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SENTINEL-PRESS

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their own at
annual banquet



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MSP photo by Emily Melvold

Going through the boxes in her living room they get excited about some of the supplies, like only medical students could. She says how nice it is to have people with knowledge in the medical field to help sort supplies. **From left to right:** Amanda River, Traci Staskal, went to Maquoketa High School with River. She's a nurse at the UI Hospitals and Clinics, River, Anothony Parks, a paramedic and EKG technician, and Mike Bouska, also a medical student.

River aids in medical relief given to Haitians

By EMILY MELVOLD

There are boxes stacked throughout Amanda River's house in Iowa City, but she didn't just move in. In fact, she's lived in the quaint white house with green trim for over a year now.

The boxes aren't filled with dishes and other typical household items either. They have physicians' masks, anti-deodorizer, and hundreds of different drugs inside them.

The Maquoketa native is helping gather supplies for medical relief in Haiti, and offering her house as the temporary holding place for materials. She is part of a non-profit organization that has been assisting rural Haitians for many years.

The group is called the Rural Haiti Development Project, but their parent organization is the World Wide Village and more specifically, the Community Health Initiative. The groups have an emphasis on educating people on healthcare.

Mostly Iowans and Minnesotans make up the roughly 50 members of the group. It's people of all positions from the medical field – physicians, nurse practitioners, medical students, CNA's, and more. She is one of the youngest of the group.

A doctor she works under at the UI Hospitals and Clinics in the emergency room, Dr. Chris Buresh, led her to join the group. The team started up preparations right after the earth quake, but were already planning a long term care project prior to the events of Tuesday, 12 January 2010.

Taking what he thought he would need and as much as he could gather, Dr. Buresh left Tuesday, Jan. 19, for Haiti. Amanda stayed behind to help oversee and organize the collection of supplies and efforts from Iowa City.

Dr. Buresh has been to Haiti around 14 times in the last seven-eight year period, but this time has been very different.

The village where River and her group

focus on was located as the epicenter of the 7.0 earthquake in a small village called Léogâne. It's approximately 16 miles west of the capital, Port-au-Prince. The hospital there was closed, and River says 90 percent of the small town was destroyed. Relief couldn't reach this village until 5 days after the earth quake.

They are sending a new medical team from their group every week for the next six months. The teams will have some overlap while they are in Haiti so that they have time to transfer information, and so no people go without care. They spend a total of about 10 days in Haiti for one rotation. The work is tiring, and it's important to keep themselves in good health so they are able to do all they can for victims of the earthquake.

River is working all hours of the day in Iowa City, too. There are a number of obstacles she has to face when dealing with transporting the supplies: customs and regulations for packaging and shipping, travel conditions in Haiti, and prioritizing what to take.

The people on the team who go to Haiti have to pack in 50-pound backpacks. Because once they reach Haiti, they often have to hike to the village over steep terrain. Therefore, when the supplies arrive at River's house, people helping her sort and prepare are trying to eliminate excess packaging on the medical products and prioritize what should be sent first.

Communication with the operation in Haiti is little to none for River. She hears information from Dr. Buresh through his wife, Ginny Ryan-Buresh. The two women work closely together. Dr. Buresh talks to his wife everyday for a couple of minutes via a satellite phone.

"It's a lot of relaying. There are tons of incredible stories already of amputations,"

Representatives of school districts discuss future

By KELLY GERLACH

Representatives from East Central, Northeast and Preston community school districts meet this week to discuss their status and possible options for the future of their districts.

The two-hour open meeting, which will not include public comment time, is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 27, in the Northeast Elementary School cafeteria, Goose Lake.

Local school districts and those across the state are facing increasingly difficult decisions as student enrollment and state funding decline and expenses increase. Boards face paring already bare budgets even further in attempts to see how much money they can save with the least detrimental impact on student learning.

This is especially true with the small districts of East Central, Northeast and Preston. The three districts combined have about 1,300 students. And like all other school districts in the state, they saw their budgets reduced by 10 percent for this fiscal year. East Central's budget was cut by about \$198,120, with a \$159,241 cut for Preston and \$258,148 cut for Northeast.

Administrators and school board members from the three districts, which already share some courses, will meet to discuss where they go from here.

Dr. Glenn Pelecky, chief administrator with the Area Education Agency, will open the meeting with introductions of participants from the three school districts. Pelecky will serve as facilitator for the meeting.

As stated in the meeting agenda, "The purpose of this meeting is to briefly examine financial and enrollment trends for each district and begin a conversation among the three districts to determine if expanded levels of collaboration could lead to increasing each community's ability to provide a quality education for all their students."

District superintendents Jim House of East Central, Jim Cox of Northeast, and Dianne Anderson of Preston will provide brief overviews of their district's enrollment and financial trends for the past five years. They will discuss the current collaborative agreements between the three districts, including the number of classes taken in other districts and the number of students taking those classes.

Agenda items will also include talk about open enrollment, including the number of students entering and exiting the district.

The superintendents will discuss current accreditation standards and any future concerns they have for meeting those standards in the future.

Del Hoover, deputy administrator from the Bureau of Accreditation and Improvement Services, will discuss school district options through the Iowa Department of Education, including whole grade sharing, reorganization and dissolution. The individual school boards have already begun discussing some of those options amongst themselves and during public informational meetings.

The three school districts will take the information back to their respective boards. Their next step will be to answer the question, "Is there sufficient potential benefit for our district to continue to participate in the conversation to identify the optimal level of collaboration to maintain our district's ability to provide a quality educational program?"

Wednesday evening's meeting is open to the public, but the public will not be allowed to voice concerns or ask questions.

■ RIVER,
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