

25 February 2010

Medical & Humanitarian Mission to Bon Repos, Haiti

The Give Them A Hand Foundation (GTAH) and its partners are planning a multi-purpose mission to the town of Bon Repos, Haiti to provide desperately needed aid and assistance to the community in the aftermath of the earthquake. We are also exploring the possibility of providing these services and facilities on a permanent basis.

Bon Repos is a short distance north of Port au Prince. It was also struck by the earthquake, suffering significant loss of life and damage to property. Our mission will be based at the Light and Peace Mission. It is a massive Church on a large property. The Church/Mission is an important cultural, social and religious center in Bon Repos. The senior pastor is Bishop Ronald LeFranc. The Church has 4 affiliated orphanages, one of which was partially damaged.

Presently there are more than 12,000 refugees from Port au Prince who are camped out in Bon Repos on or near the Church's site. To the extent possible, the Church gives water, food and other badly needed items to those refugees who show up at their door.

GTAH has arranged for a 30,000 gallon per day water purification filter to be delivered to the Church/Community. While it is to be placed on the Church's grounds it will be fully accessible to the public. The filter is a MobileMax Pure, manufactured by World Water and Solar Technologies Inc. It is powered by solar panels and has 3KW of electricity available to power other equipment. It will provide clean drinking water for up to 100,000 people per day.

It may also be used in another application, where needed, to desalinate up to 4,000 gals of sea water a day. Delivery and installation will take place some time during the week of 25 February. (Some of you might have read in the papers about the ship that is stuck in the Port of Miami for a week now with 120 tons of aid on board, including the MobileMax Pure) waiting for Coast Guard clearance to sail to Port au Prince)

The Medical mission is scheduled for the period 18-25 March. We will also undertake a research mission with the intention of putting together a program that will take children off the streets and out of the general chaos of Port Au Prince. The objective is to have a daily program where children can engage in supervised activities, educational and otherwise.

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Medical Mission

GTAH and its partners have sent two previous medical teams to Haiti/Dominican Republic. The first which went on January 18, was headed by Kids Explore and was based mainly in Jimani.

This past Wednesday, 16 February GTAH was also able to facilitate the travel of a team of 14 Doctors and other Health Care Professionals with the Bedford Stuyvesant Volunteer Ambulance Corp (BSVAC) to the Dominican Republic and on to Haiti to work at the General Hospital in Port au Prince

This upcoming Medical Mission is scheduled to travel to the Dominican Republic on 18 March. The team of 35 will then go by bus to the town of Jimani, on the border of Haiti, and then on to Port Au Prince. The Mission will operate out of one of the buildings on the Light and Peace Church compound. The Mission will also staff two or three other mini clinics that will be located at other points in Bon Repos.

The Mission will consist of doctors, nurses, other health care professionals, translators and support staff. According to our hosts, the primary need is for infectious diseases doctors, pediatricians, orthopedic doctors, geriatric doctors and general practitioners. The Mission is referred to as a one week mission, as that is the minimum time for volunteers to be there. However plans are for each team of Health Care Providers and volunteers to be replaced on leaving and for these facilities to keep providing health services well into the future. Several of the doctors have already indicated that they would like to remain there from 4 to 6 weeks.

Some of the doctors are also looking into establishing permanent facilities there in Bon Repos, including a possible Prosthetics clinic.

As of this time there are 20 Doctors who have made themselves available for the mission and another 30 persons who have volunteered to work in a variety of capacities. Not everyone will be able to go on this initial Mission. Those who are not in the first group will be placed on a roster to replace those who are returning. One of our volunteers is the renowned Dr. Patch Adams. He will take a group of 10 other doctors with him.

With regard to the mini clinics referred to above, these locations will be determined once we have gotten to Bon Repos and done a tour of the town with our hosts and town officials. They would be located where large numbers of refugees are to be found. They would become operational after a day or two.

These set-ups will be fairly mobile as they will be taken down at the end of each day and put back up in the mornings. (We will develop a plan to accomplish this)

GTAH and partners will be collecting medicines, medical supplies and equipment during the next two weeks. Some may be shipped ahead of the Mission and stored either in Santo Domingo or Santiago for later delivery. Some will accompany the team.

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There are two options for accommodations that we are exploring. We may camp out in tents and our sleeping bags at one of the affiliated orphanages that are in close proximity to the site of the main medical mission, or we can stay at nearby guest houses. The guest houses are reasonably priced and can accommodate our entire team. Our host has assured us that both options offer safety and security. We will bring our own food and water.

Education Mission

No date has been set for this to commence. However we believe that it is important for the children to be removed from the general chaos of life around them and to get back into some type of classes or supervised activities during the days. Again, we are exploring the possibility of starting an education mission. Teachers from around Haiti as well as French/Creole speaking teachers or persons having experience with children will be invited to volunteer their services.

Our host has suggested that since we cannot accommodate all of the refugee children in Bon Repos numbering in the thousands, we should limit this first mission to no more than 500 children. It is hoped that with this being successful, other groups will follow this model in Bon Repos and in other parts of Port Au Prince.

Forming this coalition of NGO's are the Give Them a Hand Foundation, Kids Explore, Gesundheit Institute, Airline Ambassadors, United African Congress, Earth Rights Institute, Humanitarian Travels International and Universal Aid Society.

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