

The Volunteer Connection



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Expanding HVO's Community in Uganda

HVO volunteers often form relationships with colleagues at project sites, and those relationships can lead to collaborations that go beyond our standard teaching and training activities. As a result of their HVO volunteer experiences, Dr. Yvonne Vaucher, the director of HVO's pediatric project in Uganda, and Dr. Jeffrey Green, the director of HVO's pediatric project in Nepal, are each collaborating with their Ugandan colleagues on pediatric health care projects. Dr. Vaucher serves as a liaison for two projects to improve family care and wellbeing for infants and young children with cerebral palsy, one in Kampala, Uganda and one in Kiwoko, Uganda. Dr. Green serves as co-project director for the one located in Kampala. These projects are both funded by grants from International Community Access to Child Health (ICATCH), which was established by the American Academy of Pediatrics to provide funding for projects that improve clinical care in resource-scarce countries. Dr. Vaucher is also working on another project, "Stop Infant Blindness in Africa (SIBA)," which is supported by American and international pediatric ophthalmologic associations and is focused on preventing blindness due to retinopathy in babies born prematurely.

"This program will accomplish a lot for east Africa, and it really grew out of HVO and ongoing involvement, knowing people, knowing places, and having connections. HVO has had more impact than just in the immediate hospitals we work in."

Yvonne Vaucher, MD

Dr. Yvonne Vaucher, a neonatologist at the University of California, San Diego, has been an HVO volunteer since 1998, returning annually to Uganda to teach pediatricians in training and hospital staff at Makerere University. "Some people choose to go different places," she says. "I chose to go one place every year to help develop their critical newborn care capabilities. In doing so, I have developed ongoing relationships with my professional colleagues in Uganda. Previous students are now pediatric physician leaders in Uganda. My involvement the ICATCH and SIBA projects evolved from those relationships."

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News & Events

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

There are so many things I love about HVO, but something that always brings me joy is hearing about the relationships and human connections our work fosters. Over the years, I have had the privilege to see lifelong friendships form between volunteers and colleagues abroad, projects grow from newfound professional

networks, and people head down rewarding paths previously unknown to them.

I have experienced this phenomenon myself. After returning from two years in Peace Corps, I was not sure what path I wanted my life to take. I chanced upon my starting position with HVO and met Nancy Kelly, first my boss, then my mentor and friend. Her guidance and my work with HVO's community led me to a graduate degree in public health with a focus on international health. Continuing down this public health path led me to become a registered dietician, which in turn helped me to better understand some of the programming we work on at HVO. With these degrees I could have left and gone anywhere, but I was compelled to return not only because of the mission I believe in, but also because of the strong ties I formed with our many talented, driven, and passionate volunteers, partners, supporters, and colleagues.

In this issue of the Volunteer Connection, you will find a story of how connections made through HVO led to new projects and big changes in communities in Uganda. It is my hope that readers feel inspired to look at the networks they have built or have the potential to build through their work with HVO. I love to see our community expand and cannot wait to hear more stories of how that expansion leads to growth and change for global health all over the world.

Sincerely,

April

April Pinner, MSPH, RD
Executive Director

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Expanding HVO's Community in Uganda

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Retinopathy is a condition that can develop in pre-term infants exposed to too much oxygen in the days immediately following birth. Infants' retinas are not fully developed at birth, and the more premature they are, the less the development. Premature infants often require oxygen in order to survive, which, if given in too high a quantity, can cause retinal vessels to bleed or scar which may pull the retina away from the back of the eye, causing severe visual loss or blindness. The problem was first identified in the 1950s after the discovery in the U.S. that, although flooding incubators with oxygen increased the survival rate of pre-term babies, thousands of these babies became blind due to the excessive oxygen.

Now, the U.S. and high-income countries carefully monitor oxygen levels of pre-term babies to ensure they get only as much oxygen as they need. This has become easier as technology has developed a simple way to measure the amount of oxygen in the blood. Oxygen can also be blended with the air to control the concentration given to each baby. However, in resource-scarce countries, the equipment needed for the blending is cost prohibitive and, in many units, only pure oxygen is available.

