

The Volunteer Connection

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Photo courtesy of Maggie Dylewski Beigis, Maggie Jerome, Natasha Frost, Naroeth Ret, and Sroeu Phannsy

"Knowledge is not like money where you give it, and it goes away. Knowledge multiplies whenever you give it away."

- Daisy Alapat, MD



Health Volunteers Overseas
Transforming Lives Through Education

Letter from the Executive Director



Dear friends,

This year, global health has faced many challenges. From the United States leaving the WHO and dismantling USAID to attacks on vaccines and the rise of communicable diseases, we have seen many setbacks. But the HVO community has remained committed to our work, continuing to provide thousands of hours of education and professional development, strengthening health systems and advancing patient care. Your work has saved lives.

Through all the uncertainty, the dedication of HVO volunteers, partners, and supporters has remained constant. By delivering lectures, mentoring colleagues, and building networks, you have ensured that health workers around the world are not left behind. Because of you, more providers have the skills and confidence to meet urgent needs, and patients have access to safer, more effective care.

Dr. Daisy Alapat, project director of hematology, Tanzania, recently shared, “Knowledge is not like money where you give it, and it goes away. Knowledge is such that you give it, and it multiplies. You give a lecture, and students ask interesting questions. It makes you think, makes you go back and read more. It gives you mental growth. Knowledge multiplies whenever you give it away.”

Thank you for sharing your knowledge and for standing with the patients and providers who rely on your commitment. With your continued support, HVO will expand training opportunities, foster innovation in health education, and ensure that providers everywhere have the tools they need to save lives.

Sincerely,

April

April Pinner, MSPH, RD
Executive Director



Photo courtesy of Prakash Neupane

“A patient had long been living with cirrhosis of the liver complicated by portal hypertension. When he was diagnosed with hepatocellular carcinoma, it was already metastatic. He was told he would not survive more than 6 months. His case was discussed at a multidisciplinary tumor board with colleagues from HVO. Our team decided on a treatment plan, and what followed was remarkable. After six cycles of therapy, not only did his multiple liver lesions shrink significantly, but his tumor marker plummeted from a staggering 800,000 ng/ml to just 4.2 ng/ml. For a man who had prepared himself for the worst, this response felt like a second chance at life. The journey,

however, was not without hurdles. On his eighth cycle, the patient developed a rare and atypical side effect of the drugs. Once again, HVO faculty stepped in through tumor board, reviewed his case in depth, and guided a management plan. Now, four years later, the patient's life is no longer defined by hospital visits or test results, but by the milestones he once thought he would miss. He traveled to Australia to visit his daughter, held his newborn granddaughter, and celebrated moments of joy that seemed impossible at the time of diagnosis. His story is a testament to the power of teamwork, resilience, and equitable access to care. It reminds us that when multidisciplinary expertise, collaboration, and compassion come together, patients can not only survive but thrive - regardless of geographical or financial barriers.”

- Dr. Ramila Shilpakar
On-site coordinator, oncology Nepal

Feature Story

Advancing Pediatric Epilepsy Care in Siem Reap, Cambodia

Dr. Randy Williamson spent one month this summer volunteering at Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC) in Siem Reap, Cambodia sharing his expertise on caring for pediatric patients with neurological disorders and epilepsy. Dr. Williamson was accompanied by his sixteen-year-old daughter, Thalea, who observed his work and learned about the field while helping an underserved population.

Dr. Williamson is dedicated to serving under-resourced areas. In addition to Cambodia, he has volunteered in the Philippines, Mexico, and parts of South America volunteering his skills and time at medical clinics. Dr. Williamson left a Vanderbilt University faculty position and moved to the U.S.-Mexico border in 2015 as faculty for the University of Texas. While he initially planned to stay for two years to help start a new medical school in the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas, he stayed for six years. At the time, he was the first and only pediatric neurologist for the University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley. During those years, he also volunteered for free immigrant clinics along the Texas-Mexican border helping many underserved patients.



Photo courtesy of Randy Williamson



Photo courtesy of Randy Williamson

During his month-long assignment, he worked in AHC's clinic, hospital, and ICUs every day. He rounded with physicians, nurses, and students and consulted with them on difficult neurology cases. "There's no formalized, specific, pediatric neurology training in Cambodia," said Dr. Williamson. "The doctors I worked with every day were general pediatricians. They know a lot, but hopefully I helped them because I've been lucky enough to have specialized training at Vanderbilt University in pediatric

neurology and epilepsy. We shared treatment choices, changes in medication, possible testing. It was entirely clinical medicine and very enjoyable. We saw sixty to eighty patients per day and at the end of the day discussed with teams all over the hospital, including nurses, nursing students, medical students, and attendings. Everyone was interested in training, learning, and more experience."

