



Kristen Danklefs poses with 9-year-old Sheiklo whose father died in the earthquake. His family also lost their home and now live in a tent. He has a twin brother and a 6-year-old brother. "Sheiklo worked just as hard as all of us in helping to demolish the church," Danklefs said. "The first day I met him, he told me he was sad and felt like there was no hope. I can only hope that by the end of my time there he felt loved."

Danklefs Visits Haiti After Quake

By Quala Matocha

While most college students were having fun during their Spring Break, one local young lady traveled to Haiti to help rebuild lives devastated by recent earthquakes there.

"What I saw there was such a need, a need that will continue long after the media has forgotten Haiti," said Kristen Danklefs, a senior at Texas A&M.

"There is so much that needs to be done. The people need healing, and they need help clearing the rubble, and then rebuilding. Our trip was just the beginning."

Danklefs, daughter of Kenneth and Janice Danklefs, is majoring in nutritional science with plans to graduate this May. She is the granddaughter of Mary Triska of El Campo, the late Leo Triska, Iris Danklefs of Garwood and the late James Danklefs. She graduated from Rice High School as salutatorian in 2006.

From March 12-21, Danklefs and 16 other students from Living Hope Baptist Church in College Station spent time at the Joy-House Mission Center in Gressier, Haiti, a place "established to take in boys who were sent out from orphanages because they were too old or the orphanage was too crowded."

JoyHouse also ministers to their spiritual needs, helps them receive an education and learn life skills.

"They are raising up Haitian boys to be leaders," Danklefs said. "They are currently receiving funds to begin rebuilding six homes for people in the community of Gressier."

Online donations can be made to the project, Danklefs said. "I know they would love the support. It is an organization that I would recommend 100 percent."

Their Web site is: <http://haiti-joyhouse.blogspot.com>.

While in Gressier, Danklefs' group saw devastation firsthand.

"During my week in Haiti, I saw thousands upon thousands of tents crammed tightly into tent cities."

I talked with countless Haitians who had lost a family member in the earthquake," she said. "I would look around and see all the rubble still right where it had fallen in the earthquake."

Nothing was untouched by its destruction. With devastation being all I saw, it was easy to feel overwhelmed."

One of the main tasks her group set out to do was help rebuild the local church that was destroyed during the quake.

"While in Gressier, our main task was demolition of the church, Jesus Church at Santos," she said. "We worked every morning from 6:30 a.m. until noon on removing the rubble."

It was a large project, but the Lord was so good, and we were able to finish it in four days. Now they will be able to build a new

church there."

Even though the church was gone, she said the people still found a place to gather and worship.

"Since their church collapsed they have been meeting under a tarp that looks out over the most beautiful view of the sea. It is hot, it is not ideal, but they have continued to gather," she said.

"One of the speakers during their church service stated, 'Many of our members have died in the earthquake, many of them are still in hospitals, yet still we gather here to worship the Lord, and we must worship Him with joy, with joy like fire.'"

In moving away the rubble of the church to make way for its rebuilding, Danklefs recalls the feeling of being overwhelmed just as the people of Haiti must be experiencing.

"We never imagined that we would be able to finish it during our stay there, but we had to start somewhere and so we began removing the rocks. Rock by rock we began to remove the destroyed church."

And with each rock we were closer to giving the church a new start," she said.

"However, had we sat there and done nothing, they would be no closer to building a new church."

In this sense, I think it is so common for people to feel overwhelmed by not knowing what to do or if they can do it.

"This is my challenge to the people reading this, that they will do something."

Even if it is something small, such as moving one rock out of the thousand broken pieces surrounding it.

Doing something is better than doing nothing at all, and Haiti needs your help whether it be your prayers, your money or your time and physical strength helping to clear rubble and rebuild."

In addition to removing the church rubble, the group assisted in distributing food, which was rather organized.

"We were able to distribute about 600 bags of rice and beans, which would feed 600 families for a week, to three different communities in Haiti," she said.

The first was in Gressier.

"The pastor of the Jesus Church at Santos distributed 200 tickets to the community, and the people began lining up about half an hour before we started distributing food," said Danklefs, who was humbled by the experience.

In the rural area of Gran Savon, the group assisted in more food distributions with yet more heartbreaking stories to tell.

"The children, who did not know how to speak English at all, knew how to beg for water," Danklefs explained.

"Water is something that most Americans don't think twice about

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Gadabouts Report on Recent Meeting

The Nada/Garwood Gadabouts held their Mother's Day luncheon and meeting May 6, at 12:00 in the beautiful home of Sybil Balusek.

President Meismer called the meeting to order and welcomed members and thanks for Sybil for her hospitality and sharing of her home.

The opening ceremony was led by Vice President Minnie Conner.

Answering the roll call with special memories of your mother, were the following: Helen Noteboom, Leona Wesselski, Henrietta Patrick, Edna Shimek, Sybil Balusek, Clara Gold, Pauline Solomon, Minnie Lee Conner, Anita Meismer, Marlene Jensen and Catherine Berger. Treasurer Helen Noteboom gave the treasurer's report.

Hospitality: Get well cards were sent to Edith Drlik, Janice Phillips and Norbert Meismer. Birthday wishes were sent to Irene Skuca, Minnie Lee Conner, Pauline Solomon and Viola Frels.

Gardening: The gardens are looking good, but do need a good, soaking rain.

Unfinished Business: Anita reminded the group of the Older Texan Fair on Friday, May 14th at the community center in Sheridan.

Booths will open at 9 a.m., the program will begin at 10:30 a.m., with the meal being served at 11:30 a.m.

Members are urged to submit entries to be judged, as well as to bring garage sale items and new items for the silent auction.

Twenty-one Kindergarten students will be treated to entertainment by Sheryl Carnes and lunch of chicken nuggets, tator tots,

catsup, punch and cookies by the Gadabouts on May 21st at 11 a.m. at the Garwood Fire Station.

The veteran's luncheon is set for June 17th at noon at the Methodist Fellowship Hall.

All veterans' of the Nada/Garwood area are invited and encouraged to attend this event in their honor.

Other: Rev. Ardie, pastor of the Methodist Church, will be retiring June 1st.

You are invited to a reception in her honor May 30th at 3 p.m. at the Fellowship Hall.

Senior Citizen dominoes will be on the 26th at 12 noon, with lunch being served before the games begin.

Anita, Sybil and Catherine were Fair judges at the Wharton County Youth Fair in Crescent last Thursday.

Sybil, who took her vehicle, received a mileage check and donated it to the Gadabouts.

Members contributed the

following: Volunteer Hours-164; Miles-691; and Money Spent-\$785.94 during the month.

The next meeting of the Gadabouts will be July 15th, location to be announced.

The door prize was won by Sybil.

Following the meeting, a lunch of sausage casserole and baked ham furnished by Sybil, along with assorted salads, vegetables and desserts furnished by the other members, was enjoyed.

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