1-26-2010

CPD Medical Employee Among the Utah Volunteers Bound for Haiti

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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George Wotton will take the next three weeks off work, but it will be no vacation.

Instead he will be one of 150 volunteers working to rebuild the Healing Hands for Haiti clinic in Port-au-Prince through the Utah Hospital Task Force. The trip's organizers ended up turning many volunteers away, but Wotton was among those selected.

The aid organizers were looking for people who could provide medical, construction and translation expertise. As a family nurse practitioner and a man with construction and carpentry experience, he filled two of the three skills the group was looking for. He currently provides psychiatric evaluations and general medical care at the CPD’s Medical Clinic. His experience includes years of providing primary care.

That said, he has been told to be flexible, since the project could require him to swing a hammer as well as care for patients. "We’ll be doing whatever they ask us to do," he said. The volunteers’ objective is to rebuild the clinic, which collapsed in the January 12 earthquake. Efforts are coordinated through the United States Agency for International Development.

Security will be provided, and the effort is well-organized, Wotton said. All the same, the situation will be unpredictable. Transportation may not be reliable, and Wotton is prepared to see some sad things. He is not completely sure that a plane will be available to fly them out at the end of the three-week period.

Still, the CPD’s management has supported his plans and accommodated his absence, he said. "Nobody has said anything but, ‘George, do this.'"

His personal plea is for people to continue giving generously, though the earthquake has begun fading from the news. The novelty of the story may have worn off, but the needs are only increasing, he said.

The United Nations reports 112,250 deaths from the quake—and that number does not take into account the bodies still trapped in rubble or buried by private means.