

Hills doctors will aid India quake victims

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER
loconnor@oec.homecomm.net

A six-member medical team coordinated by a St. Mary Mercy Hospital doctor is traveling to India to help in the country's earthquake-ravaged areas. A quake with the magnitude of 7.9 hit the country's western region Jan. 26. Death toll is expected to reach 20,000 with several thousand more injured and unaccounted for.

The group, which is believed to be the first U.S. medical unit to go to the area, leaves Sunday and returns Feb. 18.

Dr. B. Babu Paidipaty phoned the Indian Embassy to offer assistance after the earthquake.

On Monday, he had the idea of sending a medical team. For Mary Greer, a nurse in St. Mary Mercy's Respiratory Care Department, the decision was easy.

Her husband works with people from India. So does she.

"We have a lot of Indian friends," said Greer, who lives in Livonia. "I just think they are very warm, giving people."

"If I can be of help, I want to." Paidipaty is director of St. Mary Mercy Critical Care Medicine Department. He is joined by Dr. Ash Gokli, chairman of emergency medicine. The Farmington Hills residents are both natives of India.

The group also includes a neurosurgeon, an orthopedic

surgeon, cardiologist, emergency center director and respiratory care specialist. Paidipaty points a grim picture of what to expect.

"Essentially, what we will see is a lot of destruction, agony and people looking for help," Paidipaty said.

From a medical standpoint, they will likely deal with broken bones, amputations and head injuries. Medical supplies will be limited to what they can carry in six suitcases.

The medical team is likely to encounter other hurdles.

Bhub, one of the towns hardest hit by the quake, is in rubble with people still trapped. The area's only hospital is also in ruins.

There had been no drinking water or electricity, though supplies are being sent in from around the world.

A major highway leading from the town to the nearest city, Ahmedabad, is also destroyed. In some areas, no help had reached victims as of Tuesday, Paidipaty said.

Crew members will be vaccinated to protect against cholera, hepatitis, malaria and typhoid.

"I recall an avalanche in the Himalayas where 70 to 80 people died," said Gokli, who lived in Ahmedabad. "There was so much destruction ... (But) this is beyond comprehension."

The team will fly 18 hours from Detroit to Bombay and

catch a connecting flight to Ahmedabad. Northwest Airlines donated round-trip tickets to Bombay.

The Indian Embassy is helping clear up red tape involved in such a trip on short notice.

All team members will be issued visas when they arrive in Bombay. Some members of the team are also without passports, but have been assured they will have them by Sunday.

The hospital is also collecting donations of money, which will be used directly to buy supplies. UPS and British Airways have pledged to ship items.

St. Mary Mercy staff members remaining behind are doing their part. Many immediately volunteered to cover shifts for those who are going.

St. Mary Mercy CEO and President David Spivey approved of relief effort. All but three of the medical team are affiliated with the hospital.

"For St. Mary Mercy Hospital to take on this project is a great source of pride," Gokli said.

Not all those who volunteered are of Indian descent, either.

"We're all committed to care, no matter who it is or who it is for," said Barbara Dowel, a registered nurse and emergency center manager. "I have worked with nurses and physicians from India. You can see they are grieving."



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN METCAL

Mission of mercy: St. Mary's Doctor B. Babu Paidipaty M.D. talks about heading to India with his team of medical specialist to help earthquake victims.

How to help quake survivors

St. Mary Mercy Hospital is joining other organizations to provide relief to thousands of survivors of the India earthquake.

The hospital is collecting money for medical supplies, clothing and blankets, which will be sent directly to India. All donations will be used to:

- Provide medical supplies.
- Buy blankets, plastic sheeting, warm clothing and other critical needs.
- Ship the purchased supplies.

"The hospital thanks the community for joining St. Mary Mercy in this supportive effort," said David Spivey, St. Mary Mercy president and CEO.

Send monetary donations to St. Mary Mercy Hospital, care of St. Mary Mercy Hospital Foundation, 36475 Five Mile Road, Livonia 48154. Checks can be made out to the St. Mary Mercy Foundation.

For details, phone Sherri Fletcher in the fund development office, (734) 655-2121.

More crafters sought for annual Founders Festival

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
tsmith@oec.homecomm.net

People from other states already are inquiring about being crafters in the 2001 Farmington Founders Festival, said local merchant Deb Watson.

But festival organizers also hope to recruit more crafters from southeast Michigan, enough to swell the ranks from about 80 last year to 200 or more, said Watson, who chairs the festival's crafter committee.

