For some, volunteering may mean taking their job on the road and performing their skills in a different environment. For HVO, the concept is much broader as volunteers are seen as change agents, with a goal of improving the availability and quality of health care in developing countries. That can often seem like a monumental task, as you look around and see few resources and busy, overwhelmed health care workers. As many experienced volunteers will say, the first thing to do is stop, take a deep breath, and get to know your new environment. Observe the culture, watch how people interact, and listen to what they have to say. To accomplish real, sustainable change requires shifting attitudes and behaviors, all of which takes time.

As a short-term volunteer training and educating colleagues, it is very difficult to see the impact your work has on a particular site. Change occurs over time and one of the most important aspects of volunteer service is role modeling. Physical therapist Michael Ferdun noted in a trip report, “The challenge is always how to be of use. Naturally, you want to improve the care given, but local caregivers are the ones who must take ownership of this. The difficulty is finding the balance between simply being a resource versus someone who leaves behind a legacy of improved systems for the students, staff, and hospital. As more senior volunteers have told me more than once, sometimes simply being a role model is the most important part of a volunteer assignment.” After pediatrician Shaun Berger noticed a lack of soap meant many of the physicians did not regularly wash their hands, he bought a bottle of alcohol gel and carried it in his lab coat. "I gelled and shared with my colleagues between all patient encounters. I had noticed one of the Infectious Disease doctors doing the same, and realized one more physician modeling this easy, affordable intervention could start a trend, and have a lasting impact."

As a volunteer in another culture, you will always be observed and it’s best to consider yourself in a "fishbowl" environment. You will be different - whether it is due to your race, ethnicity, height, weight, gender role according to their culture, assumption that, as a westerner, you are "rich", etc. - and your every move will be considered. Take advantage of that role, to politely model behaviors that might make your colleagues’ work more effective. Physicians can show respect for the nurses on the ward and their input in patient care. Physical therapists can model polite, caring interaction with patients. A key
Dear Friends,

As we put together our cover article on what it takes to be an effective volunteer, I was reminded of these two quotes – from two very different men of different generations and social milieu. Yet, their messages still speak to us today and represent some of the most important elements of volunteering – patience and modeling.

Serving as a volunteer requires patience as your colleagues learn new techniques and strive to implement them in their own environment. It also requires patience to step back and observe, offer advice when appropriate, and learn when to remain silent. Often, modeling key behaviors and serving as an example is the best form of teaching.

What makes HVO’s work sustainable is its multiplying effect, as volunteers train their colleagues who, in turn, train others. One of our earliest programs was in Malawi – a small landlocked country in southern Africa. There, under the leadership of Dr. Edward Blair, a new cadre of health provider was created – the orthopaedic clinical officer. Trained in the conservative management of common musculoskeletal conditions, these OCOs are assigned to rural district level facilities and are the front line providers of orthopaedic care to the majority of Malawi’s population. Between 1985 and 2008, 117 OCOs were trained. Eighty volunteers rotated through this site over these years (many served several times). The data point of note, however, is that every year these OCOs treat more than 153,000 patients. This is the impact that HVO’s programs offer, with hundreds of health care providers trained but thousands of lives touched.

If you have not yet served as an HVO volunteer, please be sure to read the article, in conjunction with the excellent publication, A Guide to Volunteering Overseas.

For those who have volunteered, the article will refresh your memory of the experience and may inspire you to volunteer again. What are you waiting for?

Sincerely,

Nancy

Nancy A. Kelly, MHS
Executive Director

“Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.”
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Nothing is so contagious as example; and we never do any great good or evil which does not produce its like.”
– François de La Rochefoucauld
### Active Program Sites

**Current Volunteer Opportunities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Anesthesia</strong></td>
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<td>Peru</td>
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<td><strong>Hand Surgery/Hand Therapy</strong></td>
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<td>1 week</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hematology</strong></td>
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<td>Uganda</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
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<td><strong>Pediatrics</strong></td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Bhutan</td>
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*Please Note:* New programs are added regularly and volunteer assignments are made on a rolling basis. For the most up-to-date information on volunteer sites and scheduling, contact the HVO Program Department: programs@hvousa.org or 202-296-0928. Visit the website www.hvousa.org.
component of role modeling is listening to the needs and concerns of both patients and colleagues. Many health professionals in developing countries work in isolation and, as a volunteer, they appreciate the interaction and feedback you are able to offer as a peer. This is particularly true of department chairs, who may have no one with whom to share their concerns. Volunteers can serve as excellent “sounding boards” since they are outside the system and can speak as professional peers.

