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1900 L Street, NW Suite 310

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TEL: (202) 296-0928

FAX: (202) 296-8018

E-MAIL: info@hvousa.org

WEBSITE: www.hvousa.org

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Connecting Communities Through Education

Dr. Richard Henker has been involved with the HVO anesthesia project at Angkor Hospital for Children in Siem Reap, Cambodia since 2006. Since then, he has made thirty trips to AHC and helped to design and implement a comprehensive curriculum for anesthesia trainees. AHC, a pediatric and teaching hospital, opened in 1999 and provides lifesaving care to children from all over the country. The HVO anesthesia project, established in 2003, was the first of seven projects at the hospital and is now one of four currently active.

As a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, Rick found that many of his students were interested in overseas work as part of their nurse anesthetist program. He saw an opportunity to connect his work at the university with his work through HVO at AHC by offering students a chance to learn abroad while simultaneously providing colleagues at AHC with an opportunity to improve their teaching abilities by giving clinical instruction to his nurse anesthetist students.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Richard Henker

In 2007, Rick brought his first group of students from the University of Pittsburgh with him on assignment. Since then, over 50 students from the university have done rotations at AHC, many of whom have become involved in HVO or other volunteer work. AHC nurse anesthetists give lectures to visiting students and some have come to the United States for their own educational experiences, hosted by students. This exchange was so successful that in 2022 Rick helped start a rotation for students at Lao Friends Hospital for Children in Luang Prabang, Laos.

In preparation for the rotation abroad, students gather for three virtual meetings before departure. These virtual meetings include AHC staff and the HVO project director, Sarah Zangle. Students have a chance to discuss culture, the health care system, and disease processes at the site. Students are then required to write two reflection papers: the first, after two weeks of study at AHC, and the second, three weeks after returning home.

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News & Events

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



“We must work country by country, region by region, community by community, to ensure the diversity of needs are addressed to support each reality.”

- Amina J. Mohammed

Dear Friends,

When I came to HVO after my time in the US Peace Corps, I thought I was taking a job. I didn't realize that I was starting a career and joining a family. After my experiences living in Namibia and seeing firsthand some of the things resource-scarce countries were struggling with, HVO's model for sustainable change drew me in, and its ability to evolve and innovate to meet ever changing needs kept me here for over fourteen years.

I am grateful for all of those years, working alongside colleagues, donors, partners, and volunteers to strengthen the health workforce and improve health equity for communities around the world. I see so much growth ahead of us, and I look forward to overseeing the re-opening of many of our projects to in-person volunteers this year, as well as the evolution of our hybrid programming. While the pandemic presented challenges, we have emerged even stronger than before with increased reach and efficiency and clear vision for moving into this next phase.

My years of experience at HVO have given me a profound understanding of our mission, our community, and our role on the global health stage. If there is one thing I have taken away from these experiences, it is the importance of HVO's partner-driven model, recognizing that each of our partners has unique needs and priorities. As Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, has said, “We must work country by country, region by region, community by community, to ensure the diversity of needs are addressed to support each reality.”

Thank you for making HVO the amazing organization it is and for your ongoing support. I look forward to continuing to take on new challenges with all of you as we work towards our common goal—a world with quality, accessible health care for all.

Sincerely,

April

April Pinner, MSPH, RD
Executive Director

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HVO Welcomes New Executive Director

April Pinner, MSPH, RD

April Pinner, MSPH, RD has worked at Health Volunteers Overseas since 2009, most recently as the Deputy Director. During her tenure, she has led many significant initiatives including designing a project monitoring and evaluation system, developing HVO's first international journal publication through a novel partnership with *Frontiers in Public Health*, and leading the most recent strategic planning process for the organization. Ms. Pinner directed HVO's program department for many years, guiding the development, implementation and monitoring of HVO's programs as well as cultivating relationships with international partners. Following shut-downs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Pinner spearheaded HVO's pivot to virtual learning and helped design an entirely new, hybrid program model.

Before coming to HVO, Ms. Pinner served as a US Peace Corps Volunteer in Namibia where her experiences inspired a lifetime commitment to improving global health. She received her Master of Science in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University and is a registered dietitian. Ms. Pinner has dedicated her career to advancing the mission and values of HVO, and believes in a world where all people, everywhere, have access to quality and affordable health care.



