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2010-01-15: With unity, comes hope

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## With unity, comes hope



Several hundred members of the Northeastern community attended Friday afternoon's Haitian earthquake vigil at the Fenway Center. *Photo by Craig Bailey.* 

#### January 15, 2010

Several hundred members of the Northeastern community gathered on Friday afternoon at the Fenway Center to hold a prayer vigil for the victims, their families and all those in the university community affected by Tuesday's earthquake in Haiti.

Over the course of the hour-long vigil, Northeastern students, administrators and spiritual leaders united under a common theme: hope for turning a tragedy into an opportunity for solidarity.

"In our darkest hours," said Shelli Jankowski-Smith, Northeastern's director of spiritual life, "no one stands alone. Together we look forward with hope."

The Red Cross Foundation has estimated that between 45,000 and 50,000 perished in the magnitude 7.0 quake, which struck only 10 miles from the capital city of Port-au-Prince. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies estimates that roughly 3.5 million people were directly impacted by the disaster

Father John Unni, a pastor at St. Cecilia Parish who first visited Haiti 24 years ago, echoed Jankowski-Smith by pointing to the importance of coming together in great times of need. "We are our brother's and sister's keepers," he said, noting with optimism that the Haitian people — "a people of great faith and hope" — will overcome their misfortune.

President Joseph Aoun directly addressed Northeastern's Haitian community. They could find strength and comfort among their many friends at the university, he said.

"We share your sorrow and our prayers are with you," he said. "Your families are our families, too."

Aoun said the Northeastern community should be responsive to the changing needs of Haitians as the Caribbean country recovers from rampant devastation. He noted the possibility of sending student volunteers on an Alternative Spring Break to Haiti.

"Let's see in the next few months what we can do as a community at Northeastern and in Haiti," he said.

Students expressed gratitude for Northeastern's support as they grieve for missing family members.

"It's terrible what happened, but everyone's been really proactive by calling and e-mailing me about how they can help," said Michaelle Larracuente, an officer for Haitian Student Unity, a university-based community organization. Larracuente's grandfather is missing.

Tragedies teach us important lessons on how to deal with future adversity, added organization president Lizandre Lamour. "Haiti will never crumble," she said. "With unity, there is strength."

Members of the Northeastern community are right in the middle of the relief effort.

With financial backing from the Bouvé College of Health Sciences, nursing graduate Lauren Satterly, AS'07, teamed-up with National Nurses United to help with disaster relief in Haiti. She flew to Miami on Friday, and could be called upon at any moment to go to the Caribbean Island.

"I don't know how much difference I will make, but hopefully I will be able to do something," she said as she got ready to leave campus. "When I go to Haiti, I hope to bring with me what I have learned at Northeastern."

To watch a video interview with Satterly, please click here: http://www.northeastern.edu/news/multimedia /video.html?contentID=V-\_xWXwRx0iUBcXgh0ruYQ

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Those who can't make the trip to Haiti can still support the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere by donating goods to the survivors.

Several campus organizations, including Haitian Student Unity and Northeastern's Dining Services, are teaming up to collect donations of clothing, canned goods, toiletries and school supplies. All proceeds will be donated to the American Red Cross relief effort.

Beginning on Tuesday, January 19, collection boxes will be placed at several locations around campus, including the Curry Student Center, Churchill Hall and International Village.

Those interested in supporting national relief efforts can text YELE to 501501 to donate \$5 to the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund, or HAITI to 90999 to donate \$10 to the Red Cross effort.

The John D. O'Bryant African-American Institute's Unity Gospel Choir opened and closed the program with two spiritually uplifting songs, including, "This Little Light of Mine."

For more information, please contact Jason Kornwitz at 617-373-5729 or at j.kornwitz@neu.edu.

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