



Haitian Relief Arrives

COURTESY PHOTO

Dr. Fred Sorrells of Burnet distributes a solar panel and solar rechargeable lamp to an earthquake victim at the general hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The lamp provides up to 30 hours of light and can be recharged in five hours with the small solar panel. Sorrells plans to distribute thousands of these \$19 units to those rendered homeless by the Jan. 12 earthquake. Story, see Page 9A.

Burnet man helps disabled Haitians

By NOLA HOPKINS
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Dr. Fred Sorrells of Burnet already had a heart for Haiti, so when he heard of the massive earthquake there Jan. 12, he knew what he had to do: "go and go quickly."

Sorrells was already connected with St. Vincent's School for Disabled, a home for the deaf, blind and handicapped. He has traveled to Haiti yearly since 2004 when he became a Paralympics sports consultant for the disabled.

He received a call Jan 28 at 3 p.m., saying he could catch a ride on a chartered plane that was returning to pick up returning medical personnel if he could be in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., by 8 a.m. the next day. He hurriedly packed and caught a flight to Florida. From 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. he shopped in Walmart, picking up last-minute supplies.

With little money and no specific plan, "All of a sudden it hit me," Sorrells said. "Lord, what have you got me doing?"

Sorrells said the Lord supplied "manna from heaven. Almost every day

something came to help supply needs."

When he arrived at the school, he discovered the building had collapsed, but only eight of the 200 students and two staff members had died. One staff member who normally would have been in the building but was not said, "My life started again on Jan. 12."

As Sorrells surveyed the damaged building, he came across a classroom for the deaf. The morning of the earthquake the teacher had written the date in French on the blackboard and "Jesus is my savior."

During his month in Haiti, Sorrells saw "person after person with amputations." Some were having second amputations because of infections. All had stories of where they were when the earthquake hit and of those they knew who died. He also saw joyous scenes of people greeting ones that hadn't known had survived. With no building codes, "floor after floor came down," and thousands of bodies were still buried under the rubble. Thousands were crammed into makeshift tents and cardboard shel-

ters in pouring rain with no lights.

One highlight of his trip was when a man invited him into his tent to pray, and the man became a Christian. Then Sorrells learned the man was officially registered with the Haitian government as a voodoo priest. He then threw out "bottle after bottle" of potions, special curtains, a stick with an animal head on it and other voodoo items. His neighbors watched as he threw the items into a ravine and burned them.

Although it wasn't on television news stations, the Haitian president canceled Mardi Gras and called for three days of prayer and fasting starting Feb. 12. Sorrells has a video showing an estimated one million people praying near the president's palace. As a result, nearly 3,000 were converted to Christianity; 101 of those were voodoo priests.

Because there was so little help for the handicapped before the earthquake, it's not what these people have lost; it's what they are afraid will become of them now that thousands need help, Sorrells said. That has given his

Paralympics project a new urgency. When the Paralympics meets in London in 2012, two weeks after the Summer Olympics, he wants to see Haitians competing. For that to happen, the first step is to care for the wounded. Then they will need physical therapy, and finally some will start training for events.

He is collecting crutches to take on his return trip March 16. Crutches and donations can be dropped off at First Baptist Church in Kingsland. Sorrells can be reached at 214.674.6196 or fredsorrells@yahoo.com.