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FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 2011 THE TIMES-PICAYUNE **B-5**

Remembering Haiti

The death and devastation that struck Haiti one year ago is almost unfathomable: the earthquake killed 10 percent of the population of Port-au-Prince, making it one of the deadliest natural disasters of modern times.

What's even harder to comprehend is the quake's continuing impact on the impoverished island nation. A full year after the quake, only 5 percent of the rubble has been cleared. Millions live in tent cities, and most people are unemployed.

The devastation didn't end with the quake. A cholera epidemic in the fall sickened a staggering 170,000 people and killed 4,000. Even as the cholera epidemic raged, Haiti was hit by Tropical Storm Tomas.

The people of Haiti are living with grief, loss and deprivation as well as danger and disease, and on this first anniversary of the quake, their plight must be remembered.

New Orleans area residents know how important continued attention is for a disaster zone. After Katrina, rich nations and poor ones sent help: Haiti sent \$36,000 to Katrina relief.

That's reason enough to remember Haiti now. But our ties with Haiti aren't limited to the kinship forged by disaster. Immigrants from Haiti began arriving in the New Orleans area centuries ago and left a lasting stamp on this area's history and culture. New Orleans area residents have been mindful of the connection.

Sports stars like Jonathan Vilma, whose

parents are from Haiti, have donated money to Haitian relief. So did Hornets point guard Chris Paul and former Saint Scott Fujita, who sent part of his Super Bowl check to Haiti.

Those high-profile donors are only part of the story. Kathy Korge Albergate, whose husband is pastor of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Lakeview, formed the nonprofit group Red Thread Promise to rebuild St. Vincent's for Handicapped Children School and Clinic in Haiti. That group, with help from St. Paul's and the Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana, raised more than \$33,000 for St. Vincent's and will send a team of doctors, interior architects and volunteers to Haiti next month.

The New Orleans to Haiti Barge Initiative, part of the Louisiana/Haiti Sustainable Village Project, took supplies to the stricken country. Medical students from Tulane University went to Jacksonville, a small Haitian town, to run an urgent care clinic.

Last year, Chalmette High School's freshman class raised nearly \$1,500 for Haitian relief. And Sarah Hendrickson of Metairie celebrated her 10th birthday last year by organizing a fund-raiser for Haiti, inspired by the help we received after Katrina.

Remembering the generosity we received and the desperate need of the Haitian people should spur continued efforts on Haiti's behalf.