

Southwest Ranches resident helps treat earthquake victims in Haiti

When Dr. Kenneth Jeffers saw the devastation caused by the [earthquake](#) in [Haiti](#), he knew he had to do something.

The Southwest Ranches resident and pediatric [orthopedic surgeon](#) at [West Boca Medical Center](#) contacted a church group in Coconut Creek that Saturday and was on a plane with other volunteers the next day.

It was the first of two trips Jeffers made since the 7.0-magnitude quake. He found things to be much worse than he imagined, especially when the contingent headed west in the outside communities and tent cities of Port-au-Prince.

"Many had not even seen a physician by the time we got there, five days after the earthquake hit," he said. "The conditions of some of the wounds were already in advance stages of necrosis and infection."

With a weight limit placed on international missionary flights, Jeffers was only allowed to take so many supplies donated from his hospital. Treating patients tested his ingenuity and ability to jerry-rig things such as traction apparatuses.

Smooth pins, rocks and string were used to stabilize long bone injuries with the hopes he could get them somewhere with advanced types of treatment.

"The children that I came in contact with were surprisingly resilient ... and followed instructions with hand signals," he said.

Patients often were treated without any general anesthesia or medication to numb the pain. Bone screws and other procedures were done many times with the patient wide awake. Jeffers was struck by how patients responded to such adverse conditions.

"If anything, they were among the best patients I have taken care of in my entire career," he said.

Because of rampant malnutrition and poor living conditions in Haiti, Jeffers said long-term assistance will be needed. He said his visits have led to a strong connection and bond with the Haitian people.

"It's made me proud of the resilience of the human spirit and ... impressed by the Haitian people who were able to maintain strength and grace in the face of such devastation," he said.

Donations are being accepted through a number of organizations. Two are <http://www.helphaitinow.org> and <http://www.haitireliefund.org>.

Scott Fishman can be reached at smfishman@tribune.com.