

GRACE CARES, Inc.
773 Guilford Street
Brattleboro, VT 05301
www.gracecares.com
gracecaresvt@yahoo.com

Article from the Brattleboro Reformer

February 20, 2010

[Local man returns from Haiti, inspired](#)

By JAIME CONE



Thom Namaya helps a Haitian man with medical needs during a recent trip to Haiti. (submitted photo)

Saturday February 20, 2010

BRATTLEBORO -- In the midst of the continuing chaos in Haiti, a local man traveled to the middle of the devastation to bring some much-needed aid in the form of homeopathic medicine and music.

Homeopath Thom Namaya, one of the founders of the local organization Grace Cares, arrived in Haiti Feb. 10 and set up shop in an empty parking lot. Under an open-air tent in a poor neighborhood outside Port-au-Prince, his group saw nearly 1,000 over the course of his week-long stay.

"Most of the people were still in shock," Namaya said. "If they had a home, they were afraid to return and almost all the poor are living in the street."

Namaya practices homeopathy, an alternative form of medicine that focuses on paying special attention to the patient's complaints and using herbs and diluted medications to cure illness.

He traveled to Haiti with four other people as part of the group Homeopaths Without Borders.

Namaya said that most of the Haitians he saw have parasites and illnesses from contaminated water, or they were malnourished with untreated chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes and infant diarrhea.

"Many do not have the money to get help," he said. "Our team saw hundreds of patients per day, and the people were immensely grateful."

Their hopefulness and quiet dignity was both stunning and inspiring to see, Namaya said.

"Their prayers at night, singing songs to Jesus and asking for his blessing, touched my heart," he said.

Namaya's visit to Haiti was not just about providing medical care. He also sought to create a distraction for his patients, calling on the healing powers of music.

Kazoos, penny whistles and shakers donated by area music stores Contemporary Music and Maple Leaf Music brought joy to children who had little else after the Jan. 12 earthquake destroyed their homes, Namaya said.

"Their faces lit up with joy," Namaya wrote in his online blog. "It is as if you gave a violinist a Stradivarius."

"I played my guitar, and they followed on flute and kazoos," he added, "a rambunctious chaotic blues! The following day I received a present; the kids came over to the clinic and gave me two, small hard candies in wrappers, and said, 'thank you!'"

"It seemed like a pretty straightforward thing to do," said Edward Lopata, owner of Contemporary Music Store on Elliot Street in Brattleboro.

"Hopefully (the instruments are) bringing them a little measure of enjoyment," Lopata said. "Kids are kids everywhere, right? If for some portion of the day they could just have a little fun, maybe that would help. Music is pretty universal, I suppose."

Other members of the community pitched in as well; Family Nurse Practitioner Richard Fletcher at Putney Clinic and local orthopedic surgeon Dr. Jon Thatcher donated medical supplies, and Zephyr Design donated art supplies to give to children.

Namaya said that Grace Cares is conducting an ongoing effort to raise awareness for poverty in nations around the world.

The problem in Haiti is not something that can be solved with a quick fix, he said, and recovery there depends on the world's continued involvement.

"We will continue to partner with organizations in Haiti," he said.

He said Grace Cares is already working with Rethink Haiti, an organization that is creating an integrated model of community development in Bon Dos, several hours outside Haiti's capital.

"We will assist the community to develop a holistic approach to health using herbs, homeopathy, self care, good nutrition, clean water and sanitation," Namaya said.

Grace Cares is a nonprofit organization with offices on Guilford Street in Brattleboro.

Namaya said he would encourage anyone who is interested in community development, both in the United States and in other parts of the world, to contact him at info@drnamaya.org.

Namaya's personal account of his stay in Haiti can be found at <http://vermontpoet.blogspot.com/2010/02/haiti-love-and-lords-of-flies.html>.

Jaime Cone can be reached at jcone@reformer.com or 802-254-2311, ext. 277.