

McAllen medical volunteers serve around-the-clock needs in Haiti

February 3, 2010

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti—Servando Silva and Matt Johnson packed for a mission to Haiti before a mission even was planned.

The nurse and doctor from Baptist Temple in McAllen had prayed for an opportunity to help meet medical needs in the wake of the Jan. 12 killer earthquake.



Haitians take shelter in tent cities in Port-Au-Prince after the devastating earthquake Jan. 12.

Within 24 hours of that prayer, Texas Baptists provided a chance for them to put their medical expertise to work leading clinics in a suburb of Haiti's capital. The [Baptist General Convention of Texas](#) connected medical professionals with opportunities to put their skills to use following the disaster.

"I have some medical skills," said Johnson, a family doctor. "I have a desire

to go and show the love of Christ.”

Hundreds of people lined up to be seen by doctors who conducted the clinics alongside medical professionals from around the globe working through [Baptist World Aid's Rescue 24](#) quick strike relief team.

Silva and Johnson treated a variety of ailments ranging from backaches to racing heartbeats to respiratory infections, most likely caused by increased dust in the air following the earthquake.

“You get to noon, and then the line is even longer,” Johnson said.

Silva and Johnson aimed to treat each patient to the best of their ability, as well as with dignity and respect. At one point, Silva talked with a small group of young men who were having problems sleeping due to nightmares about the earthquake. Silva prayed with them, then the group spontaneously began singing Amazing Grace.

Silva noted he and Johnson invested themselves into their patients.

“They needed help,” Silva said. “We gave ourselves to that individual.”

Johnson and Silva capped their weeklong medical service by working overnight in the emergency room of a hospital, serving 24 hours straight—the clinic during the day, the emergency room that night.

In the emergency room, the Texans treated a young boy with pneumonia, a woman suffering from life-threatening seizures and a variety of other serious issues.

“Forget about going to bed,” Silva said. “The need was still there. You just have to say, ‘The only help these people have at this moment is me.’”

Silva and Johnson have returned home, but they know what needs to be done most to help people recover. Each day when the volunteers closed

their clinic, there were still people who wanted to be seen. Earthquake victims who have had limbs amputated need to see a doctor regularly.

New teams of volunteers have come to serve with the Baptist World Aid team, but more volunteer medical personnel are needed, Silva said.

“There’s still a big need,” Silva said. “It’s not over. These people still need help - medications, treating people.”

For more information about how individuals can help in Haiti through praying, giving and serving, visit www.texasbaptists.org/haitiearthquake.