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A Trip to Uganda

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students from Kaplan College.

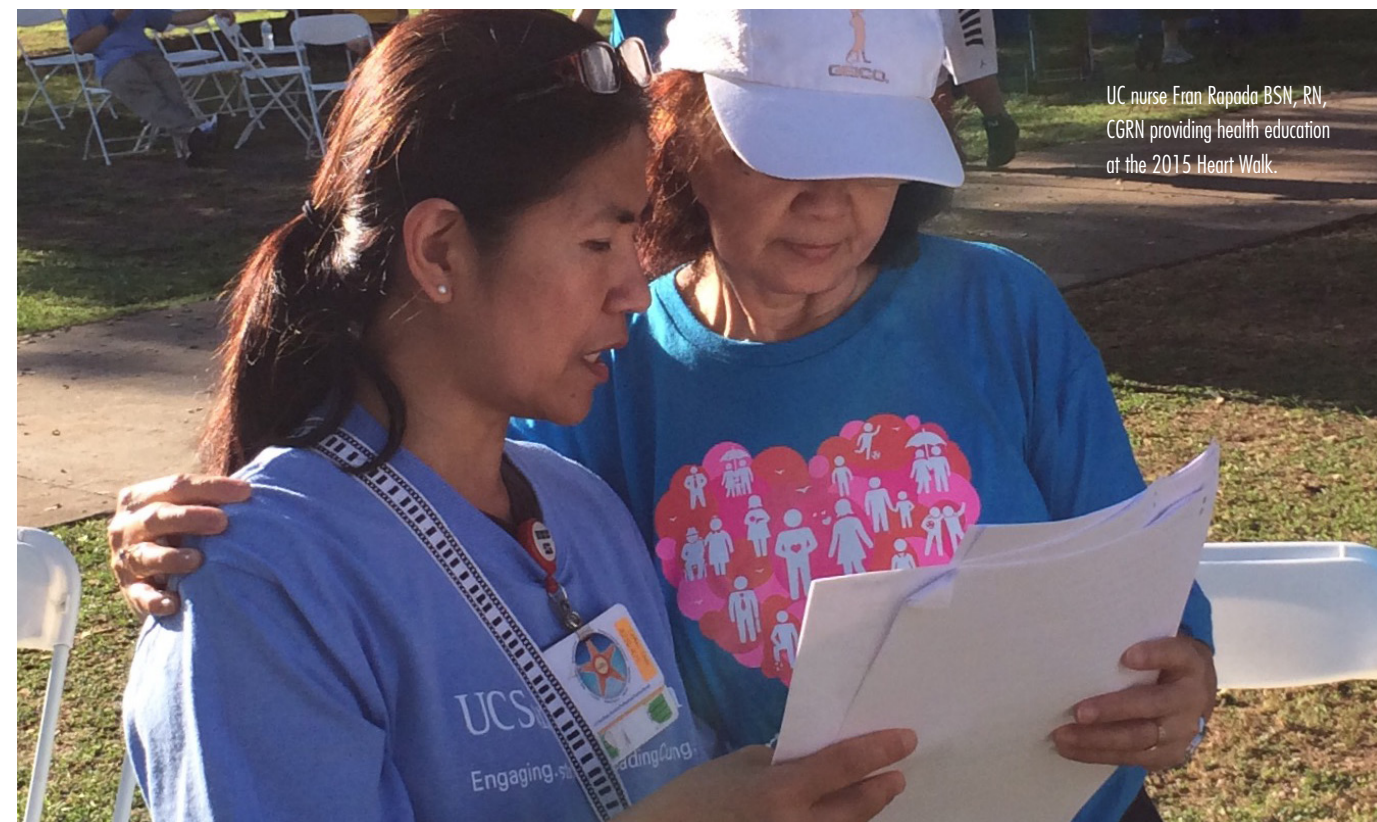
A few core volunteers who started with us as students, have succeeded in becoming UC San Diego nurses. Marilyn Cerrillo BSN, RN, who was instrumental in the staffing of events as an officer of the SDSU CNSA, has now taken a position on Thornton 3W. Lysette Sanchez BSN, RN, also from 3W, and Jamie Boyer BSN, RN, PHN, soon to start in the Thornton OR, have been two of our most dependable volunteers ever! Johnathan Bills RN from the SCVC ICU and Jennifer Whittlemore RN from 6W at Hillcrest started with the program as City College students and contributed significantly to its success. Both are finishing their BSN degrees now. Of course, the goal is always to staff screening events with as many UC nurses as possible, nurses like Fran Rapada BSN, RN, CGRN from the Thornton GI lab and Kim Dinh BSN, RN from SCVC 4A/B who have joined us on many, many occasions. Additionally,

non-nurses such as Prescott Lederer EMT, trauma tech in the Hillcrest ED have also contributed enormously to the initiative.

