

MASTER CORPORAL PAUL FRANKLIN lost both his legs in a suicide bombing in Kandahar earlier this year but doesn't think of himself as a hero. He says the 2,300 Canadian Forces personnel in Afghanistan are doing heroic work every day, and he's proud just to represent them. "If you call me a hero, what you are really saying is that all of them are heroes. I'll take that," he says. As debate rages over Canada's mission in Afghanistan, Franklin's story stands out as remarkable. The medical technician, 38, trained the eight men in his patrol company, and it was their bravery and close teamwork that saved the lives of Franklin and two comrades after the attack.

Franklin was in a four-vehicle convoy driving Canadian diplomat Glyn Berry from Kandahar airfield to a reconstruction site in January. A bomber in a taxi smashed into their light-armored jeep, detonating seven rockets. The force of the blast blew the jeep into the air and 20 meters across the road. Berry was killed at the scene. Private William Salikin and Corporal Jeffrey Bailey were seriously injured. Franklin's hair and face were on fire, and his left leg was severed. He lost his tourniquet in the blast, but Corporal Jake Petten came to his aid with one that Franklin had given him and trained him to use just three days earlier. The team's response—quickly taking him and the two other injured soldiers to medical personnel nearby—was crucial in enabling all three to get home alive.

Franklin's determination to return to Canada probably helped save him as well. "I promised my wife that I would always come home no matter what," he says. Clinging to life after the blast, he forced himself to stay conscious for wife Audra and their son Simon, 6, back in Edmonton. That kind of willpower has seen him through a tough recovery too. In the first month, Franklin underwent 26 surgeries: five on his left leg and 21 on his right, which was eventually amputated. Since then, Franklin has worked hard in rehabilitation to adapt to his prosthetic legs. He can walk about 800 meters. "Even now, I doubt what I can do," he says. "Then I just keep trying and doing my best. I don't think that I'll ever run, but I want to try." Meanwhile, he is already back at work teaching tactical combat medicine at bases across the country. His comrades couldn't ask for an instructor with a better understanding of what's at stake. —By Leigh Anne Williams



PIERRE PAUL ALCIDE

JEANELLE

SPRATT

FOUNDER, KAY NOU, ONTARIO

When Governor-General Michaëlle Jean returned to her homeland of Haiti in May for the inauguration of the country's President, she used her trip to draw attention to the plight of its most vulnerable citizens. "You have children here in Haiti who are slaves," she said. She urged the Caribbean nation's wealthy and powerful to end such injustices. Yet Jeanelle Spratt, a fellow Canadian, was way ahead of her.

Spratt, 27, a guidance teacher at St. Michael's High School in Windsor, Ont., has been concerned about Haiti's children since her first visit there, in 2003. On city streets, she saw people selling and eating mud pies—clay mixed with oil and salt—to stave off hunger pains. "That really haunted me," she says. Spratt, above left, was already assisting her parents with a child-sponsorship program they run for a Canadian-based charity called Hearts Together for Haiti (HTFH), but when she returned to Canada, she felt she had to do more.

That's when Spratt read about the estimated 250,000 *restavec* (meaning "stay with") children in Haiti, the child slaves the Governor-General spoke of. Orphans and children of parents who cannot afford to take care of them are sent to live with

another family. In exchange for work, the children are supposed to receive food, housing and possibly an education. Those children are often expected to do most of the housework. Many do not go to school, and abuse is common. Spratt contacted former Windsor priest Father John Duarte, who lives in Haiti and helped found HTFH. She asked him if it would be possible to set up homes in which some of the *restavec* children could live and be cared for. Duarte liked the idea immediately. Once the HTFH board had approved the proposal for Kay Nou (Our House, in Haitian Creole), Spratt made presentations to the people of Windsor and surrounding communities. Donations came from individuals, the Canadian Auto Workers Union and fundraising efforts at area schools.

In March, Spratt went to Haiti to meet some of the girls Duarte and local volunteers had identified as possible residents for the first house. Duarte was worried that the people they were staying with and working for would not let them go. But with what he describes as a potent mix of diplomacy and Catholic guilt, he was able to get all the families to allow the children to live in a house that Kay Nou had leased in Labadie, Haiti, for \$475 a year. Six girls, 11 to 16, moved in earlier this month.

Spratt has a list of six more girls waiting for the establishment of a second home and would eventually like to help street children too. Passionate about the project and the country, she is eager to return to Haiti. "You really miss the spirit of the people," she says. "There is a lot of misery there but also a lot of joy." —L.A.W.