

HealthReach

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A World of Good



When the Medical Society of Virginia Foundation announced its 2006 "Service to the International Community Salute to Service Award" last November, the recipient, Virginia Hospital Center's Chief of Family Medicine, Barry Byer, MD, was not on hand to accept the honor in person.

Fittingly, he was in Comayagua, Honduras, leading the 7th Annual Virginia Hospital Center Medical Brigade—an expedition he first launched in 1999 in the wake of Hurricane Mitch, which devastated much of the Honduran coast.

Annually, the week-long Medical Brigade has brought much-needed healthcare to thousands of patients who otherwise would not have access to medical treatment or supplies. Some 60 physicians, surgeons, nurses and support personnel make the trek annually, donating their vacation time and expertise. In 2006, the Brigade served 6,885 patients, performed 109 surgeries and prescribed approximately 2,400 pairs of eyeglasses with donated frames and lenses from the Lions Club Eyeglass Recycling Center of Northern Virginia. This year's contingency also offered audiology services for the first time, and initiated a model of sustained, year-round healthcare service through its Remote Village Project.

"Barry is the linchpin behind all of this," says Hospital President & CEO James B. Cole. "He has a unique combination of vision, passion and energy that allows him to pull together both human resources and financial support. He is tireless."

Dr. Byer is also founder of CrossLink International, an organization that secures donations of medicine and medical equipment and distributes the supplies to communities in need. "He is making a difference on many fronts. From his exemplary service in Honduras to his work with CrossLink International, he is a most deserving recipient of the 2006 'Salute to Service Award'," says First Lady Anne Holton, wife of Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine.

For Dr. Byer, it's a labor of love. "These people are so underserved. The government doesn't have the resources to staff a public health center, but we can make such a big difference so easily," he says. "For example, we'll see children with birth defects that cause them to walk on their toes (contracture). With a simple procedure, we can have them walking flat in 30 minutes." ■

WINTER 2007

Impact of the Virginia Hospital Center Medical Brigade Since 1999

Brigade team trips: **414**

Team investment
(personally paid travel
expenses): **\$455,400**

Average team size: **59**

Eyeglasses
dispensed: **13,104**

Patients
treated: **36,396**

Surgeries
performed: **584**

Value of donated
medical supplies:
\$3.7 million