The American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus and the International Pediatric Ophthalmologic Society provided funding to develop three centers in Africa as educational facilities and asked Dr. Vaucher if she knew of a good location on the continent that had a modernized ICU, a neonatologist, and the capacity to blend oxygen. Through the connections she had made through her HVO volunteer trips, Dr. Vaucher was able to identify Nsambya Hospital in Kampala, Uganda as an ideal place for the new center. The head of neonatology there had formerly been a resident Dr. Vaucher had taught, which helped facilitate making the connection. Uganda has forty-five million people and only forty-two ophthalmologists, of which there are a few practicing in Kampala. Combined with the fact that there was no existing program to identify or treat children who might have retinopathy, this made Nsambya the perfect choice.

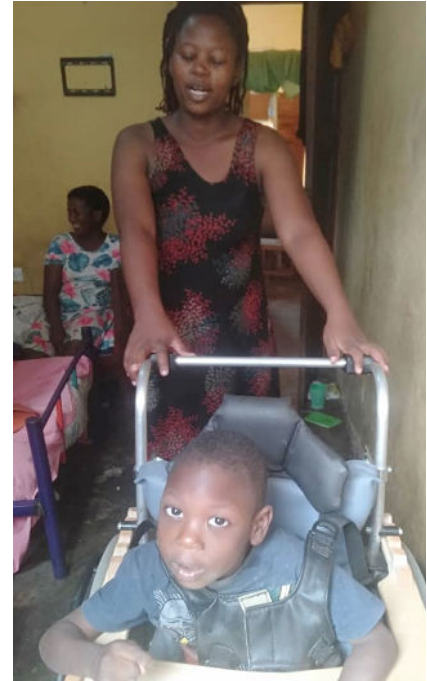


Photo courtesy of Dr. Jeffrey Green

Dr. Vaucher and a small team traveled to Kampala in the spring of 2022 to establish the center. The team consisted of Dr. Vaucher, two pediatric ophthalmologists, and a nurse practitioner. Dr.

Vaucher and the nurse practitioner spent time educating the nurses and pediatricians while the ophthalmologists trained the local ophthalmologists. During this initial trip, local providers were instructed on how to inject medicine into the eyes, a relatively simple procedure that can be done bedside. However, the injections are not always effective. On the team's second trip in 2023, they trained on the use of a laser, which is more complex and must be performed in the operating room. The three visiting ophthalmologists demonstrated the laser procedure and together they successfully operated on three babies during their trip.

The grant provided for the donation of a camera to take retina photos, the equipment needed for laser procedures and oxygen blending, and oximeters to measure oxygen levels. Because lasers are

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Expanding HVO's Community in Uganda

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Photo courtesy of Dr. Jeffrey Green

used commonly in India, the grant is funding two ophthalmologists to travel there to continue training.

During both visits, the volunteer team held town hall style meetings, which were very well attended by ophthalmologists, pediatricians, and nurses. At the last town hall of the 2023 trip, the Minister of Maternal and Child Health came to participate, as well as ten of the country's forty-two practicing ophthalmologists, some of whom had traveled long distances to Kampala. All the enthusiasm for the training and treating of retinopathy has attracted the interest of the Ministry of Health, which suggests that the program may effect big changes in the country and for the 10,000 babies per year who are at risk for progression to severe vision loss or blindness. In fact, as a result of Dr. Vaucher's team's activities, the Ministry of Health is now considering purchasing a new, simple respiratory support system recently available that will blend oxygen and air.

"This program will accomplish a lot for east Africa, and it really grew out of HVO and ongoing involvement, knowing people, knowing places, and having connections," says Dr. Vaucher. "HVO has had more impact than just in the immediate hospitals we work in." Thanks to the program, five NICUs of various sizes had all their ophthalmologists connecting and cooperating to share knowledge. Establishing these connections has been an important step towards making better and more efficient use of resources while distributing knowledge.

Dr. Vaucher also serves as a liaison for two ICATCH grant projects in Uganda, both of which are working to help families with children with cerebral palsy, a condition that affects one million Ugandan children every year. Cerebral palsy is caused by damage to a developing brain and results in disabilities in movement, balance, and posture. However, in Uganda, it is commonly misunderstood, and some believe it is the result of witchcraft. Many in the community fear these children and shun them and their families. Fathers of the children often desert the family, leaving mothers to care for children on their own. These mothers often isolated from their communities and lose their source of income.

