

The Columbus Dispatch

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Drivers blame murals on E. North Broadway for crashes



ADAM CAIRNS | DISPATCH PHOTOS

Cars pass the murals along E. North Broadway between I-71 and Indianola Avenue as painters work on the south side of the road.

Artful dodging?

By Robert Vitale | THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

As someone who has tried his own hand at painting, Steven Yoho appreciates the beauty of a mural going up along a railroad underpass on E. North Broadway.

A project of the Clintonville Historical Society in honor of Columbus' bicentennial, the colorful 300-foot murals going up on both sides of the street between I-71 and Indianola Avenue portray the history and present-day life of the city's Clintonville and Linden neighborhoods.

They're so eye-catching, though, that Yoho rear-ended a van while taking a look at the murals on his way to work on July 16. When he was between the two vehicles surveying the damage, another driver crashed into his car, pinning him between the bumpers.

The woman visited him in the hospital and said she, too, had been looking at the artwork.

"She said through tears it was that mural," Yoho said. "It's just too big and too close."

City rules demand that billboards be placed at least 25 feet away from streets and sidewalks, but they don't set limits on the size or placement of artwork. The Clintonville mural is being painted on a concrete wall that's a sidewalk-width away from traffic heading east and west on North Broadway.

Zoning officials issue permits for signs and billboards, but Department of Public Service spokesman Rick Tilton said city transportation officials have no role in determining whether something might pose a distraction to motorists.

The Columbus Art Commission approved the

See **MURALS** Page A4



A sign notifies motorists to watch for artists painting murals depicting the history and hustle and bustle of the Clintonville and Linden neighborhoods.

DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

Strickland may hold the key to '14 race

He won't declare yet as candidate for governor; 3 others await decision

By Joe Hallett and Jack Torry
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Greeting old friends at the Oasis Shriners Lodge during the Ohio Democratic Party breakfast yesterday, Ted Strickland hardly looked like an 800-pound gorilla.

At 71, the former governor appears in tiptop shape, still handsome, his gentle and friendly manner earning him beloved status among the 205 Ohio delegates and alternates to the Democratic National Convention here.

In the partisan jungle, Strickland still reigns as King Kong among Ohio Democrats, evident by the path delegates beat to shake his hand at every function here, by his status as co-chairman of President

See **STRICKLAND** Page A4

Romney's plan is a retreat, Obama says

By Darrel Rowland
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

TOLEDO — You know Ohio's a significant political state when the presidential candidates start trading trash talk about something as important as football.

Republican Mitt Romney started it Saturday in Cincinnati, the day many colleges opened their football season, saying America needs a new coach if it wants a winning season.

Although President Barack Obama was in a high-school gymnasium yesterday where basketball has reigned supreme for decades, he fired some pigskin woofin' right back at Romney.

"The problem is, everybody's already seen his economic playbook,"

See **OBAMA** Page A5

Deck chair on Titanic? Painkiller scrips dip

By Alan Johnson
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The number is almost too large to grasp: Ohioans were prescribed 767,763,408 doses of narcotic painkillers last year.

That's 67 highly addictive pills for every man, woman and child in the state.

The good news is that it's down 6.7 million, or just less than 1 percent, from 2010. Gov. John Kasich, Attorney General Mike DeWine and other state leaders have been pushing hard against the epidemic that causes hundreds of drug-related deaths and devastates families.

The numbers went the other way from 2009 to 2010, rising by nearly 19 million pills.

Statewide numbers for prescriptions filled for the first half

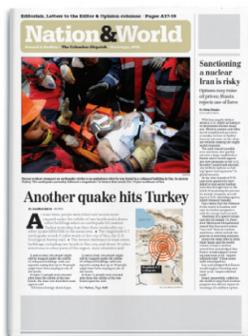
of 2012 are being compiled, but a development at the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation is sure to make a dent. About 1.1 million fewer addictive pain pills have been prescribed for injured workers over a recent three-month period because of a coordinated state effort to lessen the deadly addiction to narcotic painkillers, officials said.

Kasich touted the reduction at a recent law-enforcement summit in Columbus.

The agency began more closely watching for fraud in opiate use, centralized its drug-utilization review process and developed a new drug formulary as well as a pharmacy "lock-in" program to prevent "pharmacy shopping" for pain pills.

