It was a near perfect evening earlier this spring as we sat down for dinner. The restaurant in a leafy Washington D.C. neighborhood was a few blocks from our son Harris’ graduate school and the occasion was a 2-year Covid-19 delayed celebratory graduation dinner. Looking up from the menu I glanced around to see (as the song goes) fancy people go driftin’ by, and sitting in this seemingly idyllic place, couldn’t help but think about the millions who did not know where their next meal was coming from – or if it was coming at all. Harris glanced at me with a knowing look. I knew he was thinking the same thing. How could there still be such disparities in the world? And given her sense of social responsibility and already being a BBF donor, our daughter Marina too was right alongside.

But this is not about our children, it’s about you and the next generation of BBF supporters. It’s about the difference you make and the difference your donations allow us to make in the lives of so many. It is also what helps us to keep a positive attitude in the face of widespread adversity and inequities, where BBF employees such as Kaitlyn Nuebel and Taylor Hutton speak excitedly about activities that they are planning for children at our next vision and diabetes screening mobile clinic at a local Community Day event. Speaking of...

A few days after this year’s summer solstice, BBF, Project Theia, Mission Vision, and AHN/Highmark Wholecare, collaborated to hold our first Mobile Clinic in the storied steel town of Braddock, PA. It was the culmination of months of preparation which began with acquiring and modifying a Dodge ProMaster van to mimic an ophthalmologist’s office, and then equipping it with the appropriate equipment – a somewhat challenging task with today’s Covid related supply chain issues. Dr. Jenny Yu and Nurses Rachel Young and Kathy Sedory from Project-Theia generously gave of their time and conducted vision and blood pressure screenings for patients. Mission Vision’s Terry Snyder offered free glasses to those in need and our relationship with AHN/Highmark provided an avenue for continuity of care at their Community Clinic facility run by Dr. Stephanie Miller.

The appreciation on patients’ faces brought forth clearly the reason for our work. It was also a reminder of how the caring and generosity of one family in setting an example of giving for their own children, funded a project that will make a difference in the lives of so many in our underserved communities. Our plan is to expand the program to address challenges faced by the youngest in our midst. How many of whom for example, may have been diagnosed as having learning disabilities whereas all they might need is a simple pair of glasses.

Our commitment to the mobile clinic program at large and specifically in assisting with the wellbeing of children is absolute. Alongside you, it is they who will one day help make a better tomorrow and take on the mantle of being the next generation of BBF supporters.

And hence came the title of this article, a Jackie DeShannon song which had been reverberating through my head for some time now, Think of your fellow man, Lend him a helping hand, Put a Little Love in Your Heart... Take a good look around, And if you’re looking down, Put a little love in your heart.

And the world, Will be a better place... ■
Mobile Health Clinic Makes First Stop in Braddock

This summer, Brother’s Brother Foundation parked its mobile health van outside Allegheny Health Network’s Urgent Care Center in Braddock, PA for its inaugural Mobile Health Clinic. Equipped with an exam chair, a phoropter, a working sink, and even air conditioning, the back of the van has been transformed into an ophthalmologist’s office – only this one can move.

Dr. Jenny Yu, a practicing oculoplastic surgeon and co-founder of the Pittsburgh-based nonprofit Project Theia, spent the day welcoming patients for individual, full eye exams and diabetic eye screenings. BBF partner Mission Vision attended Braddock’s Mobile Health Clinic to provide glasses at no cost to patients, and Allegheny Health Network and Highmark Wholecare organized follow up medical appointments.

The response to the clinic was tremendous. Prior to the van’s arrival, patients with diabetes or other vision-related issues were contacted to ask if they would be interested in a free appointment at the clinic. All appointment slots available for the Mobile Health Clinic were filled, and organizers said they knew of additional patients who could benefit from the service.

“Patients were very excited to get on board and have this appointment done, versus waiting for an appointment with a specialist that was mostly booking [months] out,” said Ashley Houston, a staff member at Braddock’s Urgent Care Center.

Doctors encourage diabetes patients to receive a retinal exam at least once a year to prevent the consequences of irreversible vision loss, though most patients who visited the Mobile Health Clinic hadn’t had an eye exam in a couple of years.

“When you can’t see you can’t function,” Dr. Yu says. Yu started Project Theia alongside fellow oculoplastic surgeon Dr. Katherine Duncan in 2017. Their mission was to bring healthcare to underserved global communities, embarking on mission trips in Ghana and Honduras. When the COVID-19 pandemic limited international travel in 2020, the organization focused its efforts on needs in Pittsburgh. Yu reached out to BBF, who in turn, provided a van equipped with medical instruments.