Volunteers always feel good about the services they provide at any given event, however, the real impact of their efforts can't be assessed without data. Accordingly, a data collection tool has been in use for the past two years. The numbers reveal that at-risk people are being identified and counseled at many of the events, especially those that take place in underserved neighborhoods. There haven't been people available, though, to compile the data in a meaningful, aggregate manner given the voluntary nature of the operation. That, however, is changing. Starting in the fall of 2015 our data tool was revised and now includes information about health care coverage. Moreover, the data is now being compiled by interns with UC in the Community and submitted to the County of San Diego. Starting this spring, the SCVC screenings

will take the shape of a bonafide community resource with the addition of undergraduates from the UCSD public health program to the staffing mix. These students will be on hand to speak with event attendees who are found to have no access to healthcare and, utilizing tablet computers, link them directly to county services.

These enhancements to the Sulpizio initiative bring it into a whole new phase. There is real potential now for the program to impact the health of the region's underserved residents. However, more volunteers are needed, especially those who see themselves taking on a leadership role. This service to the community is an outstanding example of why UC San Diego Medical center is a Magnet institution. If you want to be a part of it, all you need to do is go to the community outreach calendar on the Nursing website, find an event that interests you and join in.



UC nurse Fran Rapada BSN, RN, CGRN providing health education at the 2015 Heart Walk.



Over this past summer, I had the privilege of traveling to Uganda on a community service mission with several of my fellow church ladies. We traveled with Bread for Life, which is a non-profit organization, committed to connecting volunteers with needs across West Central Africa. This organization focuses on continually finding the needs of under-privileged communities and providing vocational service. This monumental trip will forever be etched in my memory, as it forced me out of my comfort zone on so many levels.

Not only was this my first time out of the country, but it was also my first flight! We departed from Los Angeles and 24 hours later we were in Entebbe, Africa, a whole different world. This trip that challenged me to re-evaluate my day-to-day



Wind of Victory Orphanage in Jinja

relationships and changed the way I view people as a whole. As time passes, I am slowly struck by each experience and vivid memories as they gradually sink in, almost as if it was too much to process all at once.

Uganda, officially the Republic of Uganda, is a landlocked country in East Africa. Our group spent the majority of time in the capital and the largest city in Uganda, Kampala. Kampala is slightly smaller than Oregon, with a population of 1.5 million and a poverty level of 24.5%. Thankfully the official national language is English. This made it easier to connect with others and begin to understand the culture and struggles of everyday life in a third world country. The city of Kampala is a chaotic jam filled with smells, sights and poverty I had never experienced before. Lack of traffic lights, stop signs, or rules of the road, made our bus travels

sketchy.

When we arrived safely at the Namirembe Guest House, I was grateful that it had some of the comforts of home. We considered ourselves lucky as for the most part; the people we helped live with no running water or electricity. However, we quickly realized in spite of what they lack, the African citizens are amazing and resilient people. They do not have all the things Americans assume are essential, but they find strength and comfort in close relationships with each other, built through conscious investment in one another.

Each day our team started before sun up and didn't stop until sundown. On our first mission, we cared for orphans in the Sanyu Babies' Home. I was heartbroken as I walked into a group of orphans with outstretched arms yearning for us to carry them. It was clear that they outnumbered



GEM Foundation, caring for children with special needs



Caring for homeless children in the slums of Kampala

us but we would find ourselves in the middle of the floor trying to love on as many as our hands could comfort.

On our second week, we spent time in remote villages with an organization called Healing Faith Uganda where we assisted with hanging mosquito nets in mud huts, malaria testing, and education. We also participated in feeding programs with an organization called African Hearts helping children in the slums. We fed hundreds of orphans who live on the streets, sniffing glue to numb the gnawing pain in their bellies from hunger, and their hearts due to the loss of loved ones to disease. African Hearts not only cares for the slum kids, but also attempts to rescue these children from the streets in an effort to give them a place to live and an education.

My favorite day was visiting the Gem Foundation, an orphanage dedicated to children with special needs. What an amazing place! Many Africans believe special needs children are a curse, leaving them in

huts to die. This organization takes in these beautiful children providing physical therapy, nursing care, and most importantly a loving home all while educating Africans on how to care for children with special needs.

