



43 W Galena Blvd.  
Aurora, IL 60506

City of Batavia Contact: Meredith A. Hannah  
Economic Development Analyst  
630.454.2061  
[mhannah@cityofbatavia.net](mailto:mhannah@cityofbatavia.net)

AACVB Contact: Laurie DiBerardino, public relations &  
marketing director  
630-897-5581  
[laurie@enjoyaurora.com](mailto:laurie@enjoyaurora.com)

## **Batavia Patrol Office returns from Haiti, tells of devastation**

*Plans to return to help*

Batavia, IL (March 8, 2010) – After the earthquake that devastated a country and moved the world, Batavia's own Patrol Officer Shawn Mazza traveled to Haiti to assist with the efforts.

Mazza traveled to Haiti on Jan. 24 for a nine-day relief effort trip through Wheatland Salem Church in Naperville. While in Haiti, Mazza worked with other volunteers at Grace Children's Orphanage/School and Hope House in Croix De Bouquet, a suburb of Port Au Prince. The orphanage collapsed during the earthquake, but fortunately no one was killed there. "The devastation was unparalleled by the resiliency and hope of the people of Haiti," commented Mazza. "Armed with money donated from those in the U.S. we were able to buy needed food, water, clothing, medical supplies, and construction materials both for the demolition and rebuilding phases of the orphanage."

This was not his first trip nor will it be his last. On his most recent trip, Mazza had the opportunity to walk through the refugee tent camps and spend some time with the many thousands who are now homeless and call a bed sheet propped up by sticks as their home. Many people asked for food or water. Mazza heard numerous stories from people who lost family members in the collapsed buildings and many amazing stories of how people survived and how there is still hope despite the grimness of the situation.

"Most of all I was overwhelmed with the resiliency of the people and just how much they appreciate the help of the United States and international community. The best part of these trips," Mazza says, "is spending time and playing with the orphaned children. Haiti was a very difficult place to live even prior to the earthquake. The problems there are very real as most people live day by day without knowing where they are going to live or when they will get their next meal. I feel extremely blessed to live in the United States where I know I often forget how well off I am. I am also thankful to work for an employer who completely supports my trips and has frequently given me time off on short notice."

Mazza has traveled to Haiti 4 times in the past 2.5 years and is planning another trip in June. Each trip has been with the Wheatland Salem Church in Naperville to help assist two non-profit/charitable organizations, Lazarus Project and Impact For Jesus. These organizations provide hope and assistance for a variety of different ministries that are on the ground running in Haiti.

As for praise for his efforts in helping those less fortunate, Mazza downplays his role and just asks for others to keep the people of Haiti in their thoughts. "I am thankful and blessed to have a safe home and community to live in here in the states. Millions in Haiti are not nearly as fortunate. Please continue to keep them in your thoughts and prayers as their struggles are sure to continue for years to come."

Patrol Officer Shawn Mazza has been with the City of Batavia since 1999. He and his wife Jessica and two daughters are in the process of growing their family with another daughter from Haiti.

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ABOUT THE AACVB:

The Aurora Area Convention & Visitors Bureau serves as the tourism marketing and management organization for Aurora, Batavia, Hinckley, North Aurora, Montgomery, Plano, Sugar Grove and Yorkville. This not-for-profit organization provides numerous travel resources to visitors via the Web site at [www.enjoyaurora.com](http://www.enjoyaurora.com) and a toll-free number 1-800-477-4369