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S.C. hospitals help Haiti relief effort

Plane delivers medical supplies to small town in devastated nation

By CAROLYN CLICK

cclick@thestate.com

A plane full of bandages, surgical gloves, medicine and other hospital supplies lifted off Tuesday from Columbia Metropolitan Airport, a tangible symbol of the outpouring of donations from South Carolinians moved by the plight of Haiti earthquake victims.

The plane headed to Jeremie, Haiti, and the South Carolina-based Haiti Children Project, which operates an orphanage and home for indigent elderly and supports a United Methodist Church hospital there..

Tuesday's donations from the Palmetto Health hospital system included "several hundred thousand dollars" in supplies, said Shalama Jackson, spokeswoman for the S.C. Hospital Association.

And more flights are planned as more hospitals step up to donate cash and medical supplies, she said.

"We know there is going to be another flight on Thursday," said Jackson. "That plane is already loaded with things."

She said Lexington Medical Center is planning to bring pallets of supplies to the airport today in preparation for Thursday's flight. Hospitals outside the Columbia area are planning to send financial donations.

The Hospital Association began coordinating the relief effort after its members began calling to offer assistance and ask what the association could do to relieve Haiti's suffering.

The relief is coordinated through Wade McGuinn, a Lexington home builder, and his nonprofit Haiti Children Project.

McGuinn, a United Methodist, has gone to Haiti and other developing nations on dozens of missions. In 2004, he founded the project to aid abandoned orphans.

The Jeremie hospital, a project of the United Methodist Church, is the same facility that the Columbia ophthalmologist Dr. Hal Crosswell has used for decades. Jeremie is located about 125 miles west of Port-au-Prince.

McGuinn said food will also be onboard this week's flights, donated by Sysco and U.S. Foodservice through efforts of members of Mount Horeb United Methodist Church in Lexington.

The association said McGuinn has been able to acquire the use of three privately owned planes at no charge to fly food and supplies. The planes avoid the crowded Port-au-Prince airport and land on dirt strips to ferry supplies and medical workers.

Jackson said the association is also planning to coordinate relief missions with doctors, nurses and other medical personnel eager to go to Haiti.

The earthquake has prompted dozens of churches, schools and philanthropic organizations to reach out with donations of money and goods. Many faith groups already are planning missions to help restore the country.

Reach Click at (803) 771-8386.

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