




SANTE TOTAL

*Healthcare for Haiti's Poor*

# Sante Total Newsletter

Winter 2022





*Sante Total, which means “Total Health” in Haitian Kreyol, aims to provide sustainable healthcare to rural communities in the central plateau region of Haiti. We believe you can only improve health through eradicating the disease of poverty. The Sante Total approach considers the entire person – physical health, well-being, education, and employment, to be essential to health and quality of life.*

### **FUTURE MEDICAL TEAM DATES**

**TBD pending Covid-19 status**

Be a part of the team! Contact us at  
[santetotal.healthcare@gmail.com](mailto:santetotal.healthcare@gmail.com)

## **How can you donate to Sante Total?**

We are running very low on funds because we have not been able to conduct our usual fundraising activities due to COVID. We are making progress, but please remember we still need ongoing financial support to continue projects throughout the year!

Even \$20 can go a long way in Haiti. **Please designate: “Sante Total” for your contributions.** There are two ways to give a tax-deductible donation:

1. **Visit our website** at [www.santetotal.org](http://www.santetotal.org) and make a donation via Paypal or credit card.
2. **Write a check** payable to: “Sante Total” and mail it to: Sante Total, 2901 Ridgelake Drive, Suite 205, Metairie, LA 70002
3. **Send an automatic monthly contribution** through your bank.

# “Dèyè mòn, gen mòn- A Tribute to Dr. Paul Farmer”



Dr. Paul Farmer was an inspiration to many, a giant in the field of public health, but most importantly, a dear friend to Haiti. His work inspired many of us who volunteer with Sante Total. Furthermore, the hospitals founded through his organization, Partners in Health, have provided medical care for numerous patients referred from the Sante Total Clinic.

I remember vividly the first time I met Dr. Farmer at the University Hospital in Port au Prince following the 2010 earthquake. I was in an office looking for food donations to distribute to some of the patients when I walked into a room, and a man was sitting in a chair with a cast on his leg watching me. I instantly knew Dr. Farmer from having read his biography *Mountains Beyond Mountains* and many of the books that he authored on poverty and healthcare inequality. Dr. Farmer was soft-spoken and very friendly to this rogue medical student following such a huge international disaster. Over the years, I ran into him several other times coming and going from Haiti. He always said he remembered me, and he would offer a smile with words of encouragement.

Dr. Farmer left a legacy that will continue to support the Haitian people. But his absence will certainly create a huge void in the field of global health. For more information on Dr. Farmer's legacy, please see: <https://www.pih.org/article/remembering-dr-paul-farmer>.

**Written by Dr. Alison Smith**



Image Source: New York Times

# Current Political Environment in Haiti



Last year was a tumultuous year for Haiti. On July 7, 2021, Haiti's President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in his home, resulting in a declaration of a "state of siege" by the acting prime minister. More recently, Ariel Henry, the new prime minister, survived an assassination attempt. There has been no announcement of a date to elect a new president.

The assassination led to a rise in violence and an economic crisis, worsened by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on August 14, 2021. Additionally, a shortage of fuel, water, and transportation was recently brought about by increased gang activity in the wake of the president's assassination.

There has also been a rise in kidnappings, with over 800 kidnappings in 2021 as of last October. Seventeen U.S. missionaries were abducted back in October, although all have since been released and returned to their families.

In terms of the pandemic, Haiti had a total of 26,056 cases of COVID-19 with 766 deaths as of January 4, 2022. As of December 21, 2021, 0.64% of the population was fully vaccinated, in spite of the COVAX effort to send half a million doses of the Moderna vaccine back in July.

**Sources:** <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/08/03/1022776041/a-bright-spot-amid-haitis-woes-its-first-mass-rollout-of-covid-vaccines>  
<https://covidvax.live/location/hti>  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-59863052>


# An Update from Dr. Barbara Weis

“Gabriel (‘Gaby’) Thelus, the Haitian coordinator for Sante Total and chair of the board of Haiti CSR, was in Miami for a week this month. It was a pleasure to be able to have a conversation with him about life in Haiti right now. Here are some excerpts from our conversations.” - Dr. Weis

