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Penfield civil engineer Scott DeHollander heads to Haiti

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Staff writer

A powerful aftershock shook Haiti eight days after the deadly Jan. 12 earthquake, but several area residents aren't letting it rattle them as they travel to the island nation to help with relief efforts.

Scott DeHollander, 37, a civil engineer with MRB Group in Penfield, hopes to head to Haiti this morning with a national team of experts who will evaluate buildings damaged in the Jan. 12 quake.

"I'm really glad I can apply my engineering skills to do what I can to help," said DeHollander, of Penfield.

The trip was coordinated through the Multidisciplinary Center for Earthquake Engineering Research, which is based at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and the Appropriate Infrastructure Development Group in Boston.

DeHollander initially planned to leave Wednesday, but a powerful early morning aftershock altered his itinerary.

The 5.9-magnitude aftershock was centered about 35 miles northwest of Port-au-Prince and was the largest of more than 40 significant aftershocks.

Once in Port-au-Prince, DeHollander will evaluate the structural stability of several buildings.

Dr. Ralph Pennino, associate chief of surgery and head of plastic surgery at Rochester General Hospital, is among a group of six doctors expected to fly to Haiti early today taking 3,000 pounds of medical supplies to Leogane, a small town outside Port-au-Prince.

Constellation Brands Inc. donated use of two corporate jets to transport InterVol volunteers, doctors and supplies, said Pennino, who founded the Rochester-based organization that provides medical help to impoverished areas.

Five of the doctors will remain in Haiti to treat people with chronic wounds and set up space to work.

Pennino said he will fly home this weekend with plans to return to Haiti next week with more supplies and medical professionals. He said he expects the cycle will continue for several months.

"This is a community using its resources to help," he said.

Mercy Flight Central paramedic and Red Cross volunteer Winnie Romeril is currently in Haiti, caring for the injured and assisting with relief efforts, said Mercy Flight spokeswoman Anita Roberts. Romeril, of Prattsburg, Steuben County, is expected to return Feb. 1.

Alex Banks, 23, the youth pastor at Parkminster Presbyterian Church in Chili, said he can't get back to Haiti fast enough. He received a phone call early Wednesday from his mother and sister, who live

outside Port-au-Prince. He said they felt the aftershock, but they're fine.

"They are taking every day in stride. It's all they can do."

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Includes reporting by The Associated Press.

Additional Facts

Upcoming Haiti benefits

- Benefit concert at Venu, 121 St. Paul St., at 8 p.m. Friday. Tickets are \$5.
 - Donation drive for food, clothing, hygiene and first-aid items for Haitians will be at School 22, 27 Zimbrich St., from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday.
 - Relief fundraiser at Liquid Night Club, 169 St. Paul St., at 9:30 p.m. Monday.
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