



Tinton Falls pair heed the call to serve in Haiti

Their work with youth started at the Shore 35 years ago

By MICHELLE GLADDEN • COASTAL MONMOUTH BUREAU • March 29, 2010

RED BANK — When Lynn Ann and Craig Bogard began the faith-based Aslan Youth Ministries, it was as a young couple with a mission to help at-risk children.



Jessica Cappizi, a nurse from Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York, administers an antibiotic to an ailing child in Haiti. (PHOTO COURTESY OF ASLAN YOUTH MINISTRIES ~)

While their mission has changed little in 35 years, their work now reaches far and wide across Monmouth County and, since 1996, to Haiti.

"We immediately fell in love with the country and the people," said Craig Bogard, 61. "We knew our hearts were going to be drawn there on a permanent basis."

After setting up their mission house in Ouanaminthe in northeast Haiti, the Tinton Falls residents began to bring at-risk students from Monmouth County to the impoverished country. Their students and volunteers worked side by side with residents to help construct homes, operate a summer camp, distribute medical supplies and run mobile clinics.

"It's an emotional and psychologically jarring experience," said executive director Doug Eagles, 32, of Middletown. "We prep the students through our local programs."

So, when January's earthquake ravished the already impoverished nation, Bogard knew first hand the astronomical odds now facing the people there. He's spent most of the past 2 1/2 months in the country, organizing the distribution of medical personnel and supplies.

"We must have served 5,000 people initially," Bogard said. "There were so many people with compound fractures, and they didn't have the medical equipment or drugs to treat them properly. These were (wounds) easily fixed here, but so staggering there." The majority of Bogard's stories are not of the earthquake but of the boys and girls who are growing into men and women, those with whom he and his wife have established a personal connection. As he speaks of his recent visit to Haiti, the stories are framed around what the children and their families have lost, beyond the earthquake's devastation.

"Until you have been in a place like this and understand how things work, it's so other-worldly," Bogard said. "Yet there is a resourcefulness to how people can make do with things they would never make do with here."

Bogard stayed in the U.S. this past week to attend meetings pertaining to setting up a clinic that will eventually become a teaching hospital on the ministry's 6 acres of land in Haiti. The land eventually also will become home to a village school and orphanage.

And while the immediate focus is on relief, recovery and restoration, the Bogards' work will remain centered on helping children.

"We try to teach children to fight against the injustices and obstacles that lead to victimization," Bogard said. "We teach kids that you learn to lead through serving ... to look beyond your need to others' needs."