



Vision for the Future Thanks to NJ Eye Clinic

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 1/24/13)—Last summer Tyrone Choate, an **Ignite 2012** team member, visited the Cap Haitien Eye Clinic and was profoundly impacted. Less than six months later Choate and his employer, **Red Bank Family Eyecare** in New Jersey, presented American Baptist International Ministries (IM) with a check to support the Cap Haitien Eye Clinic for an entire month.

Choate had taken leave from his job as the optical manager at the Red Bank Family Eyecare to participate with Ignite. Choate explains that Dr. Erin Curtis, who heads the practice, supported his decision to go to Haiti: “She has a heart for mission. When I told her about doing the trip [Ignite 2012] she was behind me 100 percent.”

Ignite is a program of IM designed to light a passion and interest in mission for today’s young adults, aged 19 to 29. As part of the program, team members take part in a month-long mission experience.

While he was in Haiti for Ignite, Choate volunteered at the Cap Haitien Eye Clinic. He recalls asking Dr. Luc Pierre Dupuy at the eye clinic about how they bill the patients. Dr. Dupuy explained that there was no bill, that the clinic is supported by donations from churches and others, mostly in the United States. “That’s his ministry,” said Choate of Dr. Dupuy’s work to restore sight to some of the region’s poorest people.

Founded in 1989 by American Baptist missionaries, the Cap Haitien Eye Clinic works to prevent blindness in northern Haiti. The clinic treats cataracts and glaucoma, provides glasses and medication, and offers counseling and spiritual support to all of their patients. About 70 to 90 patients visit the clinic each day and 40 receive surgery each week. No one is turned away for lack of funds.

While he was at the clinic, Choate sent an email to his boss, Dr. Erin Curtis, to tell her about the Eye Clinic and how it impacted him. He recalls writing, “we need to help somehow.” Dr. Curtis did some research and learned that \$2,640 could support the clinic for one month and made this a fundraising goal for Red Bank Family Eyecare.

Upon his return Choate, Dr. Curtis, and others brainstormed ways to raise funds for the Cap Haitien Eye Clinic. They settled on hosting a community event in Red Bank where they would have a truck show that showcased a collection of eyeglass frames and auction them. Choate began calling other local businesses to tell them about the upcoming event and the other community businesses were inspired to join the auction to help the Eye Clinic. In all, 40 local businesses participated, each donating goods. Some \$2,000 of the \$2640 was raised at the October 4 event alone.

“In Haiti, God revealed to me how important community is,” recalls Choate. “That’s what God said in Haiti and then while putting this [fundraising event] together, he did it again.” Choate, a member of First Baptist Church, Red Bank, is no stranger to international mission. He took his first trip with IM in 2004 to Thailand and has returned once since then.

American Baptist International Ministries was organized in 1814 as the first Baptist international mission agency in America. It began its pioneer mission work in Burma and today works in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas serving more than 1,800 long-term and short-term missionaries. Its central mission is to help people come to faith in Jesus, grow in their relationship with God, and change their worlds through the power of the Spirit. It works with respected partners in over 70 countries in ministries that meet human need.

American Baptist Churches is one of the most diverse Christian denominations today, with over 5,200 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members, across the United States and Puerto Rico, all engaged in God’s mission around the world.