Most of the patients Dr. Williamson saw had epilepsy. The difference in resources available in Cambodia as opposed to at home in the United States was starkly evident. "Over there, they don't have the technology I use every day here to make decisions," said Dr. Williamson. "In the United States, we routinely have genetic testing, EEGs, and imaging that aren't options there. They don't have EEG and rarely can obtain imaging. These tests are helpful in tailoring treatment and medications. We routinely saw cases we would rarely see in the U.S. – like kernicterus. In the rural areas of Cambodia people often deliver their babies at home with delayed care leading to elevated bilirubin in the brain developing into debilitating cerebral palsy and epilepsy. This is a disorder not typically affecting children in the U.S."

Continued on page 4

Feature Story

In addition to rounds and bedside teaching, Dr. Williamson discussed different topics after work each afternoon, chosen in consultation with the staff and students. “They would request topics, and everybody from nursing students to attending physicians, from the clinic, hospital, and ICUs would join us,” he shared. “Every day we’d go into a room and talk. Seizures and epilepsy were the main topics. They became better educated at diagnosing and treating epilepsy.” Even before his trip, Dr. Williamson was consulting with colleagues virtually through WhatsApp. “I still do that today,” he says about his virtual teaching. “I make myself available any day of the week.” Through these calls, Dr. Williamson has been able to consult with physicians on treatment plans for children with epilepsy and neurological disorders.



Photo courtesy of Randy Williamson



Photo courtesy of Randy Williamson

While the benefits of virtual teaching are many, Dr. Williamson still appreciates his in-person time. “We stayed a whole month,” he said. “There are some volunteers who come and go in a few days, but it takes a week or more to trust you as a doctor coming in from abroad. There are language and culture differences. I think we became close because together we worked hard taking care of patients. The physicians at AHC are excellent and very dedicated. My daughter and I are planning to go back, even if it’s once a year.”

Dr. Williamson and his daughter plan to work on a grant application to obtain an EEG machine for the hospital, which does not currently have one. The machine would be transformative in increasing the ability to make accurate diagnoses and treat young epileptic patients. “If we can get AHC an EEG machine, it will give them the ability to get a basic test that every patient in the U.S. gets on day one,” he explained. “I would return and teach them how to read the results and be available virtually any time.”

His first assignment may be over, but Dr. Williamson does not intend to stop volunteering: “I plan on returning every year. There are so many patients there with epilepsy. The hospital needs more personnel, but they also need help with teaching and training, and that’s going to be my goal for at least the next five years. I can help them develop a good program. They are hard workers, but they need more training and simple things like books.

