



## PHYSICIANS *for* PEACE

BUILDING PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL  
FRIENDSHIPS THROUGH MEDICINE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **Santa Maria Physical Therapists to Volunteer in Haiti**

*The two-week mission coincides with the first anniversary of the January 2010 earthquake.*

Norfolk, Va. – Dec. 16, 2010 – Three physical therapists from the Santa Maria Valley Physical Therapy Group in Santa Maria, Calif., will put their skills to work this January at an amputee clinic in Haiti. John Hollinshead, Todd Martin and Tom Meenzhuber are volunteering in Haiti on behalf of Physicians for Peace (PFP), an international nonprofit that sends physical therapists to work with amputees and disabled patients at the Haitian Amputee Clinic at Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Deschapelles.

The mission coincides with the first anniversary of the 7.0 earthquake that devastated Haiti on Jan. 12, 2010. Meenzhuber, who volunteered for PFP in Haiti last spring, will serve as the team leader for the two-week mission next month. He says he's ready to "get back to work" at the clinic.

"The patients I met earlier this year have stayed with me," said Meenzhuber. "It's not easy for them to get to the clinic, but they don't complain. They work hard. I felt like I was making a difference last spring, especially at the end of my mission when I'd had time to get comfortable and understand the process. I want to return to build on that experience."

At the clinic in Deschapelles, Hollinshead, Martin and Meenzhuber will work with a team of healthcare professionals, including orthotists and prosthetists, to provide care to patients. While many of the patients lost a limb in the earthquake, others have been waiting for a prosthesis for years.

Like Meenzhuber, Hollinshead has volunteered in Haiti before. He worked at the Bernard Mevs Hospital in Port-Au-Prince earlier this year. For him, the opportunity to return with PFP in January represents the chance to "fulfill a contract" with Haitian patients.

"If they're putting forth the effort, you want to return to honor the contract by helping them reach their goals," Hollinshead said. "My team and I also want to provide a consistent level of high quality care for the folks at Hospital Albert Schweitzer, many of whom have returned or come there from Port-au-Prince after the earthquake."

To prepare for the January mission, the staff members at Santa Maria Valley Physical Therapy Group rearranged their schedules to cover appointments that Hollinshead, Martin and Meenzhuber would otherwise have taken. Thanks to the team's flexibility, the mission in Haiti will have no impact on patient care in Santa Maria, said Martin, who co-founded the practice with Meenzhuber in 1985. In recent years, the group has grown to include its own clinic, pool and gym to better serve patients in the Santa Maria Valley, many of whom are working through orthopedic, neurological or balance problems.

"It took a little work to figure out the schedule, but the other therapists are covering hours, and we're all committed to doing this," said Martin, who was inspired to volunteer for the mission after hearing about Hollinshead's and Meenzhuber's experiences in Haiti. "I'd been thinking about volunteering for a while, but John and Tom tipped the scale. Once I heard their stories, I decided to go myself. I want to be one more link in a chain of therapists volunteering their time to help people get up and walk."

That chain already is well established: between March and November 2010, PFP volunteer physical therapists contributed more than 1,700 hours of service to Haiti's disabled population. In that time, they completed more than 1,300 patient visits and helped 635 amputee patients learn to "walk free" with new prosthetic limbs.

For more information on PFP's work in Haiti, please visit <http://www.physiciansforpeace.org>. For more information on the Santa Maria Valley Physical Therapy Group, please visit [www.smvpt.com](http://www.smvpt.com).

#### **ABOUT PHYSICIANS FOR PEACE**

Physicians for Peace is an international non-profit organization that mobilizes volunteer healthcare professionals to assist developing nations with unmet medical needs and scarce resources. Through effective, hands-on medical education and training, clinical care and donated medical supplies, Physicians for Peace develops long-term, sustainable, replicable, and evidence-based programs to help partner nations build medical capability and capacity to help themselves. Since 1989 Volunteers for the 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization have conducted medical missions in more than 60 countries. With its headquarters in Norfolk, Va., Physicians for Peace has programs in 22 countries and offices in Manila, the Philippines and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. In 2009, the organization celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. For more information, go to: [www.physiciansforpeace.org](http://www.physiciansforpeace.org)