HVO staff from left to right: Danielle Stonehirsch, Andrea Moody, Laura Tyson, April Pinner, Natalie Cary, Emily Booker, and Lauren Franklin. Not pictured: Linda James, Lisa Vu, Lily Troup

From HVO Executive Director Emerita Nancy Kelly, MHS

"I am thrilled to see April step into the role of Executive Director. In the fourteen years I have known her, she has done all she can to learn about the needs of our programs, partners, and volunteers and has devoted herself to finding the best ways to fulfill those needs along with new ways to better serve our global community. April's good judgement, strong vision, empathy, and natural leadership ability have led her to excel in all of the many roles she has already filled at HVO. I have no doubt of her ability to excel equally in her new role and lead HVO into the future. I look forward to seeing her vision for the organization take form."

Awards

Nancy Kelly, MHS Receives Inaugural Friend of the SIG Award from the APTA Academy of Leadership and Innovation, Global Health Special Interest Group

HVO Executive Director Emerita Nancy Kelly was honored in March at the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting in San Diego, California with the APTA Academy of Leadership and Innovation, Global Health Special Interest Group's inaugural Friend of the SIG Award.

The Friend of the SIG Award was created to recognize an individual or organization that has been an advocate of the role of physical therapy in global health. The recipient has made an enduring and significant contribution to the GHSIG mission of providing resources, information, and support to SIG, Section, and APTA members regarding global health, health disparities, cultural competency, disability, and service learning in resource-limited settings.

Nancy received the inaugural award for her dedication to improving global rehabilitation, her contributions to the GHSIG's growth and development, and her commitment to their mission of capacity building in resource limited settings.

Congratulations, Nancy, for such a wonderful tribute to your 36 years of improving global health care!



Nancy Kelly and Jennifer Audette

We Want To Hear From You!



Are you an HVO volunteer with a story to tell? Have you been recognized for an accomplishment, published work, or had a notable HVO volunteer experience? We are always looking for stories, big and small, to share on our social media and HVO blog. If you have something you would like shared, please contact Danielle Stonehirsch at d.stonehirsch@hvousa.org.

Awards

Deborah A. Boyle Honored with the 2023 Oncology Nursing Society Lifetime Achievement Award

Deborah Boyle, MSN, RN, AOCNS-Emeritus, FAAN was recently honored with the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Lifetime Achievement award. This award recognizes an ONS member who makes outstanding contributions to the field of oncology nursing and to ONS and is a leader in their community.

Ms. Boyle has practiced as an oncology clinical nurse specialist for over four decades in both comprehensive cancer centers and community oncology programs nationwide. She received her master's degree with a clinical specialty in oncology nursing from Yale University and is a recipient of their Distinguished Alumna Award. She is a prolific writer of more than 300 publications and five books. Her excellence in clinical practice, enhancement of patient quality of life, contributions to the literature, and provision of psychosocial support to patients and families, have previously been formally recognized with honors from the ONS.



Ms. Boyle has been an active HVO member for eight years in a variety of roles. She has served on the oncology steering committee and the Wyss Scholarship review committee, and she has volunteered with projects in Honduras, Vietnam, and Bhutan.

Congratulations, Ms. Boyle, on this latest recognition of your many achievements!

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Awards

Kay Ahern, PT Receives the Dr. Ronnie Leavitt Award



Kay Ahern, PT was recently awarded the Dr. Ronnie Leavitt Award for Leadership in the Promotion of Social Responsibility in Physical Therapy by the American Physical Therapy Association.

The award is given to recognize a member of the Global Health Special Interest Group whose contributions and actions have demonstrated leadership in the promotion of social responsibility--locally or globally--through service, scholarship, and/or advocacy.

Ms. Ahern was born on the Fort Peck Reservation in NE Montana. At age thirteen, a school counselor gave her a brochure on physical therapy and she decided to pursue a career. After becoming an established physical therapist, she looked for places to volunteer and felt that HVO was the most ethical. Ms. Ahern has now been an HVO volunteer and member for twenty-three years and in that time has completed twenty-six assignments in six different countries. Her friendly and adventurous nature has helped her form relationships everywhere she has volunteered. She was recognized for her contributions and dedication with HVO's Golden Apple Award in 2016.