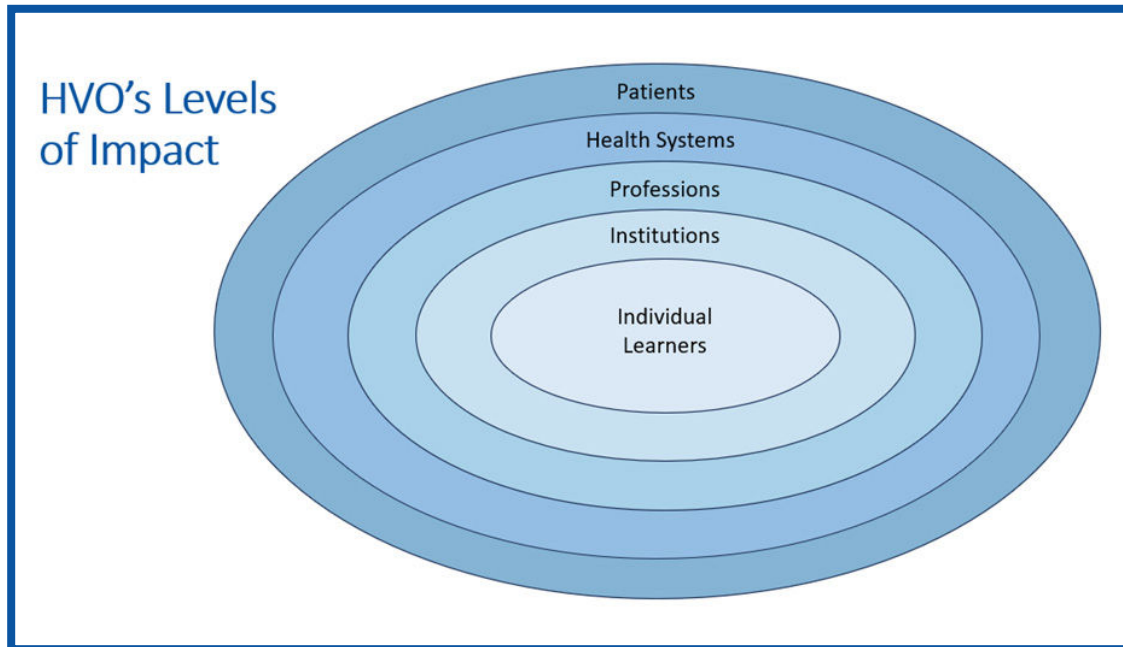


Photo courtesy of Randy Williamson

“They’re the nicest people I’ve ever met in my life. Helping train and support them so they can become a better hospital is so important. They work tirelessly to help their community.”

Dr. Williamson’s work will have a long-term impact on AHC and its patients, and we look forward to following their progress. If you are interested in learning more about available opportunities with this project, please contact Program Coordinator Emily Dalton at e.dalton@hvousa.org.

The Ripple Effect of HVO's work



HVO has a new framework for understanding the impact of our work. The visualization above is the work of a task force comprised of rehabilitation volunteers who have met regularly since 2023 to develop a framework for measuring HVO's impact in rehabilitation. The task force's work, however, is applicable to other specialties and can be used by volunteers to see how their individual efforts fit within HVO's larger scope of work.

Looking through the goals and objectives of rehabilitation projects, the task force recognized that HVO's work has a direct impact on individual learners, institutions, and professions and reverberates to health systems and patients. At the "individual learners" level are the students, educators, and clinicians that receive HVO's education and training. Broadly speaking, HVO's goals for this group are to contribute to their professional growth and empowerment. Included in the "institutions" level are schools and hospitals that are HVO's partners. For this group, the focus of HVO's work is to help enhance their training capacity, which can be characterized by having a rehabilitation department that offers a comprehensive curriculum, quality teaching, or research. The "professions" level includes, but is not limited to, professional organizations. It relates to what HVO is doing to widen and elevate the rehabilitation profession and services in various countries. By working with health care workers, universities, hospitals, and professional organizations, HVO is helping to strengthen these elements within health systems. Ultimately, the impact of HVO's work extends to patients who benefit when the health systems in their country can ensure that they receive quality care.

As HVO volunteers, you are participants creating change through this ripple effect. The task force is now exploring tools for measuring the impact at each of these levels. Thank you Jean Baumgartel, Kathy Coufal, Leslie Glickman, Monika Mann, Mary Beth Moran, Toni Sander, and for your dedication to the work of the task force, and thank you to the rehabilitation steering committee members for your valuable feedback. If you have questions or comments regarding this framework, please email Lisa Vu at l.vu@hvousa.org.

From Our Partners



Photo courtesy of Andrew Dott



Photo courtesy of Sophallyda Krouch

Dr. Sophallyda Krouch
Anesthesiologist
Sonja Kill Memorial Hospital (SKMH), Kampot, Cambodia

Together with HVO, our team has strengthened anesthesia education and practice standards. We have been able to introduce updated protocols, reinforce safe anesthesia practices, and encourage the use of evidence-based approaches. Importantly, we have fostered a culture of continuous learning among trainees and staff. One of the greatest successes of this partnership has been capacity building. Seeing our anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists confidently apply new skills and share them with colleagues has been very rewarding.

Beyond professional growth, the partnership has also created long-lasting friendships and mentorships across borders. It has inspired some of our younger colleagues to pursue further training and leadership roles—something we had not fully anticipated at the start.

HVO also provided me the special opportunity to complete a postgraduate Inter-University Diploma in Regional Anesthesia and Analgesia in Vietnam, certified by the University of Montpellier, France. Following this diploma, I was able to further develop the department of anesthesia, sharing and enabling our doctors to perform a wide range of regional anesthesia techniques. This has been a significant impact of the partnership.