See **PAINKILLERS** Page A4

THE NEW 'DISPATCH'



6 days to go

The countdown continues: The re-formatted and redesigned *Columbus Dispatch* will make its debut on Monday. What can you expect? A higher profile for national and international news, which is showcased daily in our new, stand-alone Nation & World section.

Easing others' grief helps temper her own

After losing husband, Columbus woman pushes ahead with orphanage in Haiti

By Amy Saunders
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

In Columbus and in Haiti, Nicolle Bompard awakens to the same, terrorizing thought.

I can't believe that this is my life. That, at 45, she has buried two husbands under the most traumatic of circumstances.

That she and her second husband would dedicate themselves to helping the citizens of Haiti, only for David to lose his life there — his car riddled with bullets minutes after he withdrew money



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLLE BOMPARD

Nicolle Bompard with husband David before his murder

for the orphanage their organization is building.

That she could face another loss, in light of the temporary immigration status of Mack, the 13-year-old Haitian she considers a son.

That every day brings financial

See **GRIEF** Page A6

GRIEF

FROM PAGE A1

worry, not only for her but for her organization and the 28 children in its care.

Most days, Bompert needs a half-hour or more to stop crying, breathe, pray and remember the purpose she shared with David.

Drawn together by the deaths of their first spouses, the couple dreamed throughout their 13-year marriage of starting an organization that would help people struggling with loss.

They launched Eyes Wide Open International just weeks before the 2010 earthquake in Haiti instantaneously created thousands of widows and orphans, the population they were looking to serve.

Bompert never imagined doing the work alone, a new widow herself.

Yet, seven months after David's murder, she pushes aside her grief to help others with theirs. As she lives in two worlds, the North Side of Columbus and Port-au-Prince, she believes strongly that God will again heal her — as impossible as that sometimes feels.

"The same hope that I offer to widows and orphans," she said through tears, "I have to believe for myself."

In gas stations and grocery-store lines, strangers tell Bompert of their hardships, acknowledging that they aren't quite sure what compelled them to open up to her.

"I know why you're telling me," Bompert says, before relating her own story.

She was 26 at her first husband's funeral, thinking that her life, too, was over.

Marriage gave her insight into the troubled past that she didn't know her husband had and the depression that her love and prayer could not cure.

Thirteen months into it, Carl drove to the Worthington carpet-cleaning business where his wife then worked. He hooked a vacuum hose to his muffler, accomplishing what he had earlier failed to do on that day in 1993.

Devastated and lost, Bompert moved to south Florida with no plans except to start over. Seeing no meaning in her husband's death, she decided to find one by sharing her grief with others.

Her parents say that she has long been uncommonly compassionate.

In elementary school, she befriended custodians; during a Chicago trip with her Worthington Christian High School choir, she sneaked outside at night to give her sleeping bag to a homeless man she had seen shivering in an alley.

With a warm, expressive personality, she can cry and hoot with laughter in the same sentence. She regularly announces that she's a hugger before burying people in her arms.

As a result, she puts friends and strangers alike at ease. During one family vacation, Bompert struck up a conversation in the restroom and didn't return to the beach for more than an hour.

"I really think it's the way God made her," said her mother, Bev Bosworth, of Clintonville.

After her first husband's death, Bompert continually found that discussing her sorrow not only comforted others but also gave her solace and purpose.

"The more I was willing to share my pain with someone else, the more God would bring me people who needed something that I have," she said. "My only job was to look and to be willing."

Three years later, God, she believes, brought her David.

At the concert rehearsals, Bompert felt inexplicably drawn to another singer — tall like she is, with a beautiful gospel voice and Caribbean accent.

The widow who couldn't fathom dating was suddenly getting sweaty palms whenever she looked at him.

David Bompert, who grew up in Trinidad and Tobago and lived in Morocco, had traveled to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in 1996 to perform in a concert fundraiser hosted by an aunt and uncle's church.

Nicolle, also a singer, later learned of a connection beyond her attraction to him: David, 34 at the time, had lost his wife to a stroke three months earlier.

She shared her story once again but assumed that she wouldn't hear from him after the concert, when he would return to Morocco to work for the United Nations.

But David, unable to stop thinking about her, eventually did call, without considering the time-zone difference. An excited Nicolle picked up the phone at 4 a.m.

The two began talking as if they'd long known each other, discussing their grief as well as their faith and their desire to help others who feel as hopeless and alone as they had.