"We'd like to have as many as we can," Watson said. "But we also want to improve the quality." Watson may be in luck approaching the lofty recruitment goal if early response is any indication.

"I've had a lot of responses, even from people who are from out of state," said Watson, owner of Deb's Crafts in downtown Farmington. "I think changing the name back and (changing) the date back really helped."

The community's three-day festival will again take place in July, instead of June - which is

when it was held last summer. The event again is called the Founders Festival; last year's event was dubbed the Farmington Area Family Fest. By many accounts, the date and name of the 2000 event were not popular with merchants, vendors and the public.

Watson said prospective crafters - as well as returnees - should apply as soon as possible to guarantee a spot for the July 19-21 event.

The fee is unchanged from last year, \$150 per booth, with an additional \$25 for electricity. Of that amount, \$50 goes toward insurance and promotion of the festival.

"We're also looking for new things," said Watson, referring to items that are innovative and unique. "And we're looking for things by the original designers, too."

Sought for the festival are people who make crafts such as jewelry, needlework, stained glass and woodcarving, to name a few.

The deadline to apply is Tuesday, May 15. Anyone who is interested in becoming a festival crafter should contact Watson at (248) 477-5837.

Dunckel teacher team wins state honor

Dunckel Middle School teachers Steve Koponen, Jerry Morrissey and Ninette Soares have been selected as one of the state winners for Middle School Level Teaching Team of the Year by the Michigan Association of Middle School Educators, MAMSE.

They are recognized for their leadership in fur-

thering the middle school philosophy, service to their school and community and other significant accomplishments in the middle school field.

The team will be honored at a banquet during MAMSE's annual conference on March 15 at the Novi Hilton.

Police expect to make arrests in wake of Harrison High fire

BY JONI HUBRED
STAFF WRITER
jhubred@oec.homecomm.net

Farmington Hills Police expect it won't be long before they arrest the young people responsible for starting a mid-day fire that locked down Harrison High School Wednesday.

According to Police Chief Bill Dwyer, Harrison administrators called in to report the fire at 11:56 a.m. Firefighters from Station No. 8 responded and quickly controlled a smoldering pile of cardboard boxes, completely contained within a stairwell.

School liaison Officer Pat Sidge called in police and fire department arson investigators,

Dwyer said.

Their initial investigation turned up a school hallway monitor who saw several school-aged people in the stairwell 11 minutes before the fire was discovered. The suspects left after they were spotted, and the hall monitor tried to put out the fire.

Smoke was completely contained in the stairwell. Dwyer said since the fire was so quickly contained, school officials decided not to evacuate the building. Instead, they kept students in their classrooms in a "lock-down" mode, to eliminate routing them through the stairwell.

There were no injuries or damage, other than what was

caused by the smoke.

Harrison Principal Rande Horn said Friday that interviews were progressing with students who are suspected of being involved.

Meanwhile, Horn said he did not think the fire resulted from a prank.

"I think it was some kid that was smoking, who maybe heard somebody coming, flipped a cigarette somewhere and started a fire," Horn said. "... No, I don't think it was a prank. But that's my own opinion."

Staff writer Tim Smith contributed to this report.

Pet-a-Pet seeking hospice volunteers

The Pet-A-Pet Club needs obedience-trained dogs to visit patients at the Hospice Home of Farmington Hills, said club president Ruth Curry.

She added that the Hospice Home program will either be 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays or Wednesdays.

"This is a very important program and our volunteers (dogs and their handlers) spend a lot of time with the patients," Curry said.

Those interested in volunteering for the program should contact Curry at (313) 535-0410. No special training is necessary although pets should be friendly and have current vaccination

records. Pet-A-Pet visits are scheduled once a month and last approximately one hour.

Besides Hospice Home of Farmington, other area facilities hosting the program include the Farmington Health Care Center and Botsford Continuing Health Center.

Farmington Health Care Center visits are 10:30 a.m. the first Wednesday of each month. The coordinator is Lori Clinton, (313) 633-0222.

Botsford Continuing Health Center visits are 10 a.m. the second Saturday of each month. The coordinator is Estelle Biesiedeki, (734) 464-8005.

Volunteers in the Pet-A-Pet

Club know that the benefits of the human animal bond are many and well-documented. Research in animal-facilitated therapy has shown those benefits to include the following:

- Lowering blood pressure through stroking and petting;
- Relieving loneliness, boredom and depression;
- Providing sensory stimulation, especially touch;
- Facilitating conversation;
- Stimulating laughter;
- Increasing morale since pets are non-judgmental;
- Providing an outlet for emotional expression;
- Providing a feeling of being loved and accepted.

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