- Haiti is still struggling to survive the most difficult political, national, and social issues we have encountered; living in Haiti is harder than ever, and believe me, it was hard before!.
- Due to the political situation, we have had to close the school several times, and they closed the church for a long time. We are supposed to have elections, but we have no clue if they will do it.
- The COVID vaccine is provided for free in the Pignon hospital, but the people of Haiti do not want to take it; they think you will die from the vaccine. The big hospitals have cases and many people have died there. However, compared to other places, Jacsonville is not as bad in this regard. COVID vaccination education is the next step.
- It has been difficult for patients with chronic illness, and medication is expensive. Several of our diabetic patients died because they had to choose between spending money on their insulin or buying food for their children; and of course, they chose to put food on the table for their children.
- It is dangerous to go to banks to get the money required to finish the clinic, because people who are seen leaving banks are often robbed. There is still a lot of violence in the country and kidnappings in Port-au-Prince.
- We are fortunate to live in Jacsonville, in the countryside, rather than major cities that face this trouble every day, but we still experience consequences of the turmoil. We try hard to keep going. This is our priority. It's not going to be forever. Right now it is dark, but I know we can expect light for another day.



# Meet and Greet: Temrah Okonski



Temrah Okonski is a senior physical therapist for PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, childcare center and Kennedy Krieger Outpatient Pediatric Services, both in Baltimore, MD. She is a treasured member of the Sante Total community, as she has been the only physical therapist to provide exceptional care to the Jacsonville community since 2012. Haitians are extremely hard workers and spend many hours on their feet, whether that is spending many hours of the day in the fields harvesting crops and managing livestock, walking to neighboring villages, caring for their loved ones, and often present with multiple musculoskeletal concerns when they come to our clinic. Temrah provides incredible treatments to our patients, significantly increasing their qualities of life. We have had the pleasure of witnessing no less than miracles through Temrah's dedication to the Haitian community that we serve, and we are very fortunate to have her on medical trips with our team.

Temrah also tirelessly works to fundraise for our medical efforts in Haiti, working to connect various organizations. For example, she has been an integral member (president) of the Rotary Club in Maryland, and she is currently working on writing grants to raise funds for the clinic construction in Jacsonville.



Some more background about Temrah: she also owns her own business, GOTMOJO, and treats adults with orthopedic injuries. Temrah received her Bachelors of Science degree from Simmons College in 1988 and held post graduate fellowship positions at Hermann Hospital, TX and Georgetown University, DC. She was the pediatric physical therapist for the US Airforce Base, Misawa, Japan from 1994 to 1997. While in Japan she volunteered at the local Japanese hospital. Temrah has an international patent pending for a weighted foot brace. She has published material related to child development, physical therapy treatment, and physical therapy educational models. Temrah happily joined Sante Total in 2012 after researching many out of US medical missions. She became a Sante Total board member in 2015.

Temrah Okonski is a highly valued member of the Sante Total community, and we are forever grateful for her efforts to build and serve our medical organization in Haiti.



# Project Updates



# Clinic Updates & Patient Care

- **Clinic construction is almost complete!**
  - Continuing to work on the cinder block fence around the clinic, painting, and interior doors - goal to finish before the rainy season in March.
- We have continued to support the community through WhatsApp **virtual medicine** and by providing **financial support** for people who need help with hospital bills and medication costs.
- Once the clinic building is more complete, we are planning to install a **solar panel system**; in the meantime, we have a portable generator to provide electricity.
  - We are waiting to complete this step because solar panels will be a target for theft and need to be guarded.
- Working on a **grant** to provide clinic **furniture and equipment**
- Meeting with the board of Jacksonville to finalize the details of running the clinic (staffing, computer system, etc.)



We are very appreciative of the donors who have helped us fund the clinic construction so far and are excited that we are almost there! We hope that you are willing to continue to support the next steps. At the end of the newsletter, we provide instructions on how to donate.



# St. Rose of Lima School Project Updates



St. Rose of Lima School has started again in Jacksonville, and it is vital for the local community. Through the tireless efforts of the **Delss family** and the support of the **John Carroll School**, the St. Rose of Lima School received enough support to cover most of its costs. Much progress has been made!

- Only 10 children showed up to the first day of school as a result of families lacking the money to send them to school.
- Sante Total donated funds to help with school fees, and now the school has **156 children** attending, with 10 teachers, a principal, and a consultant, who helps choose teachers and adapt the state education program.
- The school has hired **buses** to give the students experiences that were traditionally unavailable to them, such as traveling to see a river or a sugar cane mill.
- Three staff members assist the principal with managing expenses, helping with school meals and hygiene for the children, and ensuring that school supplies are available.
- All teachers have attended a teacher's school and obtained their teaching certificates.
- Cooks, watchmen, and gatekeepers help ensure the **safety and security** of the school. Issues of violence remain and occasionally the school must close if there is a nearby threat.