The first three-year project, just completed in June 2023 and based at rural Kiwoko Hospital, helped establish community-based, family care groups to support caretakers of infants with disabling cerebral palsy using the international "Ubuntu" program. Ubuntu utilizes eleven educational modules designed to educate families on cerebral palsy through participatory learning. Caretakers and their child with cerebral palsy meet together monthly with experienced trainers in small, local groups to learn first-hand how to assist in development and care for their child. Each month, the group goes through one module, working on improving the children's mobility, nutrition, and socialization skills while teaching caretakers the skills they need to care for their children, including rehabilitation techniques and child development. The program emphasizes how important it is to help the children integrate into society.

Expanding HVO's Community in Uganda

The social support provided by the family care groups is invaluable; this is often the first-time mothers meet other mothers from their community and learn that they are not alone in caring for a child with cerebral palsy.

HVO volunteer Dr. Jeffrey Green is the co-director of the second ICATCH project. Dr. Green first joined Dr. Vaucher on an HVO assignment at Mulago Hospital and Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, where he familiarized himself with NICU and pediatric wards, rounding with physicians in different departments. Dr. Green's area of expertise is pediatrics and clinical genetics, and he provided lectures on genetics and offered genetic consults for children with dysmorphic features and risk factors for genetic diseases. He grew friendly with many of the staff, including Dr. Ezekiel Mupere, the head of pediatrics at Makerere University's medical school.

In 2021, Dr. Green and Dr. Mupere applied together for ICATCH funding, looking for funding to address the lack of education and treatment around cerebral palsy in Uganda. They conceived of a program that would identify children with cerebral palsy in the communities they serve, provide medical care to the children, and educate caretakers and families on how to better care for children with cerebral palsy. Over the course of the three-year grant, they seek to identify and serve 300 affected children. Community health workers screen and refer children with potential cerebral palsy as young as possible to a clinic run by Dr. Mupere, through the Child and Family Foundation Uganda NGO, where Dr. Harriet Babikako serves as the program coordinator. There, children are evaluated, and, if given a diagnosis of cerebral palsy, enrolled in the ICATCH funded program. Some children can also then be referred to the neurology department at Mulago Hospital for additional medical support.

Once enrolled, the program creates Community Family Care Groups of about ten children and their caretakers. Trained community health workers and peer Lead Mothers provide group learning and therapy using the Ubuntu training method. Medical care, counseling, and treatment are provided for children with seizures.

Another facet of the program offers mothers small loans that enable them to learn a simple trade (such as making and selling soaps or woven items) to earn an income. They then pay back the loans so that more individuals can benefit. This is essential, as these women are often no longer welcome at work with their affected children and are deserted by their husbands, leaving them unable to get what they need to care for themselves and their children.

At this time, there are approximately 100 children registered in the program, separated into about ten support groups based on their location. "One of the biggest outcomes of our approach is that mothers realize there are other families in the same situation, and they develop their own support groups," says Dr. Green. "Mothers in the groups often find other children in their communities with



Photo courtesy of Dr. Jeffrey Green

In Memorium

HVO Remembers Dr. John Pippen



The HVO community will miss Dr. John Pippen, an esteemed member and dedicated volunteer since 2011. Dr. Pippen was known for his commitment to health care and education, values that brought him to HVO where his skills as an oncologist and educator were immediately put to use on his first assignment in Vietnam. After a successful trip, Dr. Pippen headed abroad again the following year, this time to Central America. He was instrumental in launching the oncology project in Costa Rica, and he conducted the site assessment himself in 2013 before serving as the project director until the project's closure. Always an advocate for advancing global health, Dr. Pippen encouraged his colleagues to become volunteers and supporters of HVO.

From 1995 to his retirement in 2021, Dr. Pippen served patients at the Texas Oncology – Baylor Charles A. Sammons Cancer Center. During his career, he touched the lives of students all over the world. Our heartfelt condolences to the Pippen family.



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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News & Events

Dr. Leslee Jaeger wins ACOG Service Award

Dr. Leslee Jaeger has been an HVO volunteer and member since 2019, volunteering with HVO obstetrics and gynecology projects in Haiti, Vietnam, and Bhutan. She has served as the project director of the OBGYN project in Hue, Vietnam for four years.

