



An 'OVERT' show of support

By Lauren Gilchrist

January 21, 2011

(PETERBOROUGH) They have the training and the skills, but more importantly Peterborough County paramedics Jeff Jordison and Troy Cheseboro have the desire to make a difference.

On Jan. 26, Mr. Jordison and Mr. Cheseboro are heading to Haiti where they will spend a week working side-by-side with a doctor helping out however and wherever they can.

The two paramedics are part of a five-person team heading to Haiti with the Ontario Volunteer Emergency Response Team (OVERT). OVERT is made up of emergency service personnel, such as paramedics, firefighters and police, who volunteer their time to respond to major incidents and disasters. A team from OVERT helped out here in Peterborough during the flood. Durham Regional Police constable and OVERT member Glen Turpin says this trip to Haiti will mark OVERT's first international deployment.

The team will spend their time volunteering in an area called Saint Marc, which is about two hours north of the capital Port-au-Prince.

"Every paramedic is in the job because they want to help people, this is truly helping, I hope," says Mr. Jordison.

Mr. Jordison and Mr. Cheseboro will be focusing on patient care, volunteering as part of a medical team at an orphanage and also volunteering with a roving medical clinic.

"We deal with tragedy and loss on a daily basis here, but this is a totally different scene," says Mr. Jordison.

Haiti was hit just over a year ago by a powerful earthquake that shook the small, Caribbean nation to its core. There are still thousands of people homeless or living in tent villages and the country is now dealing with a cholera outbreak.

"People's lives have been ruined and there's no sign of it turning around in the near future," says Mr. Jordison.

Mr. Cheseboro says the reason he is volunteering is the same as Mr. Jordison -- simply to help and give back.

"I think you'll truly appreciate things here after you go down there for awhile," says Mr. Cheseboro.



OVERT volunteers. On Jan. 25 Constable Glen Turpin, with Durham Regional Police, along with Troy Cheseboro and Jeff Jordison with the Peterborough County EMS are heading to Haiti where they will volunteer with the Ontario Volunteer Emergency Response Team (OVERT). *Lauren Gilchrist*

Other members of the OVERT team are bringing down portable water purification units that they will show the locals how to use, and then leave behind in the country when they head home. Mr. Turpin says clean water is key, for a number of reasons, including keeping the cholera outbreak at bay.

Mr. Turpin says the water purifying machines they are purchasing can cost as little as \$65.

"The more money we have the more units we can buy," he explains.

He notes any donations made to OVERT is spent on the mission. The team is also bringing down water purification tablets and with the tablets they are bringing they will be able to clean 80,000 litres of water in just a few days.

"Education is key as well," he notes.

Mr. Turpin says the United Nations states that 16 litres of clean water is the bare minimum people should have access to in one day. That amount can be quickly used up by having one bath.

"We are very fortunate. We are probably one of the richest countries in the world when it comes to water."

Mr. Turpin says there are already quality people working in Haiti but they are simply overwhelmed.

"It's one little finger in the dam," he says, of the mission.

For more information or to donate visit www.overt.ca

lgilchrist@mykawartha.com