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Rochester area's deaf doctors provide model for Japan

Justina Wang • Staff writer • January 5, 2009

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ADVERTISEMENT A group of Japanese professors, sign language

interpreters, pharmacists and medical students will visit

the Rochester area next month as part of the country's efforts to draw more deaf people into [health care](#) jobs.

The group, sent by the Japanese Federation of the Deaf, will look to Rochester as a model on how to train deaf doctors and medical workers, said Alan Spanjer, who co-heads DeafDOC.org, a Brighton organization tapped to host the visitors. The organization, run by Spanjer and his wife, Dr. Carolyn Stern, a deaf physician, holds workshops for health care providers and trains sign language interpreters to work with doctors and hospitals.

The couple was invited to Japan years ago by the Federation of the Deaf and applied to host the weeklong training seminar here,



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an area known for its deaf population and several deaf doctors.

About a dozen Japanese visitors will attend, including five professors and two deaf students from several universities, a pharmacist and the director of the Japanese Association of Sign Language Interpreters, Spanjer said. The group, scheduled to arrive Feb. 8, will hear Stern talk about how she became a doctor; learn how to interpret medical terms and visit the Rochester School for the Deaf and Rochester Institute of Technology's National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

Although the Japanese organization, part of the World Federation for the Deaf, has turned to the Rochester area to learn how to attract more deaf people to the medical field, the U.S. could also make improvements, Spanjer said. He said he's visited hospitals and attended health care conferences where no sign language interpreters were available.

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