Earlier this year, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists awarded Dr. Jaeger with their Service Award for Maternal Health, Empowerment, and Gender Equality. The award recognized Dr. Jaeger for her efforts in Haiti, Vietnam, and Kenya. She has led annual surgical mission teams to Haiti since 2005 and participated in cervical cancer screening trips to Kenya in addition to her volunteer assignments through HVO in Vietnam. She is a founding member of Haiti sans Cervical Cancer, an organization dedicated to organizing cervical cancer screening and treatment in Haiti.



Congratulations, Dr. Jaeger!

HVO Attends Launch of World Rehabilitation Alliance



Photo courtesy of Monika Mann, PT, MPH

HVO Volunteers Kathy Coufal, PhD, CCC-SLP and Monika Mann, PT, MPH, along with HVO Executive Director April Pinner (not pictured), represented HVO at the WHO launch of the WRA in Geneva, Switzerland.

The World Rehabilitation Alliance (WRA) is a World Health Organization (WHO) global network of partners whose mission is to support the implementation of the Rehabilitation 2030 Initiative through advocacy activities. The WRA works to promote rehabilitation services as an essential global health service which has been an integral part of HVO's work for decades in promoting health for all. HVO is proud to be a member.

Looking Ahead: An Interview with HVO's Executive Director

How have your experiences in various roles at HVO over the course of nearly fifteen years helped shape how you lead as Executive Director?

I have assumed many roles during my time at HVO, and each has allowed me to understand the organization from a different vantage point. HVO is a very people-centered organization, and I greatly value the relationships I have developed with staff, international colleagues, volunteers, partners, and donors over these years. Investing in relationships and maintaining a strong sense of community around shared values are foundational to HVO's past and future success. My time at HVO has also reinforced and effectively modeled how essential equitable partnerships and sustainable interventions are in advancing some of the most critical challenges we face in global health. These are cornerstones of HVO, and my personal and professional commitments to these values will continue to guide my decisions and leadership.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Karl Ordelheide

What has been your most rewarding accomplishment at HVO?



Photo courtesy of Dr. Michael Martin

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced shutdowns around the world, it was critical that HVO rapidly identify methods to continue supporting the needs of our international partners and colleagues. During this time, I had the opportunity to oversee the conceptualization and implementation of a virtual learning model for the organization. In collaboration with an instructional design consultant, a customized e-learning model and platform was developed and implemented in less than a year. Before 2020, HVO did not have any structured e-learning projects, and now we have 35+ such projects.

The integration of e-learning into HVO's program model has been transformational, providing opportunities to expand programming and impact beyond what HVO had previously imagined. Virtual engagement with our partners between in-person visits reinforces and expands on education provided by volunteers and helps build trust and rapport through more frequent interactions between volunteers and learners. While in-person engagement remains a cornerstone of HVO's future and success, complementary virtual engagements provide new mechanisms for volunteer engagement, new opportunities for regional and international collaborations among HVO sites, and amplifies our reach.

I am honored to have worked with so many in the HVO community who supported and contributed to our integration of virtual learning.

Looking Ahead: An Interview with HVO's Executive Director

What do you think are HVO's biggest strengths right now?

The people of our community have been and will continue to be our biggest strength. HVO is structured in a way that relies on the efforts, talents, and leadership of volunteers, both here and abroad. Our project directors, on-site coordinators, steering committees, international partners, and teachers are all volunteers of different kinds. Our community consists of very capable and dedicated individuals who support HVO's work in addition to fulfilling their already busy personal and professional commitments. I am grateful for and touched by what our community contributes. Volunteers are the pulse of our organization, and the role of HVO staff is to find effective and efficient ways to leverage the skills everyone brings.

Another of HVO's strengths is our global network of people and institutions. While some of our collaborations are new, many are decades old. Traditionally, the institutions in which we work have had little interaction with each other. Virtual learning changed that to some extent when we gained the capability to present to audiences in multiple locations. There is more we can do to connect people and resources across HVO's network, but the personal relationships and trust already exist for us to work together to make sustainable improvements in the access to and quality of healthcare in many parts of the world.