Volunteers often note that patients, and even other staff members, will turn to them, as foreigners, for advice rather than to the local provider. This is an excellent opportunity to model respect for the local provider, and defer to their decisions, acknowledging their understanding of the patient's situation and culture.

Volunteers also serve as change agents in modeling expectations. Dr. Martin Hobdell has been working with oral health programs in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam for a number of years and has been fortunate to see major changes as a result. He marvels at the profound personal change he has witnessed in one of his colleagues. Assigned to assist him in a study, the shy woman spoke little English but quickly grasped the needs of the study and did so well with the project that she made her first journey abroad to present it at an international conference. The process of presenting, and witnessing the impact of such a conference spurred her to study English at night, which led to her serving as an interpreter for the graduate level course at her university. Her interest and commitment led to a scholarship in another Asian country where she learned enough of the language to earn her graduate degree. Dr. Hobdell notes that “she has changed from a timid, retiring girl to a confident, very capable woman who now works full-time as a teacher and mentor to both undergraduate and graduate students” in the dental faculty where she trained.

How can you have such an effect on a colleague, when time is short, you may not speak the same language, and you have a scheduled agenda? A key component of effective volunteering is learning to let go, and adapt to the new environment. Recognize that working in a developing country where resources are limited will not be the
ACD honors Frank Andolino, DDS

Congratulations to Dr. Frank C. Andolino who received the Outstanding Service Award at the annual conference of the American College of Dentists in October 2011. The award, which is presented through a special recommendation of the Board of Regents, honors “efforts that embody the service ideal, emphasize compassion, beneficence, and unselfish behavior, and have significant impact on the profession, the community, or humanity.” Dr. Andolino has served with HVO as a volunteer, a program director, and is currently a member of the HVO Oral Health Steering Committee.

Making a Difference

The American Academy of Dermatology acknowledged the work of three HVO members this past year with their “Making a Difference” Award. The HVO honorees were Dr. Joel Bamford, for his work in India, Dr. Casey Carlos for his work in Costa Rica and Peru, and Dr. Stephen Flax for his work in Peru and Costa Rica, and his service as Program Director. Congratulations to each of them!

Richard Coughlin, MD, MSc Honored

Dr. Richard Coughlin was honored in February with the 2012 Heroes and Hearts Award. This award, which is presented by the San Francisco General Hospital Foundation, “recognizes exceptional community service”, with the hope of encouraging others to become involved in working towards positive change. Dr. Coughlin was nominated by “a U.S. Army Iraq War veteran who survived a suicide bomber attack in July 2011 when his vehicle was hit while serving as a private security contractor. After being stabilized in Iraq and Germany, he was evacuated to San Francisco General Hospital” and Dr. Coughlin was his surgeon.

Dr. Coughlin has been a member of HVO since 1998, and is Chair Emeritus of Orthopaedics Overseas.

“It reinforced my view that teaching and education should be the basis for international health promotion.”

—Alfred Scherzer, MD, MS, EdD, HVO Volunteer
same as working in your home country. As Robert L. Burger stated about his experience volunteering in hematology, “It is very hard to impart one’s own standards to the care of a patient in a developing country. One has to accept the limitations in care and the limited resources, and be ready to compromise, but strive to use your knowledge to give the best care.”

