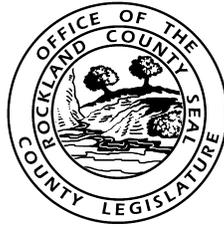


Press



Release

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For Immediate Release

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Paul & Local Medical Relief Volunteers Return From Haiti

‘The People Are Desperate And We Must Help Them’

New City, NY (Nov. 23, 2016) – She knew the devastation was going to be terrible, but visiting the communities devastated by Hurricane Matthew in Haiti was nothing short of shocking, Rockland County Legislator Aney Paul said.

“Homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, everything – just everything – was destroyed in the places we visited,” Paul said. “The people are desperate and we must help them.”

Paul, a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, joined 12 other volunteers on a medical relief mission to Haiti that lasted six days and involved everything from staffing a clinic to treat the sick and injured to packing bags of food for distribution to the hungry. They returned to Rockland on Thursday.

Many residents of Haitian descent live in Rockland, and many have relatives living in Haiti, including those impacted by the storm. Local activists have been working on relief efforts.

The mission was organized by the Haitian American Nurses’ Association of Rockland County, which continues to collect over-the-counter medicine, first aid supplies and items for children such as formula, baby food, diapers and onesies. Efforts are underway regarding large-scale deliveries of antibiotics.

Berthilde Dufrene, founder and past president of HANA, led the mission, done in collaboration with Rockland County Haiti Relief. Volunteers from Spring Valley-based Konbit Neg Lakay also traveled to Haiti for additional relief work.

The volunteers carried the supplies in carry-on bags, some weighing close to 100 pounds, with the airliner waving limits on the number of bags due to the nature of the relief mission.

Dufrene said the biggest challenge was the limited amount of supplies for both the medical and humanitarian aspects of the mission.

“People who were in desperate need of the help had to be turned away,” Dufrene said. “There is limited - and at times no - health care, water, sanitation, food or shelter. Some people are just wandering the streets asking everyone they encounter for help.”

The storm victims continue to live in their destroyed homes or build makeshift shelters from any materials they can rescue – metal roof sheeting, scraps of wood and so forth, she said.

The volunteers spent two days staffing a clinic in Beaumont. It opened at 9 a.m. each day, but people lined up for help starting before 6 a.m.

Paul said she was humbled to help a woman who had collapsed due to postpartum bleeding. The woman went to the clinic because she had been bleeding nonstop for several days. She fainted while waiting on the long line and Paul, the only volunteer with the expertise to treat the situation, rendered the necessary aid, Dufrene said.

Paul and Dufrene were also among the volunteers who visited the École Nationale d`Infirmières Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours de Jérémie, a major nursing school in Jeremie, Haiti, and the Hôpital Saint-Antoine de Jérémie. Both suffered massive devastation.

The volunteers also traveled to Grand Goaves and distributed food and humanitarian aid to three communities outside the city. The basics included rice, corn meal and pasta, along with some personal toiletries such as toothbrushes and travel-size soap.

As many as 1,000 people were killed and 1.4 million were left in need of humanitarian assistance after Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti as a Category 4 storm on Oct. 4. Much of the nation’s southwestern region was destroyed and a cholera outbreak is suspected of sickening about 1,200 people there, with an estimated 3,500 cases countrywide since the storm hit.

Paul said she intends to return to Haiti in June.

“It was very difficult to see so many people in need,” Paul said. “I feel compelled to use my skills to help. I also encourage everyone to please do what they can. Donations of medicine and first aid supplies, small monetary donations - all of it adds up and all of it can help people who are truly suffering.”

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HOW TO HELP:

Many agencies and organizations are collecting medicine, first-aid supplies, clothing, and money to assist those impacted by Hurricane Matthew, many of whom lost their homes, businesses and everything they owned.

Haitian American Nurses Association

Call: 845-641-6672

Email: ROCKLANDHANA@Yahoo.com

Rockland County Haiti Relief

Call: 845-425-4623 or 845-709-3084

Visit: www.rocklandcountyhaitirelief.org

Email: rchrc@live.com

Konbit Neg Lakay

Call: 845-425-4623

Visit: <http://www.konbitneglakay.com/home.aspx>

Nyack Center

Call: 845-358-2600

Visit: <http://www.nyackcenter.org/>

Email: info@nyackcenter.org