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Volunteers sought for Navy humanitarian missions

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The University of California San Diego Pre-Dental Society nongovernmental organization seeks civilian volunteers for U.S. Navy hospital ship humanitarian mission trips from April through September 2015.

The USNS Mercy will travel to Southeast Asia and the Oceania Islands, with stops in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Philippines, Micronesia and Vietnam. A smaller ship will make stops in Kiribati, Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Philippines and Vietnam. The USNS Comfort will travel to the Caribbean, Central and South America with stops planned stops in Belize, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Colombia, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Honduras and Haiti. This is the first time both hospital ships will be on humanitarian missions at the same time, and the first U.S. Navy mission trip since 2012.

"These missions change the lives of participants from our nation, partner nations and host nations," said Dr. Irvin B. Silverstein, UCSD Pre-Dental Society director. "Our participants have been able to help with and see some amazing things and bring friendship, understanding and build closer relationships with different people in the world. These are not just humanitarian missions. They help forge diplomatic ties and help create friendships."

UCSD Pre-Dental Society seeks dentists, physicians, pharmacists, optometrists, nurses, dental hygienists, dental assistants, medical assistants, medical and dental lab technicians, pharmacy techs, physical therapists, biomedical repair technicians, sonographers, translators, educators, engineers and all other health-related professionals.

Both ships will leave about April 1. The pre-dental society NGO will serve as a civilian partner in the Navy's humanitarian missions.

Volunteers can choose the length of time and countries in which they will serve. Professionals must serve at least two weeks; technicians and assistants must serve at least four weeks. Preference will go to those who can volunteer for longer periods. Volunteers must pay for their transportation to and from the ship. Once aboard the ship, the Navy will cover volunteer expenses, including food and lodging.

Request an application via e-mail at ucsdpds.missions@gmail.com or dsilverstein22@cox.net as soon as possible to begin the credentialing process.

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