# Other Project Updates

## School Lunch Program

- This program has become even more vital given current food insecurity secondary to COVID and the political situation in Haiti.
- We spend \$8,500 per year to support the daily school lunch program - **this is often the only nutritious meal a child gets** during the day.
- We obtained a \$450 grant again this year from the St. Thomas of Villanova Parish to help with this program.

## Sustainable Agriculture Program

- Unfortunately, a lot of our trees died because they lacked enough fertilizer/nitrogen in the soil.
- We are hoping that Mackensen, the agricultural student, will do some research so we can replace the trees that died and keep them healthier this time.
- However, there are still many trees that are all providing fruit, including oranges, mangoes, and cherries.



## Project for Seniors and the Handicapped

- Many seniors in Jacksonville do not have access to enough food due to several reasons including:
  - Economic hardship
  - Their children have moved away to find employment, leaving them alone to cultivate their fields by hand
- This project allowed us to hold weekly meetings for over 40 seniors and distribute food to supplement their meager stores.
- A plot of land has been purchased to start building a Senior Center.
- The seniors recently had a New Year's party which was attended by over 400 people!

# Educational Support

We give over \$20,000 per year to support college and professional school students from Jacksonville - this money covers **tuition and room and board** for several students:

- **Mackenson** will finish his training this year in agriculture. We hope that he will provide much-needed expertise to help the local farmers.
- **Maisson** is studying administration in Port-au-Prince and doing well. He has three years left to complete.
- **Ketteline** is a nursing student and is almost finished with her program. We hope that she will be available soon to work in the community doing simple screening tests, such as blood pressure checks and blood sugar tests, COVID-19 prevention, assessing the school children for preventable illnesses, and other projects.



Bico (left) and Ben Ben (right).

- **Bicovensen ("Bico")** is a medical student studying in the Dominican Republic. He has one year left before he starts his residency.
- **Ben Ben** is a college student studying pharmacy and lab techniques. He is in his last year of college and would like to complete a Masters in Laboratory Science and then start working at the clinic. He is helping compile a list of simple lab equipment for the clinic that is readily available in Haiti.



# How You Can Help

## Clinic and Patient Care

- The clinic building is almost finished, but we need additional funding to purchase **clinic furniture and supplies**, such as medical exam tables, medical equipment, smaller items such as otoscopes, desks, and chairs.
- We are exploring the idea of writing a grant as a partner of the local Rotary Club to provide a **mobile dental clinic** to provide weekly dental exams at our site, other clinics, and schools in the area.
- We will need **solar panels, batteries, and a generator** to provide a reliable power source for the clinic.

## St. Rose of Lima School

- **Copy machines and computers** are needed to take advantage of online resources like videos and lesson plans.
- **Books** for the library as well as a few **laptops** for the computer lab that can be shared (5-7 for the students, 1 for the principal, 1 for the business manager) and a **WiFi device** are needed.
- Items for the **playground** (swinging sets, etc.) and **polo shirts** for field trips are requested.

## Project for Seniors and the Handicapped

- **\$200 will pay for 1 month of meals for the seniors in Jacksonville.**
- We are considering a grant to buy land next to the Senior Center for the community to build an activity center for weekly activities for both seniors and children, as well as provide space for a community garden and playground.

## School Lunch Program

- Children get tired of eating the same thing every day. We would like to be able to provide extra funds to buy local food to supplement the current program, adding beans, vegetables, and spices to make the food more exciting for the kids.
- We will continue to need \$8,500 per year for the school lunch program.
- **\$200 will provide school lunches to one child for the entire school year.**

## Educational Support

- We would like to provide a **scholarship** for Gaby's daughter **Dominica**, who is a medical student. She is just starting her medical school journey, and we hope that she could work in the clinic once she is finished with her schooling.



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2. **Write a check** payable to: “Sante Total” and mail it to: Sante Total, 2901 Ridgelake Drive, Suite 205, Metairie, LA 70002
3. **Send an automatic monthly contribution** through your bank.



# **Thank you for your continued support.**

**Stay safe, wash your hands often, and wear your masks!**



## Donors (3/25/21-1/16/22)



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