The partnership has contributed to building stronger training capacity at SKMH. The emphasis on patient safety, evidence-based practice, and education has set a solid foundation that will continue to influence future generations of providers and improve surgical outcomes. Looking ahead, I would like to see a clear curriculum developed and supported by experienced HVO volunteers.

I hope future collaboration can further develop subspecialty training opportunities, such as pain management and critical care, and expand access to simulation-based education. Continued mentorship from HVO experts will help us grow as educators and leaders within our hospitals and across the region.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to HVO and all of the volunteers who have contributed their time and expertise. Their dedication has truly made a difference in strengthening anesthesia services in Cambodia. I am excited to continue this journey of partnership and growth. We hope to welcome many more volunteers in the future.

From Our Partners



Photo courtesy of Steven Sonnenberg



Photo courtesy of Ugyen Dema

Dr. Ugyen Dema

Psychiatrist

Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Referral Hospital, Thimphu, Bhutan

HVO has been with our department for some time. Even as a student, I met psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and counselors visiting our department through HVO. Volunteers have been helping us with teaching, and we have been receiving helping hands in seeing patients. They have been kind in providing supervision and been giving choices to our patients. Some of them helped with reading materials, and some have helped enroll students to attend online training. Through this collaboration, we improve our skills and also get a helping hand in seeing patients and teaching students. We would really like to have more volunteers with relevant skills and people who are really willing to help keep my country's background and culture. We have come across several hard-working HVO volunteers who are really dedicated and committed. We would like to have a platform where they can be recognized.



Photo courtesy of Timothy O'Brien



Photo courtesy of
Stephen Mirembe

Dr. Stephen Mirembe

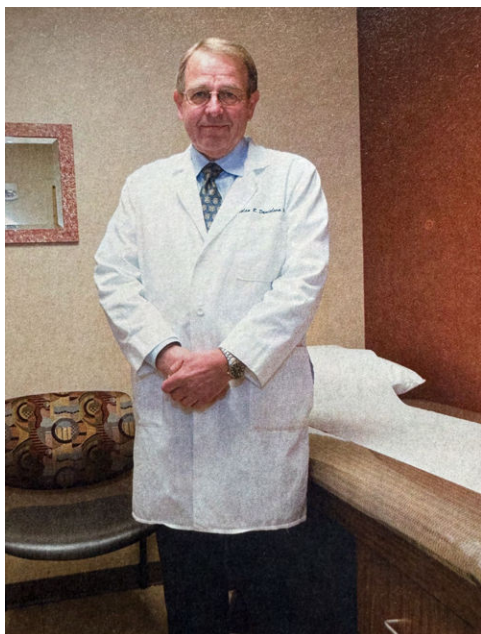
Dermatologist

Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Mbarara, Uganda

I started out as a student taught and mentored by HVO lecturers. Now, as a lecturer at Mbarara University, I coordinate HVO activities. Volunteers have led online lectures conducted in specialties that we lack such as dermatopathology, pediatric dermatology, and others. We also regularly host HVO lecturers at the university. One volunteer connected us with an opportunity to contribute to an online webinar on Kaposi sarcoma. It was a great experience for our team to not only participate in the educational webinar but to present as well. Inspired by lectures, some of our trainees show interest in specializing in disciplines like dermatotherapy, pediatric dermatology, and cosmetic dermatology. Our collaboration will lead to improved dermatological care. We are grateful for all the support provided so far, and request more training in cosmetic and aesthetic dermatology as well as in dermatopathology.

In Memorium

Alan Danielson, MD



Dr. Alan Danielson passed away peacefully on July 30, 2025, surrounded by his loving family. He leaves behind a powerful legacy of service to global health and is remembered with love and respect by HVO volunteers and partners. A member of HVO since 2000, he taught at orthopaedic projects in Bhutan, Tanzania, and Malawi. Following medical school at UCLA, Dr. Danielson served two years in Vietnam as a Captain in the Army, working as a medical battalion surgeon. He earned several medals for his heroic service and unwavering dedication to saving lives. After returning to civilian life, Dr. Danielson completed his orthopedic surgery residency at the University of Utah. Dr. Danielson is one of the three founding members of what is now Northwest Orthopedic Specialists (NWOS). Widely recognized as one of the Inland Northwest's top orthopedic surgeons, Dr. Danielson's technical excellence was matched by his genuine compassion and the deep, meaningful relationships he built with his patients.