As I reflected back on this experience and related it to my own life, I realized, in Uganda, I was just one person among desperate conditions. I felt helpless at times, knowing I was unable to really affect long term change. It saddened me to think after I was gone, the orphan and widow would continue to be without, the sick would continue to be uncared for, and the desperation would continue to grow. So what could I do? I chose to just make a difference for that one day. Show compassion and empathy in that moment. Lend a hand for that one project. Make a difference for the present even if it was just in one life. I realized that this should be my goal everyday. I brought Africa home with me as I share my life with others. As a nurse, I will continually strive to look past the patient's background, disease, economic, and social status to truly see the vulnerable person who needs me to invest in their care and to make a difference; even if only for one day.

Sanyu Babies Home - Orphanage



Connie Sherwood RN,CNIII, PCCN, is an RN working on the 4th floor PCU of the Sulpizio Cardiovascular Center at UC San Diego Health System. She joined UC San Diego in 2008 as a new graduate RN. Connie enjoys the challenges of nursing and considers herself a lifelong learner. She is driven by the inspiration and fulfillment she receives at the bedside while caring for the sick. She has been an active member of the Heart Failure Taskforce Committee since 2013.

House of Praise Orphanage, feeding program



MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

By: Vina Limson, BSN, RN, CNOR

It all started way back in 2003 when I attended the Association of Peri-Operative Registered Nurses (AORN) chapter meeting. There was a presentation at the meeting about volunteering with an organization called Fresh Start Surgical Gifts.

Fresh Start was seeking volunteers to help transform the lives of infants, children, and teens with physical deformities caused by birth, accidents, or disease. The organization was offering the gift of reconstructive surgery.

I was deeply touched by the presentation and was inspired to sign up as a volunteer OR Nurse. I started in April 2004 and have volunteered ever since. I started out going to the Health South Ambulatory Surgery Center in Encinitas every 6-8 weeks on a Saturday for 4 hours each time. It is a great way to give back to the community and to share my time and the talent that God has bestowed upon me. I enjoy volunteering and helping to transform these kids' lives. I love seeing them smile again.

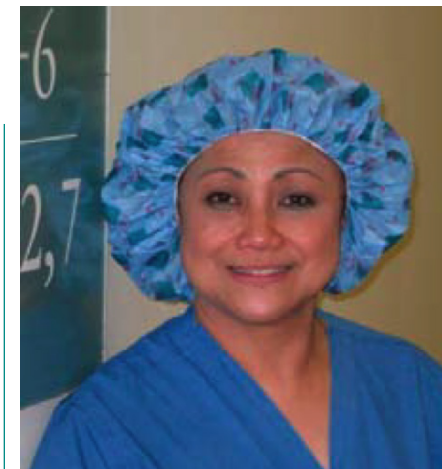
It is a very gratifying experience to see the outcomes of the surgeries when the kids come for their follow-up visits. We do mostly cleft lip/palate repairs, rhinoplasties, otoplasties for microtia, excisions of large hemangiomas, portwines, scar revisions and releases of contractures caused by burns. As the years went by, I started bringing my daughters to volunteer as well. They

played, read books and did artwork, with the children. They entertained them to ease the boredom of waiting to be seen. As we did more surgeries, including complex craniofacial surgeries, we moved to Rady Children's Hospital.

Fresh Start also offers dental work, a laser clinic and speech therapy. Laser clinics treat patients afflicted with deformities such as port wine stains and burns. Many of the children served by Fresh Start who have craniofacial disorders such as cleft lip and palate require speech therapy in order to regain their ability to speak audibly and correctly.

Fresh Start values their volunteers immensely and takes care of them by providing breakfasts and lunches which are all donated by different sponsors. In August each year, the organization recognizes its volunteers by hosting the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day. A sit down luncheon/dinner is provided at different venues such as The Prado, the Handlery Hotel, Concha de Golf, Grand Pacific Palisades, and Petco Park. At Petco we also watched a Padres Game. This past year, there was a luncheon at the Del Mar Horse Races. In 2005 I was honored to be named "Outstanding Volunteer Nurse of the Year".

Since 1991, Fresh Start has provided over \$29.9 million worth of free medical services. In total,



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over 6,900 children have received fresh starts. On average, 60 patients receive medical treatment on each Surgery Weekend. Over 500 volunteers help Fresh Start run its medical programs each year. These include Surgeons, OR nurses, surgical techs, pre-op/PACU nurses, nurse practitioners, SPD and EVS staff, translators, photographers and speech therapists. Patients come from across the United States and around the world, but all surgeries and medical treatments are provided in San Diego, CA.

Come and volunteer for a Fresh Start Surgery Weekend and make a difference in the lives of these children!!!