

Local optometrist helps orphans, poverty-stricken

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Essex optometrist Julie Ricci left for Haiti this week where she'll be setting up an eye clinic to improve the vision of orphans and poverty-stricken families.

Ricci took about 400 pairs of glasses with her when she flew to the city of Cap-Haitian Jan. 10.

She expects to treat hundreds of people over the course of the two-day clinic, which is established inside the city's Hope Baptist Church.

Leamington First Baptist Church is its sister parish and a group of seven local members will be joining Ricci on the journey.

Equipped with eye charts, aretina scope and sample lenses to determine prescriptions, Ricci said by participating in the trip she will be fulfilling a dream she's worked towards since graduating from university last year.

Ricci joined the practice of Dr. Kniaziew and Dr. Hager in August. She also works out of a Leamington office.

"Just to be able to direct-



Essex optometrist Julie Ricci stands next to medical equipment days before leaving for a missionary expedition in Cap-Haitian, Haiti. Ricci has collected hundreds of glasses and will be running an eye clinic for orphans and poorer residents of the city this week.

ly help them will be great," Ricci said. "One thing with this profession is, you can pick it up and take it with you."

This is the second time Ricci has helped create an eye clinic in a poorer region of the world.

While in her second year

at the University of Waterloo, Ricci joined a group of students on a week-long trip to Villahermosa, Mexico.

The group treated hundreds of residents of the city who were too poor to afford glasses.

"People were lined up

out the door and they know you can help them so you feel pretty good about that," Ricci recalled. "They are so grateful and when you put the glasses on them, their eyes just brighten up. You can't even really talk to them in their language, but you feel like you're really

doing something for them."

While in Haiti, a translator will assist Ricci while she performs the eye exams. She says she has a wide variety of prescriptions and hopes that by distributing glasses, it will make it easier for children to learn and adults to manage at jobs.

The glasses were donated by a number of local sources, including the Essex Lions Club, the Rotary Club of Essex and Ricci's patients.

Developing churches, schools and orphanages

Joining Ricci on the expedition is Leamington First Baptist Church Pastor Larry Forsyth.

This is the third time in two years that Forsyth has

visited Haiti. He has teamed up with employees of Leamington's MGS Horticultural Inc. and the group will be looking to purchase a three- to five-acre plot of land in Cap-Haitian to build a compound that would include greenhouses and a church-school-orphanage complex.

MGS Horticultural Inc. will also be teaching farmers in the area how to better manage their crops.

Forsyth called Cap-Haitian a "city of destitution that has been ravaged by political extremes."

He said both parishioners of the church and the community have supported the project.

Forsyth, Ricci and the missionary group will be returning to Canada Jan. 17.

You are invited to the first public meeting of The Essex and Community Historical Research Society

DATE: Thursday, January 18, 2007
TIME: 7 p.m.
PLACE: Essex Community Centre, 25 Gosfield Townline W.

(Park near the new Essex Public Library and enter at the Essex Community Centre sign)

Join us to find out more about ECHRS!

GOALS:

- To preserve local and family history
- To encourage research into local and family history
- To encourage the preservation of historical documents and information
- To work with municipalities and other historical research groups to prevent loss and destruction of historical documents and information

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Open House and Information Night For Grade 8 Students and Their Parents/Guardians



Tuesday, January 16, 2007
7:00 P.M. sharp
Please enter by the front door

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For PARENTS (Begin your night in the library)

- OVERVIEW OF EXPECTATIONS of High School
- ACADEMIC INFORMATION
- LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER AVAILABLE FOR QUESTIONS

For GRADE 8 STUDENTS (Begin your night in Gym B)

- Tours of each Grade 9 classroom area with teacher overview/question period
- Display of clubs, teams, organizations in hallways
- Option sheet package available for those who do not receive it at their home school

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