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Feature Article - February 18, 2010

# Local Haiti relief snowballs to \$1 million mark

by Julie Druker



Members of Sydenham's senior girls volleyball team help to unload medical supplies destined for Haiti. Photo Brian Rombough.

A second shipment of medical supplies valued at close to \$1 million made its way to Verona on Feb. 12 and once again it was Linda Bates of Verona, her family and a committed group of volunteers, including the coach and members of Sydenham High School's senior girls volleyball team, who helped unload the supplies, which are destined for Haiti.

This is the second shipment that has made it to Verona; the first shipment of \$100,000 in medical supplies arrived three weeks ago. Bates admitted to being "absolutely stunned" by the sheer size of the most recent shipment, which was donated by a number of groups including various Emergency Services Teams from throughout Ontario, the Oshawa Shriners, the Kingston Rotary Clubs, Inermar Kingston, the Verona Lions Club and the Verona Community Association.

Bates, who works as an educational assistant at Sydenham High School, is also the coordinator of the International Scout and Guide Fellowship (ISGF). Before the earthquake struck on Jan. 12 her role as ISGF coordinator in Haiti had been to set up and rebuild schools and to bring scouting to northern Haiti. After the devastating quake Bates' role shifted somewhat and as she explained, "The ISGF's role is now focusing on getting medical supplies into the country to assist those who have been injured in the quake".

This shipment includes countless regular and specialized wheelchairs for adults and children, wheeled stretchers, various types of walkers, commodes, canes, crutches, plus 65 plastic

totes filled with various surgical supplies and dressings.

Bates explained, "Now we're just waiting for a phone call from a trucking company that will drive the supplies to Miami."

The cruise line Royal Caribbean has agreed to deliver the goods to Haiti where Bates says they will be divided amongst four key groups: The Help Tammy Help Haiti organization that is working to erect a medical clinic in Cite Soleil, and the medical clinic, orphanage and hospital in Grison Garde. Bates added, "Whatever they do not need will be sent to Port-au-Prince or wherever it is most needed."

Bates admits that she has begun something that has snowballed beyond her wildest dreams. She anticipates a third shipment to arrive in Verona in roughly two weeks' time and said, "After that I think we'll take a break and see where we are at since finding space to store the supplies here can be difficult." This time around Bates was very fortunate when five local couples immediately offered space to store the supplies.

Bates is grateful to the outpouring of community support she has received and specifically wishes to thank members of the Verona Lions Club and the Verona Community Association, Brian Rombough and the Sydenham Senior Girls Volleyball team, Jeff Ryan, Linda Wolsey, Dianne Kennedy, Ken Dearborn and his sons, Joanne van Luven, friends, family and members of the Verona community.

Bates added that she still requires funds to pay for the shipment of the supplies to Haiti and that donors will receive a tax receipt for any donation over \$20. To donate call Linda at 613-374-1307.