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Hope for Haiti



Northeastern University alumna Christine Bruni treated earthquake victims at a field hospital in Haiti. *Courtesy photo*

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When Northeastern **nursing** alumna Christine Bruni reflects on the 12- to 24-hour shifts she worked in Haiti's largest field hospital caring for patients who survived January's devastating earthquake, it will be the tender moments that stand out most clearly.

She watched as a friendship blossomed between two 8-year-old boys whose families perished in the disaster. She hugged a smiling little girl, whose leg had to be amputated.

And Bruni, a 2001 graduate who works in the labor and delivery unit at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, marveled at

the resiliency of the human spirit. "Even those people who have nothing are so grateful and appreciative," she said.

She volunteered for two weeks — from Jan. 30 to Feb. 14 — at a makeshift medical clinic in Fond Parisien, Haiti.

Fond Parisien's Love A Child, Inc., a nonprofit humanitarian and missionary organization, donated the land where the university-based Harvard Humanitarian Initiative established a disaster recovery and medical compound for more than 1,000 earthquake victims.

Bruni diagnosed hypertension, cared for children with post-traumatic stress disorder and administered pain medications to post-op patients at the Love A Child site.

One infant lost an arm and a leg in a surgical procedure. "We were trying to control their pain," Bruni explained, "but patients were crying and they couldn't sleep."

Bruni set up a wellness clinic on the compound, stocking it with donated goods from all over the world.

She also triaged roughly 200 patients per day at a tiny hospital at Fond Parisien's Christ for All church and at an orphanage on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince.

Overall, she treated 2,000 patients. But it was never easy.

The sheer brutality in the aftermath of the disaster — such as assaults on children who had already survived many horrors —made it difficult to cope. "It was heartbreaking to see some of the things that I saw," she said.

Even so, Bruni hopes to return for another volunteer stint. "I'm so sad to leave because I won't know what happened to all of the children," she said, "but I'd absolutely love to go back someday and see the progress."

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