

Haiti Trip

February 2009

**2009 WINTER
TRIP TO HAITI**
by Dr. Hutton

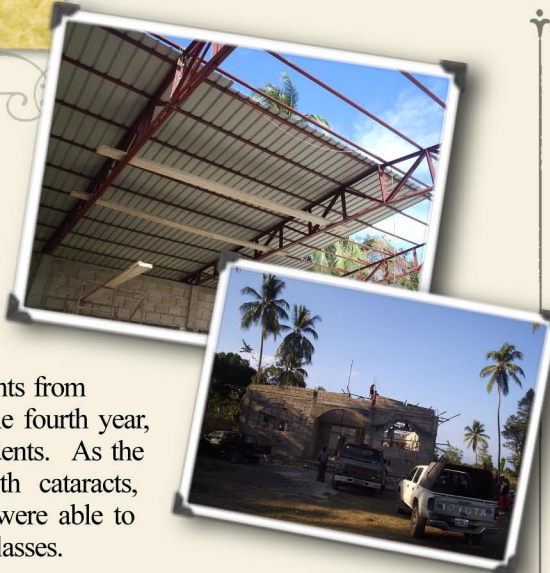
I left cold Pennsylvania for the warmth of Gressier, Haiti on February 12th and I returned back to the cold on February 23rd. For the last few years, I have helped to mentor students from the Illinois College of Optometry during their spring break. This year, seven students from ICO made the trip with me to Haiti -- one fourth year, three third year, and two second year students. As the "eye team", we saw many people with cataracts, glaucoma, and eye infections. We also were able to provide many patients with much needed glasses.

The clinic is located on a mission called Christianville. In addition to the eye clinic, the mission also has dental and medical clinics, as well as a school. The eye clinic is staffed with a full-time American optometrist. It has four exam lanes and a lab to fabricate glasses. We saw about 70 patients a day. This number allows the students to see a variety of conditions, but still allows enough time for learning from interesting cases.

During our trip, we stayed in a guest house provided for us by the mission. The evenings were spent eating Haitian rice and beans and reviewing the day's experiences. They would also usually include card games. The end of the night would find us down by the chicken house, looking to "bag" a large Haitian rat. Most nights we were successful in our hunt! We would also try to track down a tarantula or two. The other night-time highlight was star gazing. Since there is far less light pollution in Haiti, the stars are spectacular.

The second purpose of my trip was to help construct a church roof. Last year we went with the intent to build a roof on the Grand Savon Church. Instead, the leaders of the church asked us to start a building for a different church about an hour away, which had no building. That building was later finished in November. This year, the Grand Savon Church agreed to allow us to build their roof. The roof trusses were fabricated out of angled iron, and the metal roofing was attached with self-taping screws. After a week of hard work we were able to have most of the roof on before we had to leave. It was very rewarding to see what was accomplished in just one week. Prior to the new roof, the church was meeting at 5:30 AM to keep the heat tolerable for their services.

My next trip is scheduled to occur sometime in October. Look for the next update at that time.



Dr. Hutton and the "Eye Team" (students from Illinois College of Optometry)



The Haitian countryside



A typical Haitian home



This chicken house supplies eggs to the mission, both for food and a source of income.