What is coming up in HVO's future that you are most excited for?

I am excited to grow HVO's reach and scope. Our expansion into the realm of virtual learning followed by our transition to hybrid projects has shown HVO to be flexible and capable of adapting to change. I feel energized by our shift and want to explore new ways to innovate as we expand our position and influence in the global health sphere. We have added hospital administration and nutrition to our programs in recent years, and I look forward to developing our work in those areas. I would also like to bring our volunteers' expertise to less traveled locations where there is still a great need for health workforce development. As we explore these new avenues and open new projects, we will continue to follow our guiding principles of respect, collaboration, and sustainability.



Photo courtesy of Drs. Maggie Dylewski Begis and Kimberly Jarczyk

I also look forward to refining how HVO presents itself to our community and the world. We have an updated website and a new member platform, MyHVO, that contain detailed information about our work. The Remote Education Interface will continue to evolve to support the educational needs of our projects. Beyond working on refining these and other communication tools, I am interested in finding new ways to present our work and our impact, focusing on collaboration and our global community.

Expanding HVO's Community in Uganda

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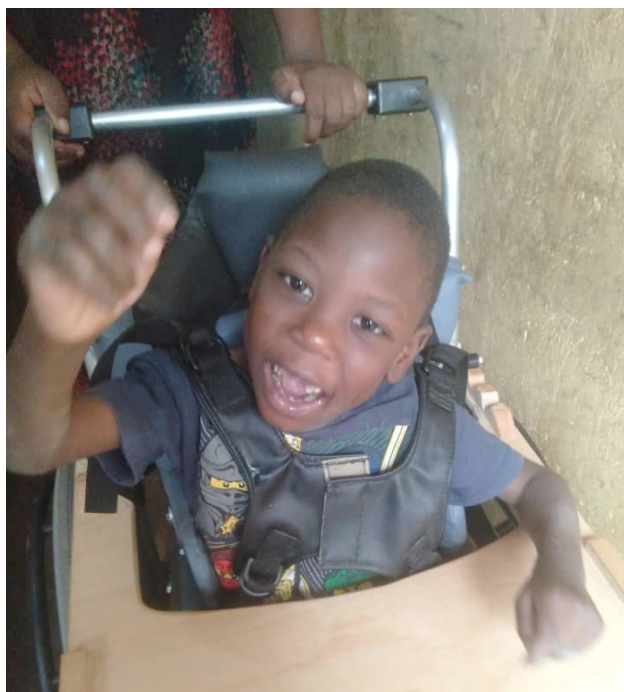


Photo courtesy of Dr. Jeffrey Green

cerebral palsy and bring them into the program.” In addition to the clinical care and community support the program provides, they have also partnered with another organization that makes mobility devices for the children, including simple wheelchairs. These allow the children to leave their homes and interact with their communities, greatly improving their outlook and helping reduce the stigma surrounding their condition.

The program has even grown beyond Kampala. “I established a collaborative interaction between ICATCH program members in Kampala and the Phelps Center for Cerebral Palsy at the Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI) in Baltimore,” says Dr. Green. “We have organized Zoom conferences between the two groups to help advise and improve the program in Kampala and to help members of the KKI better understand the problems of caring for children with cerebral palsy in resource-scarce countries.”

The program is now entering its third year, and current funding will run out at the end of 2023. Dr. Green, Dr. Mupere, and their partners are looking for a new source of financial support for 2024 and beyond and hope to raise \$60,000 to keep the program running and expand it. If you would like to donate to the program, you can do so by visiting GlobalGiving.org and searching their project number: Project #55565.

While it is true an individual can change the world, we can accomplish so much more working together as a community. The relationships HVO volunteers build at project sites, particularly through repeated interactions and long-term work, can lead to so much more beyond the original scope of the project. Through their initial HVO connections, Dr. Vaucher and Dr. Green are now part of improving health care for thousands regionally and nationally through education. We encourage volunteers to make the most of our network and find creative ways to help expand access to life-changing health care. There are exciting opportunities for those who look!