Congratulations, Ms. Ahern!



A planned gift ensures that HVO will be able to continue to make important educational strides in the improvement of health care in resource-scarce countries.

When you write or review your will, please consider leaving HVO a charitable bequest as an investment in HVO's future. To discuss making a bequest in your will or other charitable aspects of your estate planning, please contact Danielle Stonehirsch at d.stonehirsch@hvousa.org.

If you have already made a charitable bequest, please let us know. We would like the opportunity to express our gratitude and will honor all requests to remain anonymous.

Thank you to the following people who have made this commitment:

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Connecting Communities Through Education

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Meetings continue after their return to discuss reverse culture shock and how the trip affected their view of the United States' health care system.

On his most recent trip in February 2023, Rick brought two third-year nurse anesthetist students to learn from AHC nurse anesthetists. Ambria Reid and Anna Breedlove spent three weeks at AHC doing rounds with the surgical team and providing anesthesia for pediatric patients. Together, they worked with Dr. Senat Sao, a local physician completing anesthesia training at AHC, and Bounmy Kapolee, a nurse anesthetist from Laos. Rick gave daily lectures and clinical instruction to Dr. Senat and Bounmy and worked with them on providing anesthesia to up to twenty patients a day. Rick likes to use a combination of lectures, clinical instruction, and simulation training with his students.

Bounmy, a trainee from Lao Friends Hospital for Children (LFHC), spent two months learning at AHC on a Warfield Scholarship from HVO. The Warfield Scholarship for Anesthesia Professionals supports local health workers in resource-scarce countries by enabling them to pursue new training and professional development opportunities that improve their knowledge and expand their global network. These funds can support attendance at international or regional professional meetings, workshops, or other training opportunities including online short courses. Since it began, the Warfield Scholarship has funded educational opportunities for seven providers from HVO partner institutions. Bounmy, the most recent recipient, traveled to AHC for a chance to gain more experience in a wide range of cases.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Richard Henker

During their rotation, Ms. Reid and Ms. Breedlove had the chance to learn about retrobulbar blocks, something rare for students to have the opportunity to encounter in the United States. One of the things they enjoyed most about their experience was how open to learning the team at AHC is. They have often felt in the United States that opportunities for training are pushed aside in favor of getting things done quickly to save time and money. At AHC, staff is more open to making the time to prioritize educational opportunities. Every morning, they participated in rounds starting at 7:00 a.m. Rounds were their favorite part of the day as they saw new cases and checked in on the patients they had helped the day before. Later in the day, they each spent time in the main operating theater and in the minor procedure room. They expressed how impressed they were by the focus on teamwork throughout the hospital, and how aware each provider was of what others were doing.

In the second week of their trip, they were joined by Sara Nguyen, a nurse anesthetist at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, WA and a former University of Pittsburgh student who did a rotation at AHC. Together, Rick and Sara provided instruction to both the University of Pittsburgh students and the local nurse anesthetists.

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Looking Back

E-LEARNING

2022



3,811
E-Volunteer Hours

158
E-Volunteers

291
Online Lectures &
Case Consultations

43
E-Learning Projects

24
Active REIs
(HVO's Virtual Platform)

OTHER E-LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

Research guidance
General mentorship
Content development

“ Though 2022 was mostly virtual, our students had an opportunity to have lectures from HVO volunteers. Overall, our students have 100% pass rate in exams...Because of this collaboration, our dental school has improved in clinical and academic dentistry. I enjoy how students are learning to be a competent workforce for Nepal and world.

