January 12, 2014 marked the 4th anniversary of the violent 7.0 magnitude earthquake that shook the already impoverished island nation of Haiti and its 10 million inhabitants to its core. The massive death toll and apocalyptic destruction caused by one of the worst natural disasters in the western hemisphere that day left over 250k people dead, 300k injured and over 1.5 million homeless.

It is also a day when the Ochsner family again rose to the occasion to fulfill its mission to serve and heal on a global scale. Ochsner, under the leadership of Patrick Quinlan M.D., Warner Thomas and Michael Hulefeld, mobilized its resources to take an active part in the humanitarian relief efforts immediately after the earthquake. As Warner Thomas simply stated, “People were suffering and in need; it was the right thing to do.” Ochsner established the Ochsner Haitian Relief Fund (OHRF) as a mechanism to continue to support the long-term recovery efforts in Haiti.

Four years later in November 2013, Warner’s support of a 10k dollar grant from the Excellence Fund allowed us to provide five senior UQ Medical Students accompanied by three staff an invaluable clinical and educational experience to an underserved population of patients. We were able to again successfully execute our Medicine In Society Rotation in the town of Maya La Victoire which is in the Northern Department of Haiti. This innovative academic mission provided an exceptional clinical experience for the senior medical students while also providing much needed medical care and humanitarian support to a community in need. Ochsner’s partnership and support of the recovery in Haiti continues.
This is an innovative approach that emphasizes the importance of developing a true partnership between Ochsner UQ Students and the culturally rich and resource poor communities in Mayaya La Victoire. This mutually respectful and beneficial relationship provides the students a unique opportunity to learn while also contributing to the long-term welfare of the inhabitants of those communities.

Beyond the student rotation, Ochsner philanthropy also supports the year around activities in Mayaya La Vicotire in Haiti which emphasizes education, health care, economic and social development as well as women’s rights. The year round support will ensure the sustainability of the program. We want to provide these communities with skills that will allow them to become self-sustaining and resilient.

"Thank you to all those at Ochsner who have kept Haiti and its proud people in your hearts and prayers.” Yvens Laborde, M.D. and Shannon Caruso

Long before Ochsner’s involvement in Haiti, Alton Ochsner stated "Determination and industriousness result in unexpected positive results; live every moment, minute, hour and day to the fullest. Strive to make each day better than the previous one. Life is not eternal and every moment is so precious; none should be wasted." We are sure he would be proud of our accomplishments in Haiti.

The value of this program can be appreciated from excerpts from the UQ Student journals ...

“During the ceremony, it all came together for me as to exactly why I want to be a doctor, a popular question for pondering around interview season. At its foundation, I believe medicine is about improving life and helping people live better lives. We don’t always understand that the ideal of this thought doesn’t stop at improving health, it encompasses striving to provide education, improve living conditions and nutrition, ensuring basic infrastructure for provisions such as clean water and removal of waste; improving the whole life of our patients and their communities. In short, a great doctor is one who strives to improve all the conditions which interfere with patients living a better life. While we will probably never attain this goal, aiming high and falling short does more good than abandoning this greater responsibility at the door in favor of doled out rations of placation and various temporizing measures.” Miles Landry, UQ Student
From Miles Landry, UQ Student:

“The town was dark on our arrival, but the destination reached and we dined outdoors under tent on fresh pasta with oil and peppers... a cheap and filling meal that delighted all. After dinner we round-tabled on our desires underpinning this trip to Haiti, it was great to hear our individual and shared rationale. Common theme → we all feel blessed and fortunate to be who we are in our lives, sharing a sense of responsibility to share our good fortune and make life better for those whose place we could just have easily occupied had circumstance been different.”

“The trip played surrogate for a baptism by fire final exam where we were each called in turn to demonstrate quickly and efficiently the fruit of 4 years devotion to medicine, and we all passed. Better than passed, we excelled. In one week we were board tested on family practice, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, men’s health issue, pharmacology and procedural skills. We were often tasked with figuring out how to problem solve with limited resources and a fluid understanding of the physiologic disease process allowed us to problem shoot with our available drug repertoire.”

