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Moragan runs half marathon to take Global Healing to its next phase

By Sophie Braccini



John Donnelly and Dr. Karla Cerritos at the Roatan Public Hospital in Honduras. Photo provided

provides services to mothers and children in countries that most need it. Donnelly negotiated contracts with large foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to organize the low cost production of vaccines for children in these countries. He explains that pharmaceuticals now are more inclined at producing and commercializing drugs at full price in rich countries and low cost identical ones in poorer countries at the same time. Donnelly loved the work at Path, but after a few years, the intense necessary travel started to be too much, so he retired again.

He was then approached by Global Healing, which has been in existence for 20 years, and needed a new president.

In spite of his reserved nature, Donnelly speaks of Global Healing with passion. The goal of Global Healing is to make sure that mothers and children get the best quality health care in their country, provided by local skilled healthcare professionals. Donnelly explains that in many poor countries as the standard of living increases the basic medical needs are taken care of, such as vaccines and contraception. But when people get really sick, doctors do not have the latest training and equipment that will allow them to save their patients.

Donnelly gives the example of Vietnam's main pediatric hospital where Global Healing works in the pediatric Intensive Care Unit. He has traveled to the country several times and formed ties with many people there. He is acutely aware of the difficulties people still face to get medical treatment. It can take 16 hours to reach the national hospital for a very sick child who needs advanced treatment. Vietnam does have a rapidly growing economy, but big divides exist between regions.

Donnelly explains that Vietnamese doctors are very qualified, but have been trained and have equipment that date from the previous century. For example, when infants need breathing assistance, they used to be put on ventilators with tubes going down their throat. The children had to be sedated, because it is painful. A sedated child cannot eat, so he has to be fed intravenously, and has to be turned every two hours. Nowadays, doctors here use continuous positive airway pressure that blows air in the child's nose and helps inflate the lungs. The outcome for children is much better.

Global Healing works with American volunteers who are sent abroad to train the medical teams and also bring the appropriate technology when possible. In the Vietnamese example, the device is not very expensive and Global Healing provides it.

The nonprofit works with experts, such as Professor J. Colin Partridge at UCSF, to identify the techniques that are most easily transferable and will make the most impact. Global Healing currently works in Honduras, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Vietnam.

Donnelly leads an organization with a staff of four, including himself, a board of directors, and advisory board and scores of medical volunteers who travel the world to train others.

Global Healing needs support here also: volunteer photographers, filmmakers and administrators are in demand. Donations are also welcome and Donnelly goes the extra mile for it. He can be seen at 5:30 a.m.

Doctor John Donnelly has never been afraid to reinvent himself in order to achieve what he believes is the right thing.

The Moraga resident was an immunologist who conducted research for most of his career until he decided to cross the divide and work for nonprofit organizations. He now presides over Global Healing, a Berkeley-based nonprofit that aims at training and empowering health practitioners in countries that lack sufficient medical funding, especially those working with mothers and their young children. He will run the San Francisco half-marathon on July 23 to raise funds for his organization.

Donnelly portrays himself as a serial retiree, a polite way to say that he quit some of his former employers. He retired from Merck before joining Chiron and retired again after it was purchased by Novartis. He then joined his first nonprofit, Path, a 40-year-old organization that

training for the half marathon in the streets of Moraga. He says that he used to run marathons, but that since his knee surgery he cannot run as fast as he used to.

To sponsor him go to <http://bit.ly/2szAPYk>. More information about Global Healing is available at globalhealing.org.

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