Braddock was an appropriate location for the first clinic. Residents there face many obstacles to receiving healthcare. In 2010, UPMC closed its 277,000-square-ft. hospital on Braddock Avenue and left the community in what local primary care physician Dr. Stephanie Miller calls a healthcare desert. Miller is one of two primary care physicians who see patients at Forbes Family Medicine, which is in the same building as Braddock’s Urgent Care Center. Often, she treats the overflow of patients from the Urgent Care Center and the Braddock Family Health Center down the street.

“[Patients] have a tough time getting in to see specialists because of their low-income insurance and lack of transportation,” Houston said. She works closely with patients to schedule referrals and make sure they have transportation to get to their appointments. In cases where they do have an appointment scheduled with a specialist, she said many rely on transportation services such as Access or Heritage Community Transportation, which can make traveling there take over an hour, plus waiting time.

The Mobile Health Clinic provided the easy access to medical care Braddock residents hadn’t experienced in more than ten years.

“We’re just trying to meet people where they are. At the end of the day it’s just about showing people you care.”

– Dr Jenny Yu

Work Continues in Sub-Saharan Africa

In 2022, BBF continues our commitment to supporting healthcare facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the second quarter alone, we sent four, 40-foot ocean-going container shipments of requested medical supplies and equipment to distribution partners in Sierra Leone, Malawi, and Eswatini.

St. Joseph’s Hospital and School of Nursing, a long-standing partner of BBF, received a shipment of requested items from BBF. Hospital Administrator, Sr. Mercy Kanyumbu, shared that the staff and patients “are very grateful for the support you give to this hospital,” and the items received are “always put in good use for the benefit of the patient.” In Malawi, BBF joined again with Medical Benevolence Foundation to support their work with a shipment of needed face masks, additional PPE, hospital equipment, hand sanitizer, and other durable medical equipment.

In Sierra Leone, BBF and Healey International Relief Foundation shipped a donation to continue their ongoing work with healthcare facilities in that nation in West Africa. Also in Q2 of 2022, we joined with Free Wheelchair Mission to send another 40’ shipping container of medical supplies and equipment to Eswatini. This shipment included durable medical equipment and hospital equipment, in addition to medical supplies.

All of us at BBF are thankful for our many partners throughout the continent of Africa and our many years of partnership!

All Donations Big and Small

Brother’s Brother Foundation is well known for its large container shipments of medical supplies, medical equipment, and medicines in support of healthcare clinics and hospitals around the world. In addition to these large container shipments, our healthcare program also focuses on providing much-needed medicines to volunteers of organized medical mission trips, or Med-Surg trips. While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented many organizations from traveling internationally in 2021, we are seeing a rise in the number of Med-Surg aid requests in 2022. We are excited to reengage in these small, but mighty, donations made possible by our many pharmaceutical donors.

In a recent donation to Bellefield Presbyterian Church, volunteer and local Pittsburgh physician Dr. Richard Zimmerman, supplied a variety of medicines for treatment of diabetes and malaria patients in Guatemala. Our partnership with Dr. Zimmerman and his team dates to almost ten years to 2013. We appreciate the opportunity to provide continued support to organizations such as Bellefield Presbyterian due to its strengthening of sustained healthcare in poverty-stricken communities where access to basic medicines is greatly limited.

Year-to-date, Brother’s Brother has supported a total of 20 Med-Surg Trips to 14 different countries. Non-profit organizations interested in applying for Med-Surg aid can visit our website (www.brothersbrother.org) to obtain more information.
BBF continues to be part of the Combined Federal Campaign. Many thanks to both new and renewing CFC donors. Look for BBF on the Combined Federal Campaign website at https://cfcgiving.opm.gov. BBF’s Combined Federal Campaign number is 12228. For donors who are not government employees, please remember that some employers match individual donations. Ask about your employer’s matching gifts program. This is a great way to give to BBF. Thank you!

Many Opportunities to Give This Fall

September is back to school month and that means school supply shopping. Many children look forward to picking out their new notebooks and planners, but for others, their excitement is diminished because they cannot afford the supplies they need. Studies have shown that when students have their own school supplies, their grades and classroom behavior improve and they become more excited about school and learning. If you would like to help ensure children have everything they need to start the year off right, donate to the BBF School Supply Fund.

This October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month will be especially meaningful to all of us at BBF. Laura Kelly, the vice president of communications and development, concluded her 10 months of cancer treatments in August and can now celebrate being cancer-free. During treatments, Laura continued working every day for BBF and focused on expanding the Breast Cancer Awareness Fund (BCAF). The fund works to address inequities in care for women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, provide early detection education and resources, and help to pay for treatment for those who cannot afford it on their own. Last year, the BCAF made donations to Ribbons of Love in Honduras and Montefiore St. Luke’s Cornwall Hospital in New York. This year, BBF will also partner with RAD-AID International to increase access to radiology and imaging in low resource regions of the world.

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BBF continues to be part of the Combined Federal Campaign. Many thanks to both new and renewing CFC donors.

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