Learning to let go means having reasonable expectations of what can be done, and accepting that there are different solutions to a problem. Volunteers are always guests at a site and no matter how many times you have visited, you will always be an outside advisor. There may be situations that would be addressed differently in your home environment, but decisions related to scheduling, personnel, use of equipment, etc. must ultimately be left to the institute or the Ministry of Health. Persistence in tactfully modeling behaviors and attitudes, however, can bring about changes that would not occur otherwise. Anesthesiologist Krzysztof Laudanski has noted:

“Volunteering in the teaching capacity can be very rewarding. A lot depends on the personal attitude. Do not have too many expectations. Just embrace what comes. We are always guests for our hosts. At the beginning, observation will be very valuable versus expressing opinions. It may take some time to acclimate and to understand that certain things are being done differently compared to the USA. Things may look crazy at the beginning but there is a lot of common sense after all when local conditions are appreciated and understood.”

Research that has focused on successful volunteers has identified an essential set of core personal traits: flexibility or adaptability, patience, openness, innovativeness, and integrity.

Flexibility is crucial to letting go! You may arrive with a detailed PowerPoint presentation only to find the power is out for the day, your audience has been pulled into an emergency surgery, or the Minister of Health has arrived, trumping your presentation. Adapting to the local culture’s constraints, slower pace, and social gatherings are crucial to building trust, and developing camaraderie with the health care team. A good volunteer needs to be well-organized and disciplined in his skills, but must also maintain a flexible attitude and tolerate ambiguity.

Jan Nick remarked on her nursing experience, “Flexibility is key to a successful visit...It broadened my perspective and has helped me understand the Indian people I meet here in the US. I was asked to do some things that I am not accustomed to doing...speaking in large groups, consulting with editorial boards, singing for church. They are so appreciative it makes you not afraid to attempt new things.” Another volunteer has remarked, “No matter how much you plan for a volunteer experience, flexibility is the key. I only have to do the next thing -- I don’t have to know how all of the pieces will fit together.”

Patience is needed in different ways. Throughout most of the world, the pace of life is slower than in North America. Much time is spent on developing personal relationships, and listening to colleagues and patients can be an excellent way of learning about the culture and modeling behaviors. This can be frustrating to volunteers who have high expectations of what they hope to accomplish in a short-term assignment, but it is important to take the long-term view and recognize that taking time to understand the culture and the needs will impact the receptivity to changing attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, maintaining a cheerful, positive demeanor and persistently serving as a role model will result in sustainable change over time.

Physical therapist Kay Ahern stated, “I believe the suc-
cess is not immediate, but in time there will be a person, a situation, a treatment that will make a difference; there will be that individual that 2 or 3 years later will take the ball (information, skill, knowledge) that you have been trying to give them. Like a light bulb turning on! Such a nice feeling to have someone report to you that you were able to make a difference eventually."

Openness is a quality and attitude that will serve you well as a volunteer. You are entering a new culture; be open to its possibilities and its wisdom. Come prepared, having done some research on the culture, medical practices, and traditions. Be sensitive to the different nuances in the culture, particularly in terms of personal space, eye contact, touch, and proper attire. In some program sites, there are health care providers from a variety of cultures, so it is important to recognize such a diverse team and acknowledge that you are working across a lot of different cultural styles. Respecting and valuing diversity allows you to learn from your colleagues as well. By remaining open-minded, volunteers can appreciate what is culturally valuable, medically sound, and technologically feasible in order to build upon local knowledge rather than replace it.

Being open to the new culture also brings a sense of humility as volunteers recognize that they have much to learn from their colleagues, who are working under harsh conditions with limited resources. Asha Bajaj, a physical therapist, was surprised to see, "how unorthodox practical techniques were just as effective compared to all our 'evidence-based academic models.' The great familial support structure and their willingness to adapt was a revelation." Similarly, Dr. Nina Lightdale commented, "I learned that the very best medical care can be provided with limited resources if you are creative, work with a great team, and believe deeply in what you are doing." Indeed, many volunteers return home feeling they have learned more from the experience than they gave.

Innovativeness means learning to adjust to what facilities are available. Functioning in a situation where lab tests and x-rays are unavailable means enhancing your diagnostic skills and focusing on the patient’s history and exam. Dr. Eric Hentzen felt his HVO experience “has definitely taught me new techniques and ways to do things clinically that I wouldn’t have thought of otherwise. It has also shown me the capabilities of health care providers and patients when they don’t have access to the technology or support we typically have at home.” For many professionals, the experience, although somewhat disconcerting initially, serves to remind them of what originally drew them to health care.

