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CURE for the world

Rotarians help Project CURE get medical gear ready for developing nations

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Volunteers for Project CURE (Commission on Urgent Relief and Equipment) and the Rotary Club of Jefferson City spent Thursday afternoon collecting dated medical supplies from St. Mary's Hospital to send them to impoverished areas across the world.

Project CURE will send this equipment to Houston for inspection. The gear that meets requirements will be shipped to one of the more than 127 countries Project CURE helps, according to Ralph Haslag, volunteer and former Missouri coordinator for CURE.

"St. Mary's has been particularly generous; within the last five years we have taken one or two truckloads a year," Haslag said. "What we do is take used medical supplies that may be close to dated here and is being replaced. It is medical equipment that might be 20 years old in the U.S., and it is outdated and needs to be replaced. But it is still really good stuff."

The average truckload sent from Houston has about \$400,000 worth of medical equipment, and Wal-Mart and FedEx both supply free shipping to the charity, Haslag said. The end cost for the across-sea journey is around \$20,000, but it's a good price for \$400,000 cargo that can help save countless lives, he added.

Project CURE checks the equipment and the destination for each shipment. This is to make sure an X-ray machine is not sent to a village without electricity. The recipients of the equipment are ensured to have the infrastructure to run and maintain it, as well as a trained specialist to operate it, Haslag said.

The charity started in 1987 when Dr. James Jackson visited a small clinic in Brazil and prom-



Julie Smith/News Tribune

Alan, left, and Grover Beatty, volunteers from the Jefferson City Rotary Club, help wrap no-longer-used medical equipment and prepare it for transport. It will be taken to Rolla where it will be shipped to Texas. St. Mary's Hospital donated the equipment to be used by Project CURE, an organization that refurbishes and repairs then ships medical equipment to developing nations.

ised to come back with equipment to treat the many who were being turned away because of a lack of medical supplies, according to Project CURE's website. In one month, Jackson collected more than \$250,000 of medical supplies and paid the shipping cost to send it to Brazil.

Now, Project CURE operates in 15 U.S. cities; Jefferson City is one of them.

The relationship between St. Mary's and CURE started five years ago through a connection with the local Rotary club, said Mark Sneller, contract manager for St. Mary's.

Sneller said St. Mary's was donating some ultrasound equipment, operating beds, patient examination beds and monitors to CURE. In the past, SSM has donated IV poles, X-ray

machines, instrument tables and patient beds.

"Any type of medical equipment that we are replacing, that we may not trade in, we will get hold of Project CURE and work with them to have it relocated," Sneller said.

He also added St. Mary's move to its new facility has helped the donation project, as much of the hospital equipment was updated in the move. Although he couldn't be specific, he said there will be even more donations down the road.

"I think that they tie in very well with our mission here at St. Mary's," Sneller said. "If we can take our mission and expand it out to Project CURE and have it go to helping third-world countries, then I think it is a great fit."