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Stow couple and daughter feel tremors

Missionaries in Haiti when earthquake hits

 By Kim Hone-McMahan
 Beacon Journal staff writer

Published on Thursday, Jan 14, 2010



Retired cardiologist Dr. Vince Peno from Stow Stow is in Haiti working with a team of 12 missionaries with Mission Possible.

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A Stow couple working as missionaries were in Haiti when the massive earthquake hit Tuesday.

Dr. Vince Petno, 68, his wife, Lee, 66, and their daughter, Julie Bishop, 37, were working with a team from Mission Possible when disaster struck. Petno's son, Dave, of Hudson, said that no one on the team of a dozen members, which was working in Montrouis, about 40 miles north of the hardest-hit Port-au-Prince, was injured.

"Where we are, we are seeing nothing out of the ordinary . . . However everyone knows, even those in remote areas," said

Dr. Petno, who was able to communicate over the Internet through a satellite uplink.

Bishop's husband, Kurt, is the president of Mission Possible, based in Findlay, which owns and operates six schools in Haiti, serving some 2,500 students.

The team, made up of members from Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana, left the U.S. on Saturday for what was supposed to be a one-week mission trip.

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As of Wednesday afternoon, Kurt Bishop wasn't certain when the missionaries would be back.

Dr. Petno, who had recently been in Haiti, returned with the others to take pictures of the schoolchildren and bring the photos back for North American sponsors, who pay to help feed and clothe the youngsters in a country where poverty is rampant.

"Jesus Christ saved me and gave me a 'heart transplant' when I accepted Jesus as my savior in 1974," Dr. Petno said in an e-mail. "My wife and I . . . have the privilege at this time in our lives to serve others."

Nurses were also among the team staying in a dormitory on the grounds of the Mission Center in Montrouis.

Dr. Petno, a retired cardiologist, said it took the team 15 to 20 seconds to realize what had happened.

"There was a loud noise that sounded like an automatic clothes washing machine when it is off balance and making a racket. I was sitting at a table in the couples dorm working when, after the noise, the walls started to shake," Dr. Petno wrote. "The Mission Center is on the beach and it was a beautiful sunny day . . . Others were out of their buildings as we tried to figure [out] what happened . . . There were a number of mild aftershocks that persisted for quite awhile.

"Even after those subsided and we could not feel any movement of the ground, the basketball pole continued to gently move back and forth and not from the wind."

On Wednesday, the group ventured out to the schools to assess damage and help with any medical issues. Dr. Petno said the students were well.

"They [the team] heard a lot of screaming and crying [Tuesday night] . . . I don't know what that was about since [they] were not at ground zero," said Kurt Bishop. "But [for the Haitians], there's a lot of things to be distraught about."

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Munroe Falls, Oh



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