

SWOSU Students and Faculty Comprise Medical Brigade Headed to Panama

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These Southwestern Oklahoma State University students and faculty are heading to Panama on May 16-22 as part of a medical mission to help serve the people in Ipeti Colono and Torti Abajo, both rural, isolated communities in eastern Panama. They are (starting left front to back): Kristen Howard, Purcell; Sarah Morris, Cordell; BJ Loflin, Apache; Nicole Schmitz, Red Oak (TX); Sydnie Johnson, Sapulpa; Kearsten Westmoreland, Yukon; Dr. David Ralph, Weatherford; Thad Movdy, Lexington; Greg Hicks, Weatherford; Arianna Carroll, Lawton; Katrina Johnson, Levelland (TX); Dr. Randy Curry, Weatherford; Ashley DeVaughan, Ft. Cobb; Madison Rittenhouse, Lawton; LeaAnne Hume, Weatherford; Josh Joseph, Yukon; Johnathan Tran, Oklahoma City; Dr. Nina Morris, Cordell; Annette DeSantiago, Guymon; Nana Asante, Oklahoma City; Cassandra Obi, Norman; and Josh Thompson, Broken Arrow. Not pictured are Nikki Brandt of Newcastle and Jordan Wayland of Gage.

Twenty-four Southwestern Oklahoma State University students and faculty from the Division of Nursing, School of Health Sciences and the College of Pharmacy in Weatherford are heading to Panama on May 16-22 as part of a medical mission to help serve the people in Ipeti Colono and Torti Abajo, both rural, isolated communities in eastern Panama.

The medical mission trip is part of the Global Brigades organization, the largest student-led global health and sustainable development organization in the world.

Global Brigades works in partnership with community members in rural, under-resourced communities throughout the world to help resolve global health and economic disparities.

Dr. Randy Curry, rural health coordinator for the College of Pharmacy, said the area in Panama where they are headed has minimal to no access to health care. Most people travel on foot or horseback. At the clinics, patients will go through triage/medical history, physician exams, dental care, receive charla (hygiene education), and receive medications. One of the greatest long-term benefits is the charla and the distribution of hygiene packets, including toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, soaps, shampoos, creams and nail clippers.

The SWOSU Global Brigades mission trip to Panama was organized as a result of the outreach efforts of the SWOSU College of Pharmacy's Rural Health Network. The intent of the mission trip is to allow students to become actively involved in a rural, medically underserved part of the world.

Curry said the students come away from the experience with a greater appreciation for the challenges in delivering health care in rural areas, along with a greater understanding of the value that they can bring to the work of a healthcare team. In addition, the experience is designed to foster the students' development of strong community service orientation as they begin their careers in a healthcare field.

Donations from individuals, churches, civic organizations and companies in Weatherford, Clinton, Cordell, Hydro, Oklahoma City, Drumright, and Houston (TX), for example, have provided the needed support to take over \$6,000 in medications and supplies to Panama.