--Dr. Dashrath Kafle, On-Site Coordinator for Oral Health Nepal

E-learning projects that facilitated professional exchanges among participants from multiple institutions and countries:

-  **Pediatric Dermatology:** Cambodia, Costa Rica, Nepal, Uganda, and Vietnam
-  **Anesthesia:** Bhutan, Cambodia, and Laos
-  **Pediatric Nephrology:** Cambodia and Uganda
-  **Rehabilitation:** Rwanda and Ghana



Looking Forward

HYBRID

2023

In 2023, HVO will continue e-learning only projects and re-open more of our in-person projects. In addition, we will be moving forward with a hybrid project model that combines in-person and e-learning activities. Here, we answer some of the most frequently asked questions:

Can I choose to volunteer in-person, online, or both?

Yes! The types of volunteer opportunities available vary by site. For those with no previous international experience, online volunteering can be a great way to become acquainted with our partners and their culture before making an in-person visit.

How does HVO decide which projects to make hybrid?

We collaborate with our partner institutions to determine the best option for their needs. Additionally, we consider all conditions that may impact operations, including the stability of local internet, partners' access to phones and computers, volunteer safety, and immigration regulations.

What are the advantages of making a project hybrid?

The combination of in-person and virtual learning offers more training options to fit the unique needs of each project. While some topics may benefit from hands-on, face-to-face interactions, having an e-learning component allows the training to reach broader groups of learners, including those spread out in multiple countries. For learners, the opportunities to interact with volunteers in-person and online can reinforce skills learned and sustain mentorships. For volunteers, the hybrid model makes it possible to share valuable knowledge even when international travel is not feasible.

“ The remote learning has been fantastic. HVO has truly made 'lemons into lemonade' in seizing the opportunity to pivot to remote learning. I do hope to volunteer in person in 2024 at one or more oncology programs. **”**

--Volunteer for Oncology Vietnam

Connecting Communities Through Education

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Rick has had the opportunity to observe operations pre- and post- pandemic as HVO has incorporated the use of digital technology and expanded virtual and hybrid learning opportunities. He feels that the online lectures his students and AHC nurse anesthetists have been able to share with each other are great supplements to their in-person interactions, though there is no substitute for the face-to-face time. Partners at AHC have expressed their excitement at the return of their HVO colleagues.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Richard Henker

Sarah Zangle, the HVO project director, agrees that “in person volunteering enhances collaboration and strengthens existing relationships to continue future work at these sites,” but pointed out that the pandemic taught us “situations can change rapidly, and having an alternative, reliable educational source is vital.” She says, “I think the pandemic forced us to look at the education that we were offering and challenge its limitations. The online platforms have made [the] curriculum multifaceted and more easily implemented.”

She and Rick have been hard at work making the most of the digital resources HVO offers and providing the best possible opportunities for trainees at AHC.

“Starting last summer, HVO set up an online education platform for the Southeast Asian sites. Rick and I began a virtual lecture series to try to bridge the education gap left when in-person volunteering ceased because of the pandemic. It has been largely successful. Our goal has been to conduct two virtual lectures a month. The lectures are formatted to be short, single topic, specific lectures that take 10-15 minutes, and they are followed by a discussion among the attendees. The goal is to build a virtual library that will serve as a readily available, online curriculum. Over time, these lectures will cover all of our educational objectives, and can serve to provide consistent and quality education that is available at any and all times, regardless of situation, circumstance, etc. The online learning can then be supplemented and strengthened by in person volunteers, building on the foundation laid by the online curriculum. Our goals moving forward are to integrate more lecturers into the educational platform and to possibly get more sites involved in the educational experience.”

The virtual lecture series Sarah and Rick set up in June of 2022 began with participants from AHC and LFHC and expanded to include partners from Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital in Thimphu, Bhutan in October, 2022. Participants have been meeting every two to four weeks to watch pre-recorded lectures and engage in follow-up discussion. Rick and Sarah have presented some of the lectures, but they have also mentored Cambodian and Laotian providers interested in presenting to colleagues.

HVO has been working to increase collaboration across project sites, bringing together institutions from multiple countries and encouraging educational exchanges. Right now, HVO has collaborative projects in pediatric dermatology, pediatric nephrology, anesthesiology, and physical therapy that incorporate multiple hospitals across multiple countries. The expansion of the hybrid program model has supported these efforts, allowing more volunteers and partners to connect across physical distances. Opportunities for educational advancement continue to grow in 2023, and we look forward to sharing more soon.

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