Integrity is a quality that transcends your visit. The program site hosts will have spent a lot of time and energy preparing for your visit and want to treat you as a special guest. At the same time, they are often short-staffed, work several jobs, and have the multiple demands on their time that you encounter at home. Professional integrity means that you are committed to providing the best care, with the resources available. You are willing to share your knowledge, yet remain open to technologically-appropriate solutions. You share a passion for your work and are dependable in your service. When a task is understood, you take initiative and are willing to challenge yourself. You will be seen as an ambassador, representing HVO as an organization. On a personal level, you should maintain the same standard of behavior to which you hold yourself at home, respecting their culture but remaining true to your personal values.

Upon her return home, Dr. Emily Berry, an OB/Gyn oncologist, reported on her visit: "We are best suited to contribute to their knowledge so that THEY can best serve the women of Honduras. With this expectation, one can feel more satisfaction with what can be accomplished in one week. In the long run, I think the relationships established with residents

continued on page 11
2012 Photo Contest Winners

Above: 1st Place Children 'Children in Vietnam' - Michael Unger

Left: 1st Place Humor 'Good Advice x3' - Richard Fisher

Below left to right: 3rd Place Vol in Action 'Teamwork' - Phors Yin

1st Place Local Scene 'Running from the Rain' - Jon Kolkkin
Above: 1st Place Nature 'Romance at Sunset' - Ana Belen Oton

Right: 3rd Place Humor 'Monks with Cell Phones' - Kenneth Iserson

Below: 2nd Place Nature 'Honduras Butterfly' - Michael Unger
2012 Photo Contest Winners

Left: Best-in-Show 'School Chums' - Sam Baker
Below: 2nd Place Local Scene 'Monks in Laos' - Michael Unger

Below left to right: 2nd Place Humor 'I can Cure Everything with Herbs' Kenneth Iserson
3rd Place Local Scene 'Boys in Prayer' - Jon Kolkin
HVO – IMPROVING GLOBAL HEALTH THROUGH EDUCATION

11

When you write or review your will, please consider leaving HVO a charitable bequest as an investment in HVO’s future. You may bequeath a specific amount of money or a percentage of your estate. Another relatively simple option is to designate HVO as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy or the assets of a retirement plan.

If you are interested in creating a charitable bequest in your will or in discussing some other charitable aspect of your estate planning, please contact Nancy Kelly at giving@hvousa.org. If you have already made a charitable bequest, please let us know! We will honor all requests to remain anonymous.

Thank you to the following people who have made such a commitment:

Anonymous (3)  
Claude Davis, MD  
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Steven Stoddard, MD  
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Kim Dunleavy, PhD, PT, OCS  
Dr. & Mrs. David Frost  
Garry Hough, MD  
Paul Muchnic, MD  
James Pembroke  
Dr. & Mrs. Harry Zutz

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

Keys to Volunteering Effectively  continued from page 7

and faculty are going to outlast any clinic or operating experience a volunteer had. I have been home 3 days and already have been consulted by the residents about the management of a patient with gestational trophoblastic disease. A one-week interaction can turn into a life-long alliance and relationship.”

These traits of flexibility, patience, openness, innovativeness, and integrity are at the core of successful volunteers but they must also be prepared for an assignment. The more you understand the culture, the expectations of the site, and your own abilities, the smoother your experience will be. To prepare for a volunteer assignment, be sure to speak with the HVO recruiter to schedule a convenient timeframe at the most appropriate program site. Read A Guide to Volunteering Overseas (available in the HVO Marketplace), talk with the program director, and read trip reports and lectures that are available on HVO’s KnowNET. Practice modeling behaviors here at home so it will feel natural when you arrive at your site, and prepare yourself for an experience that can be transforming.

3rd Place Nature 'Peace’ - Camille Reuter
Special Thanks

DONORS & IN-KIND DONORS

...to the following individuals and companies who have so generously donated teaching materials, equipment, supplies, and other support:

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