



Sea Mercy

Bringing health care to remote islands

THE REAL CALL OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Sea Mercy's Floating Health Care Clinic Answers A Call For Help In The South Pacific

Fiji, Vanuatu, Tahiti, Palau, Tonga, Samoa... Just hearing the names of those islands conjures up travel brochure images. Warm tropical sun setting in the distance over blue turquoise waters, palm trees leaning towards the ocean, luxurious air conditioned hotels and honeymoon getaways nestled on secluded white sandy beaches beckons you from afar. As real and appealing as those images may be, there is another calling in the South Pacific that few know about and fewer still allow themselves to hear. Yet, it is a call that pleads with us to respond with the same intensity and clarity. It's an urgent call for medical help.

In the South Pacific, there are no roads, power lines, or phone systems to connect the smaller, less populated remote islands to the same services offered on the larger more populated primary islands. Sadly, these remote islands are left without even the most basic of health care services.

Having sailed in the South Pacific, Richard and Stephanie Hackett, the original founders of a non-profit organization called Sea Mercy, witnessed both the incredible beauty and hardships faced by those living on the remote islands. Seeing the need, they began reaching out to the island nations to learn more about the health care initiatives they had for their remote island citizens. "That was when we learned the reality of the situation for the remote citizens." Said Richard Hackett, Founder of Sea Mercy, "Although the island nations were striving to build a modern health care infrastructure on their larger, more populated primary islands,

there was no service delivery mechanism in place, or funds available to try and connect their remote islands to even the most basic of health care services. That is when we decided to find a solution."

Working directly with the island nation's health ministry leaders, in 2012, they launched a non-profit 501(c)3 organization named Sea Mercy (www.seamercy.org), a Floating Health Care Clinic (FHCC) staffed by US-based health care volunteers to answer the South Pacific's call for help. The FHCC is a modified sailing catamaran that carries doctors, dentists, optometrist, nurses, dental assistants, and pharmacy technicians and the necessary supplies to these remote islands in order to deliver the care, medicines and services needed. "We selected the sailing catamaran as the delivery platform for the FHCC." Richard explained, "It provides the best fuel efficiency, a shallow draft that allows us access to almost any lagoon or shallow harbor, and a more stable and spacious platform for treating patients than traditional wind or engine powered mono-hull designs."

The FHCC will focus on fulfilling the following health care needs:

- Preventive** - Providing immunizations, examinations, and evaluations.
- Curative** - Providing treatments, minor surgeries, and limited pharmaceutical care.
- Promotional** - Health education and training of local



Fusi Kaho is a traveling nurse for the remote islands

RAWAKI
(PHOENIX ISLANDS)

citizens on better health practices and there by reduce health care needs.

Rehabilitative - Helping islanders return to a productive life through corrective treatment of physical ailments and impairments.

Sea Mercy is also an educational training ground for our island nation partner's local health care interns (doctors, dentists, nurses, etc.). These interns work with the onboard, US-based, Sea Mercy doctors and staff. They are essential as they will provide a vital link to the local remote island communities, acting as interpreters and cultural liaisons for the Sea Mercy staff and assisting the Sea Mercy teams in the education and training of the local populations in health care practices.

The Kingdom of Tonga, located approximately 500 miles east of Fiji, will be the first island nation to receive a Sea Mercy FHCC. Tonga has over 176 islands spread across 270,000 square miles of ocean, 160 of those islands are located 100 to 500 miles north of the primary island of Tongatapu where the primary hospital and the majority of their health care staff are located. *"Tonga is a good example of our more remote islands being neglected with more focus of donor aid on the main referral hospitals."* Said Dr. Latu Tekiteki, Medical Officer in Charge of Community Health Services, Ministry of Health in Tonga. *"Also with the small populations on each island, it is not feasible to put medical officers there... One island caters for a scattering of smaller islands who have to take the boat to the closest Health Center, from there it is usually 3-5 hours away from the secondary Hospital in that island group depending on weather and if there is even a boat available to take them there."*

The great distance between the primary island group in the south and the remote island groups in the north creates an incredibly challenging situation for medical personnel to deliver primary health care services to the remote islands and equally challenging for those whom live there to receive treatment in times of emergency. Based in Tongatapu, Sea Mercy's FHCC and volunteer staff will make regular visits to Tonga's remote island citizens, "standing in the gap" as long as needed or as long as there is available support for the Sea Mercy operations. The South Pacific is calling and Sea Mercy is asking for your help in answering.

Sea Mercy Captain Program

For those who prefer to "sail with a greater purpose", we have a *Sea Mercy Captain* program available that can not only change the reason you sail the South Pacific, but perhaps create an opportunity for you to sail there. At Sea Mercy, our goal is to have a Floating Health Care Clinic (FHCC) operating in each of our targeted island nations at the earliest opportunity (i.e. as funds allow). Just like establishing a hospital or clinic on land, the most expensive part of operating an FHCC is the initial cost of the vessel. We created our *Sea Mercy Captain* program in order to remove the cost of purchasing a vessel. Instead, we partner with an existing vessel owner/captain and focus our resources on covering the costs of their vessel operating as a FHCC (fuel, food, license, lease expenses, etc.). We know this unique program is not for everyone, but if the timing is right, it might be right for you. [Click here](#) for more info on the Captain Program.

For more information about Sea Mercy please call 541-913-0938 or e-mail: seamercyorg@gmail.com.

www.seamercy.org MM



Richard and Stephanie Hackett