Weekly calls became daily chats, at the rate of \$2.89 a minute. David never told Nicolle what he spent on the calls, only that she was worth every penny.



CHRIS RUSSELL | DISPATCH



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLLE BOMPART

ABOVE: Nicolle Bompert is working to adopt 13-year-old Mack but is prepared to move with him to Haiti if she must. He could face deportation next year.

LEFT: Bompert in Haiti, with orphans she works with through Eyes Wide Open International

► For more information or to make a donation to Eyes Wide Open International, visit www.eyeswideopenint.org.

As he is home-schooled by Bompert's mother and friends, Mack has had a chance to be a kid: going to summer camp, watching cartoons. But Bompert knows he hurts deeply, having never seen him cry.

Recently, Mack's expired refugee status was extended through Jan. 1. Bompert hopes that his stay will again be prolonged, given that legally adopting him could take years, but she still fears the possibility of deportation.

If Mack has to return to Haiti, she knows what she'll do: move with him.

Yet, in Haiti, Bompert fears for her life.

She declined to disclose details of her husband's killing, given the Haitian government's investigation. Because David was a legal U.S. resident but a Trinidadian citizen, she has been told, American agencies can't help.

Bompert's last trip proved so dangerous, she said, she went into hiding, unable to afford the full-time bodyguard that some have recommended she hire.

Still, her mission hasn't changed.

"I have 28 precious children who depend on me," she said. "And my husband deserves truth and justice, because he was a good man."

"I'm willing to lay down my life for that, like he was willing to lay down his for the Haitian people."

Bompert does wonder how much hardship she can handle — a thought that makes her well up but, at other times, seems so crazy that she has to laugh.

She jokes about the notion of describing her marriage track record on an eHarmony profile and imagines a phrase inserted into a line of Scripture about God wanting to prosper and not harm people.

"It says, 'except Nicolle Renee Bompert,'" she said, laughing so hard that she could barely get the words out.

But she trusts that in God's plan, some good will arise from David's death, the way it did from Carl's. She believes it already has.

Bompert thinks of the acts of kindness: the friends and church members who, in six hours, donated \$48,000 to fund David's helicopter trip from Haiti. The strangers who showed up at the Miami hospital to pray with her, having learned via Facebook that she was alone.

The stories of marriages strengthened and families brought closer as a result of David's death.

The 28 children in Haiti who have started calling her "Mom."

During a recent visit to the orphanage, Bompert was alerted to a child who was rolling on the floor as she wailed uncontrollably.

Only later would she learn that, on that day in different years, the girl's parents had been shot and killed.

Bompert isn't yet fluent in Creole but, with the orphans, shares another kind of language: For an hour, she hugged the girl and cried along with her until the sobs began to subside.

That evening, when the children said their prayers, the girl thanked God for someone who loved her like the mother she had lost.

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They married the following year and moved to Columbus, with Bompert still in disbelief over finding such a compatible match.

For Nicolle, David was more than a husband and best friend, said Gina Dietz, a close friend who works part time for Eyes Wide Open International.

"He was everything that she had asked God for."

The images on TV haunted them: a city crumbling; families trapped under houses that no longer existed; women crying for their husbands and children wandering the streets, their relatives all gone.

Before Jan. 12, 2010, the Bomperts had spent time in Romania, where Eyes Wide Open International had teamed with a local organization that supports widows, and had identified several other countries where they hoped to someday help. Haiti wasn't on the list.

But in watching the aftermath of the quake — which left more than 316,000 dead and 1 million homeless — they couldn't ignore their organization's mission and the Bible verse that inspired its name.

"Once our eyes are opened, reads Proverbs 24:12, *we can't pretend we don't know what to do.*"

At the time, David had recently been laid off after 12 years at an automation tooling company — three days after Nicolle left her job as development director for Tree of Life Christian School to work on Eyes Wide Open.

The earthquake brought new purpose for the organization and for David, a native Creole speaker with military and logistics experience and a longtime interest in improving disaster-relief efforts.

Ten days later, he arrived in Port-au-Prince to volunteer at a makeshift hospital at Toussaint Louverture International Airport, working on transportation, security and other logistical details.

Nicolle followed in two months, assigned to oversee a group of young patients after one had been walked out by a stranger.

