally part from one another will never be forgotten.

In those moments especially, our young men of Flight embodied the mission of the program. Then and now, they reflect Flight's core values more fully than we might ever have imagined when launching the program five years ago. They have become great men, living honorable lives and helping others in need.

The impact that Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries had on these young men is reflected in how they now care for others...bringing that dream of five years ago to life.



Rob Kivlan coloring with Samuel at the Petionville orphanage.



Rob opening Christmas gifts with Francky at FH grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.



Jon is the program assistant for the Flight Program. He has been to Haiti several times and his family is the sponsor of Noel at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.

## Personal Reflection on Haiti

*Jon Geiman*

This trip to Haiti was filled with so many new experiences! It is the fourth trip I have taken to Haiti in the past year. I still struggle to put words to all of my thoughts and experiences. I will start by saying how great it was to have members of the Flight Program join us for this trip. I am relatively new to Flight, having worked as the Program Assistant for the past six months. It has been a wonderful privilege being a part of these young men's lives and doing the best I can to help them succeed in the positive things that they strive to do.

When Rob and Matt brought up the possibility that some of the Flight participants could join us in Haiti, I was ecstatic! Having these young men join us and experience the things that I have experienced was exciting. I knew that this trip would impact each of them in a significant way. As the week went on, my

expectations were met and then some! Seeing the way our Flight guys reached out and the people, especially the children, of Haiti was heart warming. We had big tough guys sitting in a circle making bead and rubber band bracelets with little girls, and that is a picture I will never forget. I know that their hearts and their lives, along with the children they worked with in Haiti, will be changed forever. I cannot say thanks enough to those who helped make this possible .

As for myself, I always leave a little piece of myself in Haiti when I return home. The people of Haiti teach me so much about life. They don't have the best of everything, but they make the best out of everything that they do have. This is a lesson that I believe everybody needs to learn—not to take for granted the things that we have, but to use what we have to its maximum potential.

The capacity of a product is never determined by its user, but by its maker. This is a statement that I try to live by, and it is something I have learned from Haiti. After visiting Haiti, I have seen people squeezing every ounce of what they have and it's inspiring!

We have our whole lives in front of us and we have the capacity to do far greater things than we have ever imagined. Our potential in life is not determined by us, but rather our Maker. In knowing and believing this, the possibilities for our lives are endless.



*Flight participants making bracelets with several girls at FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel.*



*Jon, painting Dofline's face at FH Grace Girls' Home in Jacmel.*



*Jon with his sponsored child Noel at FH Grace Boys' Home in Jacmel.*





Matt is the Flight program manager, and also the U.S. director of Freedom Global Outreach.

## Everybody Needs a Hero Sometime

*Matt Reichard*

We have a saying in our Haiti ministry that “everybody needs a hero sometime.” There are times in all of our lives when we are down and out...when we are struggling...when we are lost and alone. Those are the times when we all need somebody to pick us up, brush us off, love us and make sure we know that we matter. Those are the times when we need a hero.

Our kids in Haiti have been through their share of struggles. We have kids who come from abuse, kids who lost their parents in a tragic earthquake, kids who were abandoned and kids who were child slaves. In Flight, we have young men who have had their own struggles and their own tough times in life. They have lost loved ones, they have been homeless, they have been hungry. They know, in a small way, what our Haiti kids are dealing with. They can feel how they feel.

During our week in Haiti, the Flight participants had the opportunity to do something heroic for our kids I don’t mean that they jumped in front of traffic or rescued them from a life or death situation. Sometimes our cultural definitions of heroes are too much “movie” and not enough “real life.” The Flight participants were heroes to the kids in ways that matter to the kids. It wouldn’t make for a great movie scene, but it

keeps running in my head over and over again.

Heroic actions can seem so simple, like Big Mike and Keith sitting on a bench with a group of orphans making bead bracelets and necklaces all day, or Jordan, Eli and Mike making fools of themselves dancing “Boogaloo” with a group of kids. Little actions can be heroic; the smallest things sometimes make the biggest differences.

Our kids in Haiti have been through a lot, and sometimes, though they are very well taken care of in our homes, they need a little something extra. They need some extra love, some extra hugs and some extra things to make them smile. The Flight participants were that extra something; they were that little spark the kids need sometimes to keep them going.

JFK once said, “It’s better to light a candle than sit and curse the darkness.” Our Haitian kids have been through a lot, and though they are in a better place now, there is still an element of the darkness of their past that they deal with. When we work with the kids we can choose to ignore it, we can choose to be upset about it, or we can choose to turn on a light and help to drive out the darkness. Flight, at least for this week of ministry, was lighting candles in the darkness for all of our kids.

Now, I don’t mean to sound as if a week with us takes away all of the pain of their pasts; that would be silly.

They still see counselors regularly and work through their struggles, but there is a part for us to play. When one of our orphan kids is shown the unconditional love by one of us, by one of our Flight participants, it gives them a small glimpse of God’s love. We always tell the kids, “As much as we love you, God loves you so much more!” It’s a light in the darkness.

I have never been more proud of each one of the young men of Flight who came on this trip. They went outside of themselves, they put others first and they were heroes for some of the kids on the days when they needed one. The day when Elismene needed to be held, Big Mike was there. The day that Wideline was sad and needed somebody to care, there was Jordan. Claudette needed a hug, and there was Mike. Clifford needed somebody to play with him while he was alone, and there was Eli. Nobody ever notices Abigaëlle, shy and quiet in the background, but there was Keith making sure that she was noticed and a part of everything. Our Flight participants were heroes to somebody at sometime and nothing will ever change that. Our Haitian kids’ lives are better today because Flight was a part of them... and so is mine.



Matt with Fritznerline at FH Grace Girls’ Home in Jacmel, Haiti (top) and with Micheca at FH Bethesda Girls’ Home in Port-au-Prince, Haiti (bottom).

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**W**e are the Flight Program. We are a group of young men who made poor choices when we were younger, and some of us were referred to Diakon Youth Services including programs at the Diakon Wilderness Center. Most of us have been in and out of the juvenile justice system, placements, and detention centers. That was the past.

Today is our future. Today we are voluntarily participating in the Flight Program, and we're taking new and challenging steps in our lives to change and become successful. We rely on one another for support. We attempt to do what is right, not what is easy. We now look forward to the future and our goals instead of living "in the moment." We want the best the world has to offer and we're now ready to go after it, the honorable way. We are separating from our old friends. They don't know what to think of us anymore. Our families don't know us anymore. They're impressed. Our old teachers, probation officers, and everybody else in our communities (whom we struggle to understand) are beginning to see that we're going to make it.

We now have positive dreams and goals. We believe in helping others along the path to success: as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. We are discovering and using the tools and resources in our communities to achieve our goals. We are breaking free from our comfort zones and soaring to new heights.



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