

## HAITI EARTHQUAKE

# Rochester Reaches Out

The University community finds ways to assist victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

By Jennifer Roach

Safira Amazan '12 is making new plans for spring break and for her summer. The Haiti native is determined to return to her homeland "to help wherever I can."

Amazan, who was visiting relatives in Haiti just four days before the January earthquake devastated parts of the island nation, spent several frantic days this winter in long-distance communication to confirm the safety and welfare of family and friends. The experience, she says, has reaffirmed her dream of becoming a doctor and contributing to the future of the country.

"Haiti will always need an extra doctor, and it will be helpful and an honor for me if I can be a small part of the 'extra' or just one that can help make a difference in someone else's life," she says. "That is my hope."

Amazan, who grew up in Les Cayes, about 140 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince, is just one of many people at Rochester—students, faculty, and staff—who have personal connections to the Caribbean nation. In the days after the January 12 earthquake, they and other members of the University community responded by organizing and contributing to fundraisers, hosting special events, and by traveling to Haiti to assist in medical and relief operations.

In a statement to the University community, President Joel Seligman said, "Our hearts go out to those who are touched directly by this tragedy. . . . At times like this, we draw strength from expressing our concern for others and assisting them."

Haiti native Jean Joseph, an associate professor of urology, says many people approached him after the earthquake about helping in Haiti. Working with the nonprofit organization InterVol, Joseph and a 12-member team of doctors and nurses made the trip in February to help staff a 50-bed mobile hospital near Haiti's capital.

"When you look at the devastation online and in the media coverage, it's hard



to watch," Joseph says. "The question becomes 'what can I do to help?' We have the skills and we are able to help others. I'm glad I can help."

In another example, a team of Medical Center physicians spent a week in Haiti with volunteers from Cure International, a nonprofit organization that specializes in providing medical care in developing nations.


James Sanders, the chief of pediatric orthopaedics at the Medical Center, was a member of the team. "Haiti's been devastated," he told local reporters after returning to Rochester. "Lots of people with terrible injuries lost their families. It's a very sad state."

Jordan Hayes '08E and Emeric Viani '08E, who are both pursuing master's degrees in ethnomusicology at the Eastman

School, organized a benefit concert, "Harmony for Haiti," featuring ensembles from Eastman and the College.

The pair also connected with their former voice teacher, Haiti native Louima Lilite '08E (DMA), who performed at the benefit. Lilite, an assistant professor of music at Oklahoma Baptist University, was about four hours away from Port-au-Prince during the earthquake. He was in Limbe at the North Haiti Music Camp, where he serves as the coordinator, and, like Amazan, waited several anxious days before he learned of the safety of his sister and her family.

Hayes and Viani say the benefit was successful because the Eastman community is a close network of musicians who go out of their way to help one other.

"This concert is but a continuing example of the closeness of Eastman's community that extends beyond Gibbs Street and out into the world," Viani says. 

**▲ MEDICAL ASSISTANCE:** Haiti native Safira Amazan '12 says the earthquake has reinforced her plans to study medicine so that she can return to her homeland to help the country in the future.

*Jennifer Roach is an associate editor for University Communications.*