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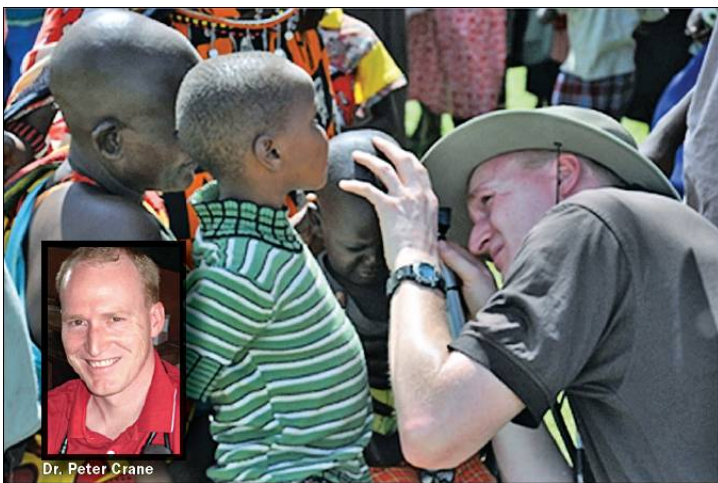
Filling a need

New Montpelier doctor living his dream

Montpelier — Dr. Peter Crane, newly hired family physician at Bear Lake Memorial Hospital in Montpelier, is living his dream. “This is my hometown. It’s always been my goal to come back and work among the people I grew up with,” Crane said. “The physician I replaced actually delivered me and now I am working in his old office.”

But while he settles into the position he began in September, the 32-year-old doctor, who completed his residency this summer, also looks forward to the time when he can get out of town.

Way out of town. Crane has already made three trips to impoverished parts of the world where medical care is simply not available with any regularity. All three trips taken before he even completed his residency — one before he finished medical school — have equally touched this young doctor’s life to a level that leaves him committed to doing it many times in the future.



“Absolutely I would love to do more,” he said. “I would love to go back to any of the places I have been, but I would also like to go back to Brazil if I can find any opportunities there.”

Dr. Peter Crane, newly hired family physician at Bear Lake Memorial Hospital in Montpelier, has made three trips to impoverished parts of the world where medical care is simply not available with any regularity.

Crane served his LDS mission in Brazil, and speaks Portuguese and Spanish. That came in handy during his first medical service trip in 2008 when he headed off to Ecuador .

“There was a physician at the medical school who put it together, separate from the medical school,” Crane said. “There were eight of us and we had to put together our own money to go.”

The rewards, he said, were well beyond anything he could imagine.

“The part I really liked about it, and it may sound corny, was the pure interaction between someone who has a need, and someone who could fill that need,” he said. “It was nice to be able to provide that service to someone without any concerns about secondary gains.” That trip brought Crane to the town of Otavalo, Ecuador, from where his group made trips to tribes living in remote areas with altitudes as high as 11,000 feet.

“I just really enjoyed the pure interaction,” he said. “People would bring their little children in. Sometimes it was just a matter of reassuring them that their child is doing OK. With others, it was the only way of getting any care for their child.”

They brought a local physician with them who could attend to any patients who needed more immediate follow-up.

His next trip came two years later while serving his residency in Muncie, Ind., where another physician was planning a trip to Kenya.

“She told me she was going to Kenya and knew I had been on a trip prior and asked if I was interested in going,” Crane said. “I jumped at the chance.”

His trip there began with a visit to a poor area of Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, but quickly moved out to the bush and a small community known as Masai Mara. “It’s a place where the indigenous people have lived the same way for centuries,” he said. “They still live in huts made from sticks and cow manure.”

Visiting with the Masai people, Crane said, involved being in a far more remote place than when treating those in Ecuador, where he said medical care was typically three to four hours away. In Masai, the trip for medical care was often days to make because they typically walked what took many hours to drive.

That was the summer of 2010, and it would be just a year later, earlier this summer, that Crane made his third, and in many ways most revealing trip. This one was to Tijuana, Mexico, where he said many things took on a more surreal feel.

“That trip was interesting because we were never more than 30 or 40 miles from the U.S. border. I had a U.S. cell phone signal the whole time,” he said. “But to have such a third-world condition almost immediately after you cross the border was eye-opening.”

This trip was again made with the same doctor who invited him on the Kenya trip. Crane said this doctor makes many of these trips in any given year and the Tijuana trip was an annual one.

Among the most astounding days during that stay was one in which the group made a trip to a city dump, which he said was about 20 miles out of town. He estimates there were some 100 people who worked the dump full time, scouring it for anything of value that others have thrown out.

“We saw them frantically sifting through the garbage as soon as the trucks would dump it, looking for something valuable,” he said. “That was a really startling thing. So close to our abundance and resources, and there are people who have no other means than to sift through the garbage.”

That particular trip is organized through a religious organization with ties there in Tijuana, and Crane said they were able to bring far more supplies than a typical trip because they had plenty of safe, reliable places to store the goods. Having just started at Bear Lake Memorial Hospital, Crane knows it will probably be a little while before he’s on another trip, at least a year or so, he says. But there is no doubt in his mind, that many more trips are in his future. “It really broadens your scope, your perception of the world,” he said. “That’s the thing that keeps you coming back when you learn how such a large part of humanity lives in such desperate conditions.”