GET INVOLVED

Volunteer at Global Links

Support our work with a financial gift. Globalinks.org/donate. United Way #4319

Donate your unwanted crutches, nebulizers and more.

ENGAGE

Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and Instagram

Attend a Tour or join us for a Lunch + Learn

IMPORTANT DATES:

10.24 United Nations Day

11.28 Give Big Pittsburgh Day—Your gift to Global Links will be matched!

12.2 Anniversary of the Pan American Health Organization

ABOUT GLOBAL LINKS

Global Links is a medical relief and development organization dedicated to supporting health improvement initiatives in resource-poor communities and promoting environmental stewardship in the US healthcare system.

GLOBALLINKS.ORG
INFO@GLOBALLINKS.ORG
412.361.3424

Printed on 100% recycled paper with vegetable based inks.

Post-surgery, Hamza is a happy and healthy 3-year-old

Children represent the future, and ensuring their healthy growth and development ought to be a prime concern of all societies.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The Right Sutures to the Right Partners

SUTURE DONATION PROGRAM

Hamza was born with two of his fingers on each hand fused together, and his family fears for his future. In Nigerien culture, individuals with disabilities are often viewed as inferior. Hamza could potentially spend the rest of his life marginalized if his fingers are not corrected. To make matters worse, materials for a simple surgery like the one needed for Hamza are not easily available in Niger. The health clinic where Hamza’s parents initially took him did not have the type of sutures needed to perform the surgery. Hamza’s options were limited.

An item as simple as a suture can have a life-changing impact. Due to federal laws and hospital policies, healthcare institutions in the United States discard sutures once they are placed in a surgical setting, even if they are unopened, and even if that surgery doesn’t take place. Since our founding, Global Links’ Suture Donation Program has been

continued on page 2
recovering these surplus sutures and distributing them to partner clinics around the world that are providing free and reduced costs surgeries. Luckily for Hamza, the type of sutures needed for his surgery were part of the materials we regularly recover through our Environmental Stewardship in Healthcare Program.

When sutures arrive at our facility, a dedicated team of staff and volunteers process, sort, count, and organize them based on distinguishing characteristics such as, thread and needle type, and size. Our program manager works closely with partners to ensure that surgeons have access to a variety of sutures that meet their specific surgical needs.

After being turned away from his local health clinic, Hamza was referred to a CURE International hospital nearby. CURE International has been a partner of Global Links for just a few years, but in that time, the partnership has expanded to four CURE healthcare facilities in as many countries. Its hospital in Niger is the only one in the country offering specialty surgical care for disabled children. CURE Niger Executive Director Joshua Korn had recently received a distribution of sutures that contained the type necessary for surgery on Hamza’s fingers. After a series of operations, Hamza left with 10 fully functioning fingers and a new chance in life.

The story of Hamza is not unique. It is just one example of the many ways in which materials can be recovered and redirected to support life-saving services in low resource communities. CURE Niger performs more than 800 surgeries a year similar to the one performed for Hamza. For nearly 28 years, Global Links’ established network of partners has performed hundreds of thousands of surgeries that have afforded countless individuals a new chance at a productive and meaningful life.

If your company or facility has surplus sutures to share, contact Medical Outreach Manager Matt Fuller at 412.361.3424 x213 or mfuller@globallinks.org. or call 412-361-3424. Support for our Suture Donation Program comes from our donors and GSK.
Why Wheelchairs?

MOBILITY PROJECT

Global Links recently responded to a request for 200 manual wheelchairs for individuals affected by the hurricane in Puerto Rico. It is a need we are experienced in meeting. In our Community Partners Program, our partnerships with the Medical Equipment Recycling Program (MERP) and CHOSEN IMA distributed 59 wheelchairs to neighbors in need. And every disaster response trailer of the American Red Cross in Southwestern PA is stocked with a Global Links wheelchair along with other materials from Global Links.

Why? In times of disaster, victims may have to be evacuated without their medical equipment. In case of a fire or flood, individuals may escape with only the clothes on their back. If a community’s power grid is out for an extended period, electric wheelchairs are useless. No matter the reason, when a wheelchair is damaged or destroyed, filing insurance claims and waiting for a new chair may take months, and no one should be without mobility and dignity during that time.

At any given time, Global Links’ has a healthy inventory of manual wheelchairs, thanks to surplus from our region’s health systems and the generosity of Pittsburghers. As our community’s population ages many families find themselves with manual wheelchairs that are no longer needed. By donating those wheelchairs to Global Links, families can be assured that it will go on to serve another person in our local or global community at a time when it is most needed.

If you have a manual wheelchair, canes, crutches, walkers, bathing benches or other homecare items, please donate those materials to Global Links. More information can be found at globallinks.org, or call us at 412-361-3424.

Why Money is the Most Important Gift in Times of Disaster

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With all of the natural disasters in the news these days, and the photos of whole cities and countries ravaged by storms, fires, and floods, everyone I know is thinking about the best way to help. After all, how can you see the images of families losing everything and not want to supply those things that we all have so much of and are eager to share?

