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U.S. Navy seeks volunteers for two humanitarian missions

By Kelly Soderlund

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The Pacific Partnership 2011 and the Continuing Promise 2011 are seeking dental and other health care volunteers to join humanitarian efforts in the South Pacific and South America and Latin America.



Open wide: Dr. Jan Westberry, right, a dentist from Florida, treats a patient and is assisted by Linda Alsad, a dental assistant.

The University of California San Diego Pre-Dental Society Non-Governmental Organization will work with the U.S. Navy on two humanitarian missions this year.

Continuing Promise 2011 will use the USNS Comfort Hospital Ship to travel from Baltimore to Jamaica, through the Panama Canal to Peru, Ecuador, Columbia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, then back through the

canal to Haiti.

The Pacific Partnership 2011 will use the USS Cleveland, traveling from San Diego to Pearl Harbor, Tonga, and Vanuatu before a rest stop in New Caledonia, then Papua New Guinea, a rest stop in Darwin, Australia then on to Timor Leste and Micronesia.

Both ships leave around April 1.

"We are seeking dentists, specialists, hygienists, assistants and translators to help in these missions," said Dr. Irvin B. Silverstein, UCSD Pre-Dental Society dental director/advisor. The Pre-Dental Society NGO is a civilian partner for the Navy's Continuing Promise and Pacific Partnership effort.

Dr. Silverstein is also recruiting medical, pharmacy, nursing, veterinary and other health and engineering professionals. Pre-professional students and students in the professional fields can also come with the proper credentials.

"All of the students

who volunteer for these missions are experienced technicians and will be supervised by dentists who are licensed to practice or teach in the United States," Dr. Silverstein said.

"These technicians will only perform procedures for which they've received proper education and training."

Volunteers do not have to stay for the entire mission and can come on and off the ship. Preference will go to those who can stay on for longer periods of time. Volunteers must pay for their transportation to and from the ship.

The humanitarian missions provide both health care services and infrastructure support. Last year, 133 civilian volunteers from the UCSD NGO traveled to Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea. The Pacific Partnership saw more than 101,000 patients and 2,800 animals.

"These missions change the lives of participants from our nation, partner nations and host nations," Dr. Silverstein said. "Our participants have been able to help with and see some amazing things as well as bring friendship, understanding and build closer relationships with different people in the world."

Anyone interested in volunteering for either mission should send his or her name, profession (if student, name of institution) and contact information to Dr. Silverstein at dsilverstein22@cox.net.



Child's play: Dr. E.J. Welch, a dentist from Massachusetts, stands with children at one of the clinics in Indonesia last year.



Fancy faces: Alice Nguyen, a dental assistant, poses with children at a school in Indonesia in 2010.

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