“More than anything, this week proved that what we had set out to accomplish 4 years ago when we flew to Australia in pursuit of a degree was here within our grasp. By no means are we polished physicians, but we’re all confident to step in and sort out the problems within our capabilities, as well as recognizing when things don’t add up or additional insight and expertise is required. We have the next decade to become experts, but for now I’ll enter into residency confident I’ve mastered the basic skills I need to attain the next level of learning; to be tested in the real world and come out better for having gone through it is the real souvenir we carried home.”

“Despite the challenges (did I mention dripping sweat on everything!), I was able to collect and analyze almost 20 samples for real time diagnosis and guidance for treatment in remote Haiti, far removed from modern facilities or consistent electricity for that matter. Looking back, it was really incredible to be a part of something that incredible!”
From David Pickney, UQ Student:

“I am gaining more of an appreciation for empiric treatment. In the US, we are used to either knowing the diagnosis or at least having a pretty good idea. Here we have to treat based on limited information. It basically breaks down to people being “sick or not sick” and then treating with whatever we have available in our pharmacy. The hope is that people will continue to follow up and keep getting the medications that we prescribe, but it is hard to know if they will do so.”

“I spent the day in the women’s clinic with Dr. Knoepf, and we saw a couple of cases that reminded me how little access people in Haiti have to health care. These women had pretty serious conditions that were seriously affecting their quality of life, but they had been living with their conditions for years without being able to see a healthcare provider. The frustrating part about these cases was that they had problems that would be treated in a fairly straightforward fashion in the US, but we could not do much for them in this setting (lack of an operating room, lack of the right medication, etc.).”

From Jose Feliberti, UQ Student:

“I am excited to be here with my classmates on our first rotation of medical school. It is hard to explain how great an experience this is and how I look forward to one day bringing my wife here to have this experience with me.”

“We are all quite tired but we all have smile at the end of the day. This is very satisfying work. It is good to see how this project has started. All of us are curious to see how it will be five years from now and if we are lucky enough to be a part of it. We brainstorm ideas of how this can become a more sustainable project with greater involvement of the Ochsner Foundation and the University of Queensland. We think that this can be a strong project with even Residents from the USA and Haiti.”

From Justine Shaw, UQ Student:

“On our first clinic day the magistrate came to the clinic for a formal ceremony to recognize Dr. Laborde and the clinic. The ceremony was very emotional for all involved especially Dr. Laborde as he was presented a plaque. We were all happy to be a part of it.”

“There was hardly ever anytime to just catch my breath between patients because when one left another would come right in. However, it is understandable because they wait all day to be seen and we want to see as many patients as possible. We saw about 28 in the GYN clinic that day.”

“The people were very welcoming and I felt very honored to serve this community.”
1. Constructed a small temporary medical clinic and pharmacy, additional funds needed for permanent structures

2. Completed on site medical student and faculty housing

3. Financial support for around the year local physician presence

4. Installation of water well to provide clean water for school and clinic

5. Provided books, uniforms, school supplies and lunch for 210 students as well as salary for the teachers

6. Ochsner West Bank Golden Opportunities collected toys for Haitian holiday giving program

7. Seed and livestock program for student families and surrounding community

8. Support adult community health, education and farming programs

9. Financial support for off-site orphanage in Port-au-Prince

10. Set up videoconferencing capabilities with Haitian Medical School

11. Sponsored educational lecture for Ochsner physicians and employees on effective post-disaster intervention

12. Successful introduction of the OHRF to the Employee Giving Program

13. Offering in the Ochsner Gift Shops handcrafted items created by Artists in Haiti as part of the Healing Power of Arts Project

14. Able to send supplies from research groups and other Ochsner departments to Haiti

15. Orchestrated transport of Haitian patient to Ochsner for life saving treatment

16. Discussions with Haitian authorities to make Ochsner the health destination of choice for insured Haitians seeking treatment abroad

17. Finalizing MOU between Ministry of Health/FONDYLSAHH/Ochsner Health System

18. Continued collaboration with Nueterra including onsite visit by Jon Campbell

19. Have been involved in the planning and execution of three missions to Haiti: October 2013, February 2014 and May 2014

To Help Haitian Relief Efforts

http://www.ochsner.org/lp/haitianrelief/