

Association of Flight Attendants Volunteer on Haiti Relief Flight

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By Raymond Rolak

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In a generous example of humanism, charity and solidarity, five local union members went above and beyond the call of duty. United Air Lines Flight Attendants, Meg Mikesell, Paul Antuna, Kathy Browne, Tony Retkowski and Gerald Sermana donated their time on a recent Haiti relief flight. They are all Chicago based. Their example is a reminder that calls attention to the relief efforts of the American Red Cross.

The five AFA members helped usher aid workers and supplies to Haiti and returned with some who lived through the earthquake and its horrific aftermath. "I am unable to contribute a lot of money, but I was able to give my time," said Tony Retkowski. "I hope my contributions inspire United's passengers and others around the world to give all they can for these beautiful people. The experience of letting someone know they are cared for is an incredible reward."

AFA President Pat Friend said, "We hope others can offer to help also."

In the aftermath of the January 12 earthquake that struck Haiti, relief in many forms is still desperately needed. Financial contributions can make a life-saving difference. In a move to encourage Americans to continue supporting the relief effort underway in Haiti, Congress passed a bipartisan bill to make contributions to Haitian relief work deductible from 2009 income taxes.

OTHER AVIATION PROFESSIONALS TEAM UP

A group of twelve doctors and nurses from Marquette, MI, were trying to get themselves and several tons of donated supplies from the US to Haiti to participate in the relief efforts. The doctors and nurses have teamed up with Partners In Health, a long-standing Haitian health provider, that assists an under-staffed hospital in Les Cayes. Their biggest problem was that they had no way to get to or through the crowded Port-au-Prince Airport. Had they gotten there, the state of the roads and the lack of infrastructure would have kept them from contributing to the relief efforts.

This group managed to make contact with long-time Albatross owner Bill DaSilva of Tecumseh, Michigan. He is a retired Northwest-Delta captain. His plane, N7025N, was already in Florida for the winter. He agreed to donate his time and aircraft to get these doctors and nurses to their destination. This allowed flying directly to the beach at their destination.

Only the Albatross is capable of carrying this load from Miami to the waters off of Haiti and returning without refueling in Haiti. Without this transport, the mission would have been scrubbed.

Bill DaSilva's generous donation of their aircraft was only the start. The doctors and nurses from Marquette are funding their own shelter, food, supplies and support as well as providing fuel for the first round-trip to Haiti.

Delta Air Lines provided transportation to Miami for the doctors and their supplies. Other generous donors have stepped in to buy fuel for an additional round trip at a cost of \$6000. Paul and Lynda LeVeque came from California to provide additional piloting and maintenance support. SeaPlane Operations, LLC along with Chuck Kimes is providing flight planning.

With the Albatross' unique capabilities for delivering 4000 pounds of supplies directly to seaside locations around Haiti, and then returning without any ground support from the island, several additional flights are anticipated.