

# Canuck effort creates global impact

Flying up a Pakistani mountain range in an American military Chinook helicopter, Sgt. Don Ryan realized his trip to aid earthquake victims would be a remarkable journey.

"You couldn't buy that on eBay," he said, of the experience of storming up the hillsides in order to deliver aid with the GlobalMedic group – a lean and efficient rapid response team dedicated to helping those in need around the world, by providing relief supplies and equipment to disaster zones. "I'm looking forward to the next one," Ryan said.

At press time, Ryan, along with EMS medic Rahul Singh, were on their way to Indonesia to deliver medical aid and water purification equipment to a country ravaged by earthquakes.

GlobalMedic, which falls under the David McAntony Gibson Foundation mission, delivers medical attention, supplies and food to Third World countries.

The group – made up of paramedics, firefighters, police officers and some civilians – is looking to recruit more officers to aid in their humanitarian work. They're having an orientation session June 17 at their Scarborough headquarters at 36 Crockford Blvd. as a refresher for its members and an orienteering session for potential volunteers.

In Bagh, Pakistan, they brought in a 20-bed inflatable hospital and a million dollars worth of drugs.

"We're not the United Nations, but it seems to make a difference," Ryan said, of the small stature of the group. "We can go anytime, anywhere to help distribute water, food and medical supplies."

Two other TPS officers have been on missions with GlobalMedic – Consts. Jackie Hood and Dave Phillips.

Phillips said the missions are far from depressing despite visiting some of the poorest places on the planet.

"You come back from the missions even more energized," he said, of the positive attitude gained from the operations. "You see people in their situation, laughing and telling jokes and having fun but they don't know where their next meal is coming from."

He said coming back to hot showers, stoplights and gas stations is a welcome sight on a return home from Cambodia where running water is scarce, traffic is chaotic and where plastic pop bottles are used to fill gas tanks.

He spent four weeks in



Sgt. Don Ryan and Const. Dave Phillips assemble a structure with help from Cambodian workers

Photo courtesy Eye Motion Productions

January and February aiding in putting up temporary hospitals, building a school, teaching people how to build bio-sand water purifiers and transporting school and medical supplies.

He said that GlobalMedic tries to create a lasting effect by providing equipment that people can be trained on easily so that their mark is long-lasting.

The annual Cambodia trip delivers much-needed aid to a poor corner of the world and helps train newcomers to the GlobalMedic crew while keeping veterans on their toes. Volunteers can also have some time to visit tourist destinations such as the Angkor Watt temple. This year, in Cambodia, they delivered medicines, medical supplies, set up a medical clinic, delivered school supplies and built a small school and taught locals how to build a water filtration system.

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**-Sgt. Don Ryan**

But it is in emergency situations that Global Medic rises to the challenge, responding to worldwide crisis through quick reaction teams assembled in a day or two.

Last October in Guatemala, they diverted fresh water from the mountains into the villages of Santa Clara and San Miguel that were swamped with dirty water because of flooding and mudslides.

"We work with the locals to build something they can maintain themselves," Phillips said, of the indigenous Guatemalans – the poorest in the country hit hardest by the flooding that killed thousands in the wake of Hurricane Stan. "It's almost always that the simplest solution is the best."

He said as they were distributing water one day, he realized the power of these people. A 70-year-old woman showed up to the water distribution station three kilometers from her village with a 40-litre water jug typically placed on an office water cooler. She insisted they fill it up and help place it on her head for the journey home.

"They went to great lengths to help themselves and their communities," said Phillips, astounded by the resilience of the Guatemalans and Cambodians he's had a chance to meet through GlobalMedic work.

## Orientation session for potential volunteers

Officers are being invited to join GlobalMedic.

The group, dedicated to delivering emergency aid to disaster zones – both natural and man-made – wants to introduce officers to their work at an open house in June.

They are looking for people to join the quick deployment program that uses inflatable field shelters as hospitals and water purification units to provide potable water to affected populations.

"It's an opportunity for people to come out and experience what we do risk-free," Phillips said. "They can talk to members about their experiences and get to know them."

He said that recruiting police officers is a

natural fit because they are used to working in teams, stressful situations and responding to crisis. He said that they also have a better ability to take time off than someone working a 9-to-5 job.

Missions last approximately two weeks. Volunteers donate their time but have travel expenses paid.

In the past three years, teams have been deployed on 10 international operations to countries including Sri Lanka, Sudan, Laos and Guatemala.

The June 17 session at 36 Crockford Blvd. (running south of Lawrence Ave. E. between Warden and Birchmount Aves.) runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information on their work, go to [www.dmgf.org](http://www.dmgf.org)

## Ontario Safety League award for Service programs

The Toronto Police Service has been recognized as a strong partner in making streets safer.

Deputy Chief Tony Warr accepted the 2006 Ontario Safety League (OSL) Public Service Commendation Award on behalf of the Service.

Since 1913, the OSL has served as Ontario's Chief Public Safety Advocate and annually gives awards to deserving individuals and organizations that

have made an outstanding contribution to safety through education or related public advocacy. The award recognized Toronto as setting benchmarks for community safety programs so that people make safer choices on the road, at work and at home.

"In reviewing 2005, there are a significant number of opportunities to recognize the Toronto Police Service as a significant partner in a number of safety programs," said OSL president and

general manager Brian Patterson.

TPS Advocacy, awareness and enforcement campaigns in pedestrian safety, street racing, extreme driving and child car seat installation have made the province safer, Patterson said.

### Fixture in traffic safety

He said TPS members are a fixture at committees and the organization has backed up officers by properly funding initia-

tives.

"There are so many good opportunities, good officers ... it's not just one person," Patterson said. "It's a chance to say good job to the entire organization."

Specialized Operations Deputy Chief Warr said it was an honour to accept the award on behalf of traffic officers who do so much to make the roads safe.

"They remind the public of the importance of traffic safety,"

Warr said. "Driving is serious business and requires your full attention – it's not just a by-product of 21st century living."

Warr said traffic officers keep busy with campaigns all year round because they educate the public.

"The whole point of enforcement and awareness campaigns is to prevent collisions from occurring in the first place," Warr said. "It's better to prevent a collision than to investigate one."