

A CALL FOR HELP



ASHLEY SMITH/The Times-News

Mike Duffy, a doctor with Family Health Services, stands in front of the mobile medical unit along with nurses Yoli Cabello and Blanca Jauregui, left, on Wednesday in Jerome. The three will be working with victims of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana for 10 days.

Local medical team heads to Louisiana to assist victims

By Sandy Miller
Times-News writer

TWIN FALLS — When the Children's Health Fund put out the call for volunteers to help provide medical care to victims of Hurricane Katrina, Family Health Services answered.

On Sunday, Dr. Mike Duffy, a local family practice physician, and nurses Yoli Cabello and Blanca Jauregui will board a plane for Baton Rouge, La. Driver Bernardo Benitez will already be on the road with Family Health Service's mobile medical unit. Their final destination will be the town of Angie, about 75 miles north of New Orleans and 10 miles from the Mississippi border. They

How you can help.

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will provide medical care to people in the poor, rural community as well as to people in the neighboring town of Pine.

When it comes to health care, the people of the two small towns are underserved during the best of times. When they were hit by the fury of Hurricane Katrina, it made a bad problem even worse.

"There's the problem of people having difficulty in accessing health care," Duffy said. "They're displaced from their homes, displaced from their medications and dis-

placed from their usual health care situations. A lot of their health facilities are not currently functional."

Duffy, Cabello and Jauregui expect to see patients with both acute and chronic health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. And their health has likely deteriorated since they've been without medications, Duffy said.

"Anytime you separate a patient from their medical home, bad things happen healthwise," Duffy said. "Acute needs and chronic needs don't get met. It leads to more medical problems and difficulties."

Duffy also expects to see problems related to contaminated water.

"We will definitely be seeing a lot of dehydration and gastrointestinal infections," he said.

Duffy said the mobile medical unit houses a well-supplied medical office and a dental unit. Family Health Services has been on the phone to local pharmacies asking for donations of medications.

"That has always been part of our mission — to try and provide as full a scope of health care as possible," Duffy said. "We'll be able to treat a wide range of acute problems. We'll be able to do vaccinations, preventative medicine and update patients on managing their chronic health conditions. By bringing a mo-

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Volunteers

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mobile unit to them, we bring the ability to take care of their

health care needs until they can get back to their medical home."

The medical team will be roughing it, staying in an abandoned wing of a hurricane-damaged hospital. But they don't mind.

"We're excited and nervous," Cabello said. "There are lots of emotions going on at once. It's an adventure for all of us. Blanca and I are looking forward to going and helping out."

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Helping Hurricane Katrina victims

Family Health Services, a private, nonprofit agency that provides medical care to underserved populations, is sending its mobile medical unit and a medical team to Louisiana to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. The mobile medical unit will be back to its regularly scheduled sites Oct. 24.

The mission is funded by Family Health Services and the private, nonprofit Children's Health Fund. However, donations are welcomed. Those who would like to donate money should make their checks payable to Children's Health Fund Operation Assist and drop them off at any Family Health Services office. Indicate the donation is for the Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort. Checks also can be mailed to the Family Health Services Administration Office, 794 Eastland Drive, Twin Falls, ID, 83301.

For more information, call Patty Brown at 734-3312. For more information on the Children's Health Fund, call (800) 535-7448 or visit the Web site at <http://www.childrenshealthfund.org>.