

## 'AVENUE' GIVES AFGHAN A WAY HOME TO HELP

Oregonian, The (Portland, OR) - Sunday, February 17, 2002

**Author:** ERIN HOOVER BARNETT - *The Oregonian*

Summary: Mohammad Khan Kharoti of Portland has left with Mercy Corps to work at the hospital where he started

Mohammad Khan Kharoti went into medicine after three brothers and his father died from disease.

He began as a nurse in 1965, working in a new hospital near the village in Afghanistan where he was raised.

He returned as a doctor in 1984, working at the same hospital during the war with the Soviets.

Now 18 years later and a resident of Portland, Kharoti left Saturday for Afghanistan and the hospital where he began, this time with Mercy Corps.

"With the little I know, I hope I'll be able to help the people of Afghanistan," Kharoti, 58, said Friday at Kaiser Permanente's Interstate Medical Office South where he is a nuclear medicine technologist. "It's just amazing how life brings such beautiful avenues your way."

Kharoti will find his war-torn nation in the midst of a four-year drought. Sanitary conditions are poor. Electricity is a luxury. Starvation and disease are rampant.

"It's like going back to zero again," Kharoti said of his country.

Kharoti's mother, one brother and extended family remain in the village near the city of Lashkar Gah in southern Afghanistan. Kharoti said his family is doing OK. He will visit them and a school that he helped to start.

Kharoti will join in Mercy Corps' efforts to distribute 89,500 pounds of medical supplies donated by Northwest Medical Teams and flown in to Kabul on Tuesday by Evergreen International Aviation.

The hospital in Lashkar Gah, a cross-country trek from Kabul in the north, is one of several places receiving supplies. During his six-week stint, Kharoti plans to help care for patients, share knowledge with nurses and doctors, and assess long-term needs for which he hopes to raise funds.

Portland-based Mercy Corps views partnerships with natives such as Kharoti as invaluable.

"Mercy Corps is based on building bridges of understanding, and Mohammad has done a lot to help with that," said spokeswoman Susan Laarman.

Because of his trip, this father of four will miss his son Yama's 18th birthday on Feb. 22. But Yama understands.

"Normally, I would be a little sad that he's going to miss my 18th birthday, because it's a big event in my life," said Yama, senior class president at Wilson High School. "But him going over there and doing such a great thing totally takes all the sadness away from me. What he's doing is such a noble cause."

Reporter Erin Hoover Barnett is at 503-294-5011 or [ehbarnett@news.oregonian.com](mailto:ehbarnett@news.oregonian.com)

**Caption:** Photo - KHAROTI Will distribute medical supplies

**Edition:** SUNRISE

**Section:** LOCAL STORIES

**Page:** B03

