



From Significance to Success

As an old parable goes, a man was walking along a beach that was covered with hundreds... thousands... of starfish. As he walked, he picked up individual starfish and threw them back into the ocean. A passerby asked him why: "You're never going to be able to throw them all back. Why do you bother?" The man looked down, picked up another starfish, threw it into the sea and then replied, "Well, it matters to that one."

The Timmy Foundation

22 East 22nd Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202

phone: 317.920.1822
fax: 317.920.1821
timmyfoundation.org



~Long-time Volunteer explaining how the Timmy Foundation works

Dr. Chuck Dietzen is a man of many parts. A Pediatric Rehabilitation Specialist at Crossroads Easter Seals and St. Frances Hospital in Indianapolis, Dietzen grew up as the foster brother of the more than 150 children his family welcomed into their home. He spent a few years as pro wrestler (Dr. Doom!) and has volunteered on myriad medical mission trips, "the stripped down, hands-on, rewarding work that reminds me why I practice medicine." In 1997, following one such orthopedic mission in India, his colleagues there asked him to establish a foundation to support their ongoing efforts.

"I didn't want to add the layers of bureaucracy that can come from philanthropic organizations. But I knew first-hand there are a great groups doing vital work that need support. So we established the Timmy Foundation as a resource clearinghouse for partner organizations around the world. We serve the underserved by activating the youth," Dietzen emphasizes, "empowering them to make a difference in the world and helping those young people discern if they are truly called to the medical profession as doctors, nurses, therapists, pharmacists, and more."

The Timmy Foundation's mission is that dual development: to expand the access that low-income communities have to health care and educational opportunities by utilizing the passion and energy of students, volunteers and medical professionals in a way that promotes global understanding and awareness, and humanitarian values.

Each year this small non-profit sends 10 to 12 international medical clinics abroad, staffed with hundreds of students and professional volunteers treating 10,000 patients, subsidizing hundreds of surgeries plus hundreds more cases of follow-up care for the patients they see in those medical clinics, and distributing about \$1.5 million in medicines plus millions of dollars more in in-kind resources.

"We are able to do all that with relatively low administrative expense [about \$200,000 annually] because of the model on which we operate," says Timmy Executive Director Matt MacGregor. "Timmy's hybrid approach is unique because it puts students in the driver's seat, allowing them to run with their ideas and be the principle players in the healthcare that is provided."

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Michael Doran
Vice President of Sales
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mdoran@nugrowth.com

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Every “brigade” the Foundation sends out is created, organized and staffed by student chapters. They recruit medical professionals, solicit medicines and supplies, and raise funds on behalf of Timmy Foundation’s partner organizations. “They are the advocates for and labor behind each mission,” MacGregor continues, “and they make it possible for us to dedicate a significant percentage – in the mid-90% – of all money we receive to programming.”

Presently Timmy partners with five international nonprofits in Columbia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica and Nigeria, and numerous domestic organizations. It plans to expand its medical efforts, both internationally and domestically, and to increase the number of student chapters at colleges and universities across the country.

The individuals who go on the Foundation’s international trips often return with a refreshed view of their own lives.

Participants gain a far greater understanding of the world and tangibly contribute to the broader world community. They’ve been exposed to situations and difficulties that are far more challenging than they regularly encounter. When they return to live their lives from the value-perspective they’ve experienced, they become better doctors, nurses, social workers, businessmen and women – aware, focused and willing to tackle the big problems facing our world.

Chuck Dietzen and Matt MacGregor each learned that first-hand. “Working directly in impoverished communities brings a certain balance. And it requires you to reflect on your own life,” says MacGregor. “When you see the needs and confront the realities much of the world faces, you realize you have it pretty good. You have access to

reflect on your own life,” says MacGregor. “When you see the needs and confront the realities much of the world faces, you realize you have it pretty good. You have access to resources, and along with that comes a responsibility, or at least the ability, to give back. As for the recipients – whether adults in need of surgery or babies receiving vital medicines so they can grow up – you have to believe they will go on to become more productive forces for society,” he concludes.

Changes in technology, the ability to travel more freely, and a growing global awareness provide the opportunity for any one of any age to engage in significant social issues in real and effective ways, and to make a difference. For Dr. Dietzen, it’s a priority.

“Too many of us are trained to get a job and make money... I’ve been blessed to live my passion by approaching everything from a ‘what’s my mission?’ perspective. As a result, I’m often asked to speak about The Timmy Foundation and how to grow from success to significance. Actually, as someone who’s always worked in the not-for-profit arena, I’m not qualified! But I have learned that, while money is not the most important resource, it’s typically the most limiting one. So,” he laughs, “I guess I need to go from significance to success.”

Through the efforts of student and professional volunteers and generous contributors, the Timmy Foundation is bound for both.