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News & Events

HVO Named Finalist for Global Health Impact Award

We are proud to have been selected as one of three finalists for the Washington Global Health Alliance 2023 Global Health Impact Awards in the Organizational Impact category. This award recognizes organizations committed to delivering greater health equity through innovative programs. Jo Davies, MBBS, FRCA and Peter Buckley, MBBS, FRCA represented Health Volunteers Overseas at the awards ceremony, which was held at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, WA on October 4th. Thank you to everyone working with us to advance global health!



Photo courtesy of Drs. Jo Davies and Peter Buckley



Photo courtesy of April Pinner

HVO Leadership Attends ACOG Meeting in Paris

HVO Executive Director April Pinner, Board Member Dr. Thomas Gellhaus, and Wyss Scholar Dr. Dago Dem traveled to Paris for the FIGO World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics where they presented on a panel entitled "Academic Exchanges and OBGYN Volunteers around the World."

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.



"This workshop is so meaningful to us... We always appreciate HVO's [motto]: 'Transforming lives through education.'"

Phuong Nguyen, MD



"I want people to realize there's more than making money. There's so much more we can do and give with the skill set we've got."

Jesse Hollander, DDS

"As soon as Dr. Kruey saw us, she rushed over to us, gave us both big hugs, and said, 'You didn't forget about us. You came back. Thank you for caring about us.'"

George Pantely, MD



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Photo courtesy of Drs. Robert Erdin and
Virginia Casey

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In memory of Nei Cheng
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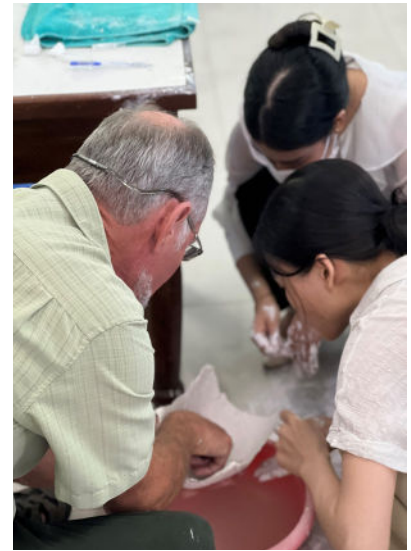


Photo courtesy of Dr. D. Kirk Gray,

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In honor of Janet Dewan
Jackie Rowles, CRNA

In honor of Linda V. James
John James

In honor of Dr. Louis Rafetto
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Photo courtesy of Dr. Kaira Kaplinsky



Photo courtesy of Dr. Richard Henker



Photo courtesy of Dr. J. N. Alastair Gibson



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Transforming Lives Through Education

Membership & Donation Form

HVO has two categories of supporters – donors & members. Members are health care professionals who may volunteer. Donors come from all walks of life, sharing a commitment to improve global health through education. All donations and membership dues to HVO are tax-deductible.

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- Monthly Semi-annually
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I will begin my payments of \$ _____ (amount) on: _____ (start date) via a **recurring payment** to be deducted from the account I've indicated below.*

Step 3

Method of Payment (check one):

I will pay the amount \$ _____ or make my recurring gift with:

(total amount)

- Check (for recurring payment, please enclose a voided check)
- VISA MasterCard Discover American Express

Card # _____ CVV _____ Exp Date _____

(Note: Address above should be associated with this card)

Signature (required): _____

*a record of each donation will appear on your bank or credit card statement. You can increase, decrease, or suspend your pledge at any time by contacting HVO by phone or mail. All donations provided to HVO originating as ACH transactions comply with U.S. law.

Please return this form to:

Health Volunteers Overseas
1900 L Street, NW Suite 310 • Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 296-0928 • Fax: (202) 296-8018 • www.hvousing.org



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 E-MAIL: info@hvousa.org
 WEBSITE: www.hvousa.org
 CFC # 12147
 United Way # 0342

Health Volunteers Overseas is dedicated to improving the availability and quality of health care through the education, training and professional development of the health workforce in resource-scarce countries. HVO designs and implements clinical training and education programs in child health, primary care, trauma and rehabilitation, essential surgical care, oral health, blood disorders and cancer, infectious disease, wound management, and nursing education.

The Volunteer Connection, HVO's biannual newsletter, is available by mail or electronically for those who prefer. Subscriptions are free to HVO members and donors. Previous issues are available on the HVO website under "HVO News." The newsletter is produced by the communications staff at HVO.

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