

Two Haitian kids return home with bright hopes of longer lives after Akron Children's Hospital surgical team repairs heart defects

ADIEU, MERCI AND BE HAPPY

By Cheryl Powell

Beacon Journal medical writer

The only way to give their children a better chance at life was to let complete strangers take them away.

Kurtis Petion and Elie Pierre were born with life-threatening heart defects that are routinely fixed in the United States with a single operation.

But the boys live in Haiti, where resources are scarce and childhood heart surgery simply isn't an option.

So in an airport in Port-au-Prince last month, the father of 1-year-old Kurtis embraced Dr. Jeff Kempf and then let his son go.

The two men had met just several days earlier at St. Damien Hospital, the only pediatric hospital in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

With the help of St. Damien employee and interpreter Denso Gay, Kempf and pediatric cardiologist Dr. John Clark had met with the boys' parents to explain the operations their children would undergo more than a thousand miles away where the doctors work, Akron Children's Hospital.

If all went as planned, they would return to Haiti cured — no longer sick or destined to a slow, painful death before adulthood.

In broken English, Kurtis' father implored Kempf to take good care of his child. Nearby, the mothers of the two boys sobbed.

"Make sure he's safe," the father said through tears.

Last month, Kurtis and 4-year-old Elie became the first Haitian patients to come to Children's Hospital for lifesaving cardiac surgery through Gift of Life North East Ohio Inc.

The charity, affiliated with Rotary International, brings children

Please see **Heart**, A4



TED STEVENS/Special to the Akron Beacon Journal

Denso Gay (right) interprets for Dr. John Clark (left), a pediatric cardiologist at Akron Children's Hospital, as Joel Petion expresses last-minute concerns about his 16-month-old son Kurtis leaving Haiti for heart surgery in Akron.



KAREN SCHIELY/Akron Beacon Journal

Cardiac nurse Lynn Urbanic leads Elie Pierre to the operating room before his heart surgery at Akron Children's Hospital. Elie turned 4 in early May.

StAr STUDENTS

See our annual list of top area students for the Class of 2012. **SECTION D**

Scouts decorate veterans' graves at national cemetery in Rittman



COMMUNITY, B1

St. Vincent-St. Mary captures team titles at Bedford regional

FLASHES IN NCAA BASEBALL TOURNAMENT

SPORTS, C1

BETTY LIN-FISHER

Copley Township residents are next on list for Summit County probate deed project

BUSINESS, B8 (Inside Community)

Federal program fails to meet goals

Some states struggling to move elderly, disabled from long-term care facilities into community

By Jenni Bergal
Kaiser Health News

WASHINGTON: A multibillion-dollar federal initiative to move poor elderly and disabled people from long-term care facilities into the community has fallen far short of its goals, as many states have struggled to cobble together housing and other services.

Launched in 2007 during the George W. Bush administration, the states initially projected placing 35,380 Medicaid recipients in the first five years. As of March 31, at least 22,500 had made the transition, about 36 percent below the states' goal.

The numbers vary sharply by state. Some, such as Texas and Ohio, have helped thousands find homes in their communities. Others, including

North Carolina, Missouri and Kentucky, have moved fewer than 500 each.

In California, only 827 people have made the jump since 2008, although the state was awarded \$41 million during that time. "We're not doing a good job of it here," said Deborah Doctor, legislative advocate for Disability Rights California. "It's pathetic."

Some states have found it especially difficult to move the elderly. While the vast majority of eligible people are elderly, only about one-third of the program's participants are 65 or older, according to Mathematica Policy Research, a Princeton, N.J., firm hired by the government to evaluate the project.

Please see **Care**, A10

Matters of the Heart

Second part in a two-day series

Historic Akron cemetery losing hope

Dwindling donations make maintaining basic operations difficult at 146-year-old graveyard

People die. Sometimes their cemeteries do, too.

Bob Heilman is "working my butt off out here" trying to prevent 146-year-old Mount Hope Cemetery in South Akron from going the way of Atlantis.

But it's a struggle, and he's short on money, and his equipment is old and broken, and often he feels the same way.

When I visited the place last week — at the urging of a reader who had been researching his family tree and was appalled at the conditions he discovered — about 75 percent of Mount Hope's 8 acres were overgrown with grass and weeds. Some of the weeds were 2 feet high.

Piles of brush, branches and dirt were scattered here and there, additional evidence of an effort that ran out of steam.

A once-stately mausoleum long ago lost its stained-glass windows, and now seven of the glass blocks that replaced them are broken out, compliments of vandals.

A narrow, one-way road through the heart of the place is a disorderly amalgamation of brick, asphalt and vegetation, testimony that asphalt replaced brick as the pavement of choice, then vegetation replaced choice.

The flagpole doesn't even carry a flag.

By the time you read this — the Good Lord willin' and the mower don't break — the grounds could be semi-respectable, something that happens around Memorial Day if it happens at all.

"We operate strictly on donations," says Heilman, "and over the last few years, donations have dropped off drastically. I can't hire anybody, my equipment is falling apart and I've been out here working for weeks now trying to get it straightened up."

"Two weeks ago, it was waist deep. It just takes time. I usually try to have it cleaned up by Memorial Day."

The nonprofit operation is

Please see **Cemetery**, A10



KAREN SCHIELY/Akron Beacon Journal

Larry DASHO of Green places a wreath at the grave of his parents, Andy and Bernice DASHO, at Mount Hope Cemetery in Akron. Andy DASHO was a WWII veteran. The cemetery has been around for 146 years.

BOB DYER



Partly sunny



88° High
68° Low

Forecast, Page B10

INSIDE

■ Akron's FirstEnergy and Columbus' AEP are engaged in a battle of TV commercials after 15 years of peaceful coexistence. **B1**

■ Bill Allen and the Back Beats, a rock band from Akron in the 1950s, is thrilled to enter Rockabilly Hall of Fame in Nashville. **B1**

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