

(Neb.)-Health Professionals, CSC Students Serving Others In Jamaica

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 05/15/2013 11:01 AM

(CHADRON)-Accompanied by several health professionals, nearly 20 Chadron State College health professions students flew out of Denver last week en route to Falmouth, Jamaica, on a medical mission trip. The group will return on Sunday, May 19th.

The trip was organized by Loretta Belknap, who lives in the Cottonwood Creek area in southern Dawes County and teaches a basic nursing assistant course at Chadron State in cooperation with Western Nebraska Community College two days a week. She has been on a similar trip to Jamaica in the past.

Besides Belknap, three other nurses, including her daughter, are on the trip. Scottsbluff dentist Todd Pieper, a dental hygienist, and two assistants are also on the trip as well as Chadron physician Kristi Johnson. Also making the trip is Rev. Jeri Soens, former pastor of the United Methodist Church in Hemingford and interim pastor of the Methodist Church in Chadron for a few months earlier this year.

Johnson said the trip will be an eye-opener for the college students. She said none of them has previously been on a mission trip, and many of them had never flown in an airplane.

The students gathered to pray prior before leaving Chadron. They took along about 250 Bibles that will be offered to patients at the clinic. The Bibles were donated by members of Gideons International and the OpenDoorChurch south of Chadron.

Falmouth is an important port city along Jamaica's northern coast. Johnson says the clinic and adjacent hospital where the western Nebraska group will work was founded by a Nebraska doctor and his wife.

Johnson said some of the people who come to the clinic live in the surrounding hills and mountains and will get up at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and walk to the clinic. She added that many of them will have to wait in line for hours before they can be seen.

Johnson "recruited" a medical student from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha to assist her on the trip with the most severe cases that the group will see. The CSC students will also be involved in helping with patients.

Each of the students had to pay their own expenses of about \$1,500 to take the trip. Chadron Community Hospital donated most of the medicines that will be used.

--Con Marshall, CSC Information Services