Maureen Strohn, MD

Dr. Strohm (right) with a Swazi Public health nurse setting up the "check out" table at a rural site.

New at Eisenhower Medical Center, Maureen Strohm,MD has been a family physician for more than two decades, and most recently served as a faculty member at the University of Southern California before joining the Eisenhower staff in November 2009.

Before coming on board, however, she had a commitment to keep.“One of my graduates, Condessa Curley, MD, created a group called Project Africa Global, Inc. that provides care to underserved communities, and she had been twisting my arm to go ever since they started the program nine years ago,” explains Dr. Strohm.“Last year I said,‘I don’t care what is going on at the time, I am committing to this,’ and I signed on.”

Dr. Strohm, along with 21 other American physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners and a youth group, spent two weeks in September 2009 working at a local hospital in Swaziland, a local clinic and establishing clinics in several rural areas. The group also conducted a two-day conference on updates in HIV/AIDS Care for doctors and nurses in the area.“I have not seen so many sick individuals with HIV/AIDS since the mid to late 1980s when we first recognized the HIV virus,” says Dr. Strohm. “Swaziland has only had antiretroviral medications to treat HIV/AIDS for about three years, and their population has the highest prevalence of HIV infection, particularly among pregnant women there, 42 percent of whom are HIV positive.”

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Still, despite their very difficult challenges,Dr. Strohm could not help but be struck by the Swazi people.“I am sometimes asked why go so far away to help when there are people who need help right here,” shares Strohm.“I think getting out of one’s own environment, even if you’re working with underserved communities in the United States, can be a real eye opener. The Swazi people have a certain spirit.Yes, there is a lot of poverty and illness, but the people are genuinely open, friendly and basically happy, especially the children. They seem to have a different sense of priority and balance than we do. I am so grateful to have shared this experience with them and my colleagues.

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