There, she met Maken, an 11-year-old with a shy, sweet smile who was hospitalized with life-threatening health conditions.

"Mack" had been playing outside when his house caved in, crushing his four siblings and parents inside while his mother cooked dinner. Terrified and alone, he had walked 12 miles to the hospital.

Dust and debris from the quake had settled into the colostomy he has had since he was born without an anus. When doctors examined his infected intestines, they also discovered a dangerous heart murmur that would require open-heart surgery.

The Bomperts had promised each other that they would not take

home a child, but neither could resist the overwhelming pull toward Mack.

Nicolle, who worked part time caring for a woman with a colostomy, began to believe that saving Mack was her responsibility.

"Once our eyes are opened ... In May, Mack obtained a medical visa to travel to the United States, where he underwent three major operations in Tampa. Upon his recovery, he began learning to speak English and to read and write, having never attended school in Haiti.

Meanwhile, in June, David accepted a full-time job overseeing supplies at Port-au-Prince's only trauma hospital, which required him to spend months apart from Nicolle and Mack.

The Bomperts openly discussed the risks of the position, both knowing too well the fragility of life.

"We knew he could be offering up his life for what he was doing," Nicolle said. "And we both believed that was what he was supposed to do."

But David looked forward to the break he would have in March, when he planned to go home to a wife planning his 50th birthday party and an orphaned boy who called him "Dad."

With the concrete foundation poured and other preparations going smoothly, the Eyes Wide Open Children's Home was scheduled to open as early as March.

On Jan. 25, David withdrew money from a bank and proceeded to the nearby hospital to pick up medical supplies for the children.

As he drove, two motorcyclists flanked both sides of his car, four men firing their weapons relentlessly. David, shot in the chest, ran to the hospital — the same one where he worked.

Nicolle arrived in Haiti to find her husband looking unresponsive, surrounded by doctors as they prepared him for an emergency helicopter trip to Miami. But with her touch, David opened his eyes.

"Some people will do anything for attention, David," she joked, before promising to bring him home.

She never again had the chance to talk with him after the brief moments they shared on the tarmac.

Intubated at the time, David couldn't open his mouth but looked into his wife's eyes. Weakly, he lifted his hand to speak in sign language: *I love you.*

In Miami, David endured seven days of treatment before succumbing to his injuries on Feb. 2.

Overwhelmed with grief, Nicolle initially had assumed his death to be the result of a robbery gone awry.

But the more she learns, the more

she believes that it was a murder.

In April, for the first time in two years, David wasn't at the airport to greet Nicolle when she landed in Port-au-Prince.

She drove past the hospital where he worked and the street where he was shot, her Isuzu Rodeo still pocked with bullet holes.

The challenges of returning to Haiti, emotional and logistical, can feel endless.

More than 2½ years after the earthquake, orphanages remain full; hospitals discharge children not to homes but to the streets where they live.

Initially working with a local church, Eyes Wide Open began caring for 28 children, some of whom were orphaned before and after the earthquake. Others have parents who can't provide for them: Before arriving at the orphanage, three siblings lived with their mother under a car cover.

Almost daily when Bompert is in Haiti, someone asks her to take in a child she wishes she could accommodate.

The children live in a rented house while Eyes Wide Open works toward building a permanent structure on 2 acres purchased and donated by the Bomperts' church, Vineyard Columbus.

Every few weeks, Bompert visits to spend time with the children, oversee her staff of seven and check on the investigation into David's death.

Rarely does a trip go according to plan: In the spring, she was hospitalized for several days with severe malaria. A July visit became unproductive when the orphanage lost water and electricity for five days.

And, just last week, Hurricane Isaac struck Haiti during her visit, destroying a 15-foot exterior wall needed to protect the orphanage.

"I'm pretty amazed, and if I weren't her mother, I would say this, as well," Bev Bosworth said, starting to cry. "I'm pretty amazed at what she's able to do."

Bompert's time in Columbus doesn't include much rest.

Eyes Wide Open needs \$167,000 to complete construction of the orphanage, plus \$8,000 a month to cover rent and the children's food, schooling and health-care needs.

During many stays at home, Bompert organizes large garage sales that, along with donations, can cover the monthly expenses. Without personal income, she relies on the generosity of others as she works to obtain sponsorship as a missionary.

And she worries about Mack, a boy who has experienced more tragedy at 13 than many other people do in a lifetime.