Medical supplies, hospital beds for Jamaica

A 40-foot shipping container destined for Jamaica was loaded with medical supplies and hospital beds Wednesday as part of a humanitarian relief effort to help two hospitals in the Caribbean country.

The effort is a partnership among RecoverCare, a distributor of medical equipment; Supplies Over Seas, an aid program of the Greater Louisville Medical Society; and Hand in Hand Ministries and Food for the Poor, an international relief agency providing aid for Caribbean and Latin American countries. At least one of the hospitals is in Kingston, Supplies Over Seas senior executive Allen Montgomery said, but it was unclear where the other is. But both were in desperate need of the equipment, so a decision was made last week to help, he said. “We thought, ‘Let's move these supplies to a place that really needs them and can use them right now,' and that's how we chose Jamaica,” he said in a phone interview on his way to help with loading the equipment at RecoverCare's warehouse on Stanley Gault Parkway. The supplies — in two containers — are to arrive in Jamaica in mid-April, Montgomery said. RecoverCare President Kevin McKim plans to be in Jamaica when the containers arrive to help with installation of equipment and training of hospital employees, according to a news release. Food for the Poor, a partner of Supplies Over Seas on relief efforts, identified the hospitals as a priority for equipment. Although relief efforts are continuing with Haiti in the wake of its devastating earthquake, Montgomery said it made sense to help Jamaica as well. “Right now there's a backlog in terms of supplies going to Haiti, so we looked at other potential needs around the world,” he said. “As things open back up we will revisit sending additional supplies and equipment to Haiti.” Montgomery said Supplies Over Seas has sent more than 530 tons of surplus medical supplies and equipment to 87 underserved countries in its 15-year history. “We work with local hospitals and other organizations in the area to recover supplies and equipment that in many cases would otherwise end up in landfills or as salvage,” he said. But in this particular effort, RecoverCare was willing to provide all of the supplies.

“Helping those in need and supporting local charities is fundamental to who we are and what we do at RecoverCare,” Mark Bidner, chief executive officer of the company, said in a statement. “We are proud to be working alongside SOS to support the Jamaican health system.” Supplies Over Seas is always in search of volunteers to help with relief efforts, Montgomery said, and information about the group can be found at www.suppliesoverseas.org.