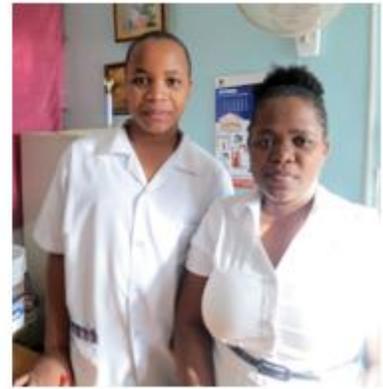


The Haitian Project, Inc.
Community Update: On the Third Anniversary
January 9, 2012



Mithsuka Colomb, LCS Sekond (US 11th grade) student on the playground where the wall fell in 2010; Dr. Theony Deshommes at work at St. Camille Catholic Hospital; Ms. Paul in her office at LCS with her nephew Jacques, a senkyem (US 8th grade) student.

Happily, I can report that the 2010 earthquake does not occupy our minds much anymore. Although its mention does still wrench the heart and gut a bit, we are largely recovered. We are thankful for that, especially this week — the third anniversary of the quake.

Haitians and LCS are good at recovery. In the 25 years that LCS has been operating, the school and its staff have survived a revolutionary change in government, a coup d'etat, a failure of a government, several hurricanes, and an earthquake. While we are proud of our resilience, we would rather people be impressed by the successes we have achieved during those years. It is more enjoyable to be regarded as "winners" than "survivors."

I think the snapshots above and the stories below are about "winners." These are not only people who have survived tough conditions and horrific events; these are people who have overcome adversity and are winning the good race. Their faces and stories say, "We have not only survived the earthquake, we have beaten it."

Mithsuka Colomb, now a sekond student, was on the playground with some of her classmates on January 12, 2010 when the earth began to shake. A perimeter wall belonging to the school's neighbor came crashing down (as many walls in Haiti did that day) and Mithsuka was struck in the head by one of the falling cement blocks. Thanks to the remarkably quick and courageous response by the staff, Mithsuka was taken to the clinic on Santo 19 and her wounds were treated within an hour of the quake. Mithsuka stayed on the LCS campus while she recovered from her injuries.

When Mithsuka tells her story, she tells it in a calm and matter-of-fact manner. Without knowing the details of the event, one might think she is retelling a story about skinning her knee. There is no doubt that she has moved forward. In her own words...

"After the earthquake I used to get headaches and I could not comb my hair. It's better now. I do not have headaches anymore, and I can comb my hair again. I was not the only student at school when the earthquake happened, and there were many victims

outside of our school. It is simply something that happened; it was an act of nature. It is important that we continue as we did before the earthquake. I must continue to go to school so that I can receive an education to live a better life and build a better country.”

Dr. Theony Deshommes (LCS '03) was at the University of Notre Dame in Port-au-Prince preparing to give a presentation in one of his medical school classes when the quake struck. He recounts, “I had stayed up all night preparing, so when the ground began to shake I thought I was imagining things... Once we were allowed to leave the building, I went to check on the state of my home. Along the way, people recognized my uniform and approached me for medical assistance. I didn't have any materials, but I did what I could, using my t-shirt to bandage one person's head.”

After checking on his family at home, Dr. Deshommes went to the Hospital, Saint-François de Sales, where he was serving his rotation. There, Deshommes and four other medical students worked for countless hours—eating only when the families of the patients could bring enough food to share. In his own words...

“Knowing that I am a survivor has reinforced my goal to be there for others when they are in need. Otherwise I would not continue to work as a doctor. Seeing our hospitals' inability to respond to the medical emergency has affirmed that my place is in Haiti.”

Esther Paul, LCS Director of Operations and alumna, was working late on January 12th 2010. She remembers, “I was speaking to a member of the security staff and had just collected my bag when it began. When the first shock ended, we tried to leave [the building], but the gates to the building had stuck in place. When we got out, we saw that some of the walls surrounding our campus had fallen and that some students were injured. We brought them to the Santo 19 medical clinic and stayed overnight there. I tried to call my sister, Edia, but the call could not go through.”

After leaving the clinic, Ms. Paul and her family searched tirelessly for days to find her sister who was at the University of Calais at the time of the event, but sadly Edia was never found. In her own words...

“I now have a great deal more responsibility than I did before the earthquake. [My sister's] two children, Lairy and Jacques (then ages 4 and 7, respectively), have come to live with me and I care for them and make sure they have an education. As a survivor, I know that I have an opportunity and a responsibility to live a full life. I have a chance to affect change.”

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