Cary Bjork, MD

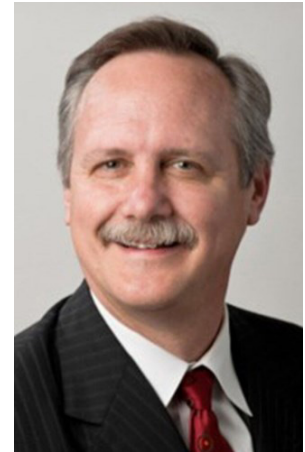


Dr. Cary Bjork was an invaluable volunteer and leader in the HVO community for decades. Dr. Bjork was a frequent volunteer with the internal medicine project in Kampala, Uganda from 1997 to 2018 and served as the project director from 1998 to 2016. He served twice on the internal medicine steering committee from 2000-2003 and 2013-2016. He gave countless presentations about HVO over the years at state and national association meetings. In 2008, he received HVO's Golden Apple Award for his extraordinary contributions to HVO. Most recently, he served on our Wyss Selection Committee, which reviews and awards Wyss scholarships. After completing medical school at the University of Colorado, he served as an officer in the United States Public Health Service in Fort Defiance, AZ, achieving the rank of Lieutenant Commander before returning to the University of Colorado to complete his residency. He leaves behind a remarkable legacy of service and dedication to global health.

In Memorium

Randall Culp, MD

Dr. Randall Culp was a renowned hand surgeon who enhanced the lives of countless patients. He joined HVO in 2008 and made twelve trips to Honduras between 2009 and 2024, sharing his knowledge and skills with his colleagues. In 2013, he was awarded the HVO Golden Apple for his service. Dr. Culp graduated from the Penn State College of Medicine at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and completed his residency and hand fellowship at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. He researched and published extensively, contributing innumerable surgical innovations to his profession. After completing his residency, he served as a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, joining the staff at the Naval Hospital in Oakland, CA During Operation Desert Storm, Dr. Culp served for nine months in the Persian Gulf on a U.S. Naval hospital ship. In his private practice, he frequently donated surgical services to those in need.



Sandy Ganz, PT, DSc, GCS

Dr. Sandy Ganz, a respected volunteer and leader in the HVO community for decades, will be greatly missed. Her contributions to HVO's rehabilitation program were extraordinary. Since joining us in the 1990s, she volunteered in South Africa and Vietnam and served as chair of the rehabilitation steering committee. She began volunteering even before HVO had an official rehabilitation program established. Her first assignment was in Transkei, South Africa with support from the orthopaedic project. Dr. Ganz was always seeking ways to support HVO. She organized silent auction events, was the first person to join HVO's recurring donor program, and was always ready for every challenge and assignment. Her commitment, insight, and generosity were remarkable.



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Photo courtesy of
Charity Burke Walters

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Make a gift today at <https://hvousa.org/hvo-volunteer-connection-gift/> or scan the QR code.



In Memorium

Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Chung

Dr. Chung served as the on-site coordinator for HVO's anesthesia training project at the Hospital for Traumatology and Orthopedics in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam for over twenty years. He always welcomed HVO volunteers into his department with warmth and guidance and went above and beyond by personally greeting visitors at the airport, assisting with travel logistics, and serving as a translator for volunteer lectures. Volunteers consistently extolled Dr. Chung for his clinical and teaching skills, his humble nature, and his dedication to the care and safety of his patients. He was awarded the HVO Golden Apple in 2016 for his commitment to HVO's mission. He will be greatly missed.



“Dr. Chung was an extraordinary colleague and collaborator whose impact was felt across borders. His unwavering dedication to education, combined with his generosity of spirit, hospitality, and deep kindness, left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of working with him. His passion for teaching and commitment to partnership will continue to inspire us. He will be missed dearly and remembered with great admiration and gratitude.”

- Odinakachukwu Ehie, MD, FASA

“Dr. Chung was not only an extraordinary physician, leader, and statesman, but also a close friend. His joy and enthusiasm were infectious, and he believed deeply in the power of collaboration. He held his department to the highest standards, inspiring excellence in everyone around him, while remaining tirelessly devoted to his patients throughout his distinguished career.”

- Daniel Vo, MD

“I was deeply struck by his generosity of spirit, his passion for education, and his deep-rooted love for Vietnamese culture. I will remember him as a wonderful human with a unwavering love for the specialty of anesthesia and trainees.”

- Viji Kurup, MD



Special Thanks

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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:

Anonymous (7)
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