

March 2010

Howard Hospital Mission

For the past 8 years I have been an active supporter of the Howard Hospital in Zimbabwe, and have made 2 trips as a volunteer. On April 1st, 2010 I will be making my third trip to the hospital. The following is information about Zimbabwe and the hospital that I hope you will find of interest, and if possible, I am asking for your help with this mission.

What is the Howard Hospital?

The Howard Hospital is a Salvation Army hospital in rural Zimbabwe that has been in existence for about 80 years. It is run by a Canadian, Dr. Paul Thistle who graduated from the University of Toronto 12 years ago and has dedicated his life to helping the less fortunate. Upon graduation he headed for Howard and has run the hospital since that time. Paul has forgone a small personal fortune to do his life's work. He operates this hospital under some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

What is happening in Zimbabwe?

In a nutshell, Zimbabwe is one of the poorest countries on earth and is in total economic collapse. Late last year the currency was deemed worthless, and the country now uses foreign currency. Believe me when I tell you that there is not much foreign currency in Zimbabwe. The majority of the people are either subsistence farmers, or live in large cities with no prospect of employment. With the severe droughts of the last couple of years, food has been scarce. The World Health Organization reports that 75% of the population depends on foreign aid to eat.

If all of the above was not bad enough, Zimbabwe has one of the worst AIDS crises in the entire world. It is estimated that 20% of the adult population is infected with AIDS. Because there is no money for medication these people are dying. The World Health Organization also reports that the average life expectancy in Zimbabwe is now only 40 years of age. Many grandparents and children are now raising families.

Why the Howard Hospital is important?

With the economic collapse in Zimbabwe the Howard Hospital is one of 3 or 4 hospitals that are able to remain open in the entire country. These few hospitals serve the total population of Zimbabwe, 12.5 million people. Last year the government of Zimbabwe funded the hospital with \$2,000 US dollars, which obviously would not allow the hospital to stay open.

All of the additional funding and supplies have come from foreign donors and, much of that from Canadians.

The hospital is unlike anything that most of us can imagine. The 80 year old structure is in decay. It operates without many of the basic medical supplies and equipment that we take for granted. And if all of this wasn't enough, the hospital has a heavy workload treating AIDS patients. Despite this foreign donors provide enough support to keep the hospital operating, saving many lives every year.

Why I support Howard Hospital

Everywhere we look there are less fortunate people in need, many in our own communities. It is critical for us to help others where ever they are. I volunteer for many Peterborough based organizations because I can see the great need right here in our own community. Yet despite the great needs here, I know Canada is a very privileged country and one of the richest on earth. When I consider how desperate the needs are in Zimbabwe, I feel compelled to act. My admiration for how Dr. Paul Thistle has dedicated his life to help others, is a huge motivator for me. It makes me proud to be Canadian.

How you can help

I am currently collecting both medical supplies and donations for the hospital. If you have access to medical supplies, please call and we can discuss. In addition any donations you make to the hospital will really help and are greatly appreciated. All donations go directly to the hospital and a tax receipt will be issued. Simply make the cheque payable to Ve'ahavta and I would be happy to pick it up.

Blessings,

Larry Gillman, B.A., EPC