It makes sense to share these items when the loss is close by – one of your neighbors, a local fire, a flood. But when it’s not nearby, collecting items without a specific request, a plan, or a designated end user can be yet another challenge to recovery and relief efforts. The best donation is a cash donation. Organizations working with communities on recovery can use it for what’s most needed at any given time (and those needs can change pretty quickly depending on the circumstance). Remember, too, that recovery takes a long time. The need goes on much longer than the media stories.

I have seen the problems that are caused when materials show up without being requested or correctly timed. Consider tractor-trailers full of clothing, mixed household goods, bottles of water, etc., showing up in a country that has experienced a devastating disaster that affects roads, storage facilities, personnel, and virtually every aspect of the country’s infrastructure. Who is going to clear these shipments, sort through them, store them, and then distribute them? Even valuable materials that arrive at the wrong time can cause serious problems and can distract first responders and recovery organizations from more critical needs.

People are moved to help; it’s our human nature, and it makes us feel good. But be a thoughtful giver. Cash makes the most sense and has the largest impact when given to vetted, transparent, and trusted organizations.

Kathleen Hower
Executive Director and Co-Founder
A Week in the Life: As told by a Global Links Blue Bag*

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN HEALTHCARE

THURSDAY, 5:45 A.M.

First day on the job. It’s quiet this morning, but there’s a lot going on… it’s time for a shift rotation at the hospital. The evening and morning crews meet for 15 minutes every day to review patient charts and make sure everyone knows what’s on the schedule for the day. This is when I am introduced, since it’s hard to get so many nursing staff in one place. Matt explains Global Links and, more importantly, what staff on the unit can and cannot drop in the blue donation bag (me!).

FRIDAY 10:03 A.M.

Things are picking up. There were a lot of discharges, so patients will be heading home today. That means anything left in the room, like unopened soap, shampoo, and toothbrushes, gets donated to Global Links!

SUNDAY 2:00 P.M.

I’m starting to feel full. A few gauze pads here and there add up quickly. I’m almost half full, and it’s only been 3 days! I think the staff likes me.

MONDAY 6:30 A.M.

Something wasn’t quite right. Luckily a staff nurse noticed that someone tossed Styrofoam cups in here, even though they shouldn’t have…thankfully she caught the mistake and removed them, so I’m back in business.

WEDNESDAY 1:37 P.M.

I’ve definitely put on a few pounds this week. Today, Robin from Global Links arrives and swaps me out with a new blue bag. I am just one of 10 bags picked up from the hospital, and one of 60 that will be picked up today! (My coworkers and I all dress alike.)

THURSDAY: 9:00 A.M.

I arrive at Global Links, where I am weighed and immediately carted into the busy Volunteer Center. Without warning, I am turned upside down and all of my contents spilled out on a giant table. It’s all a blur after that…many, many hands of the Global Links volunteers are sorting and matching all of the surplus medical supplies from the week and carefully putting those items on shelves. I’m feeling deflated, literally, but excited and ready to go back into action next week. I can’t wait to hang out with the hospital staff again. Without their passion and dedication, Global Links couldn’t share surplus and save lives!

With 150+ Blue Bags stationed in hospitals throughout our region, healthcare workers have a way to support their colleagues in communities that lack vital medical supplies.

*Blue Bags are the large, nylon bags that capture the valuable surplus medical materials on hospital units throughout our region. To start a Blue Bag Collection Program in your department or facility, contact Matt Fuller at 412-361-3424 x213 or email mfuller@globallinks.org.
In March of this year, the department/state of Putumayo in the southwestern region of Colombia experienced 150% of its average monthly rainfall. By early April, the main rivers surrounding Mocoa, the capital of Putumayo, had overflowed. At 3:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 1st, deadly mudslides engulfed a large section of the town. Seventeen neighborhoods near the riverbanks were affected, and large sections of the department were buried in mud. Five neighborhoods were completely destroyed. In total, 316 people were declared dead, 332 injured, 106 missing. This is widely considered to be the worst natural disaster to ever affect the area.

Global Links is working with Colombia’s Ministry of Health and the Pan American Health Organization to replace medical materials, supplies, and furnishings in clinics damaged by the mudslides. Our project is designed to not only help the disaster recovery but to improve the quality of health services and strengthen the region’s public health system.

Did you know that Global Links accepts office furniture?

Desks, chairs, filing cabinets, and meeting tables are vitally important to the functioning of a healthcare facility but, administrative furnishings are at the end of a list much longer than the budget can address for clinics and hospitals in our partner countries. The lack of these items takes a toll on staff, patients, and families, and how well the facility can perform. If your company is moving or redecorating, contact us at 412-361-3424 x213 or email mfuller@globallinks.org to learn more about donating furniture.

We’ll even pick it up!
GLOBAL LINKS FAMILY VOLUNTEER DAYS

NOVEMBER 18
DECEMBER 9
DECEMBER 16

JOIN US FOR ONE OF THESE SPECIAL DAYS WHEN FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN OF ALL AGES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER!

REGISTER AT GLOBALLINKS.ORG