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Profiles in Giving

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Profiles in Giving

It's hardly news that Colbians leave Mayflower Hill and go on to do important things for their communities, for their countries, for humanity. But the breadth of their contributions, from making a small town a better place to shaping international policy, is easy to take for granted.

On the following pages are representatives of many, many more alumni who see it as their responsibility to give back in some way. Physicians who donate their time all over the world, actors who use the stage to remind us of social ills, clergy who give hope where there otherwise would be very little, teachers who find inspiration in the progress of a single child.

None of the subjects here sought this attention. In fact, they probably would have deferred to others, given the chance. But they didn't get that chance and their stories are here to show what can be accomplished by any of us with commitment, hard work and no small amount of selflessness.



Qaiser Khan

[A Global View]

Djibouti, a tiny former French colony on the Red Sea, has a problem. The country's health system, while it is the pride of northeast Africa and draws patients from neighboring Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, has spiraling costs. The question: how to better manage those costs without adversely affecting patient care?

A case study for a class in health economics? It could be. But for Qaiser Khan '77, it's on the to-do list. A senior economist and task team leader with the World Bank, Khan traveled to Djibouti earlier this year as part of his ongoing work with health officials there. Remedies for the excessive health-care costs include a referral system and a switch from brand-name drugs to generics. Khan and his team are also looking at the spread of HIV/AIDS through traffic moving through the country's port on the Gulf of Aden.

"The social funds and education projects—you can actually see an impact," Khan said, at his Washington office before a return trip to Djibouti in February. "Health is a little more difficult to see."

While the gratification may not be instant, that hasn't kept Khan from wearing a path between the U.S. and North Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia as he implements and tracks social welfare and education projects underwritten by the World Bank. This spring he expected to visit Iran, the West Bank and India. He has worked on transportation problems in Madagascar and school building in Yemen, and he headed a study of the flagging economy of the Seychelles, the Indian Ocean archipelago. His report led to a story in the *International Herald Tribune*, but most of Khan's work goes unnoticed in the popular press.

For instance, Iran has been in the news in the U.S. as part of President Bush's "axis of evil," but Khan is in the middle of a study of the effectiveness of Iran's social protection programs, including welfare and pensions for the elderly and disabled. "The mission in Iran is very different from going to other places," Khan said, "because Iran feels totally isolated in many ways from global trends. So when we go to Iran, we spend a lot of time doing seminars, almost like running a graduate school."

Critics, including those in the anti-globalization movement, would prefer that the World Bank close down that graduate school. They charge that the World Bank has too often put Western-style globalization and economic interests first.

Others, including Jan Hogendorn, Grossman Professor of Economics, point out that only one part of the World Bank's tasks is to design tighter budgets for countries where fiscal policy is believed to be out of control. The human development side of the World Bank is a "leading light" in addressing social problems, Hogendorn said.

"Being able to do this kind of work for the World Bank gives you the clout to really accomplish something. Many a volunteer goes out with nothing that they can really accomplish beyond generating good will. . . . People like Qaiser are in a position to make a real impact and I think that's impressive."

Khan, in fact, acknowledges that some criticisms of the World Bank are based in fact, though some date back to situations decades old.



"[Subsequent] events may have changed the facts but there is an internal debate within the bank between those of us who work on poverty and social and human-development issues and those who are financial sector specialists who still believe in trickle-down," he said. "We have that internal debate within us but I think our side has won that internal debate."

Not that he believes the critics will go away.

"The bank will make new mistakes and somebody will have to point that out and we will have to address it," Khan said, adding that the bank will continue to support globalization but will work to address the social costs associated with it.

A native of Bangladesh, Khan earned a doctorate in economics at the University of Pennsylvania, studying with Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1998. Khan went on to teach at Bowdoin, then became a development consultant in Nepal, the Philippines and Barbados.

He now lives in suburban Virginia with his wife, Habeeba, and their two children, Zainab, 7, and Jibran, 11, and describes his global life as a balance like yin and yang. "When you come [home] from rural Yemen or rural Madagascar, this is a huge contrast," Khan said.

Though he travels 150,000 miles or more every year on business, he says his World Bank development work leaves him "mentally at peace."

"I hope I'm having a wide impact," Khan said. "That's what keeps me going." —Gerry Boyle '78

Diane Zavotsky

[The Lives She Changes]

Diane Zavotsky '82 practices family medicine in "medically underserved" northern New Hampshire. Each winter she volunteers in a clinic in the central highlands of Guatemala, treating people who otherwise have no access to health care.



It's discouraging to see sick people she simply can't help, but, Zavotsky said, "the handful of cases where you feel you really made a difference make it worthwhile." Like getting a baby with pneumonia to a hospital and literally saving its life.

Zavotsky confesses that her humanitarian instincts were mixed with selfish motives when she signed on. Beyond a break from winter in New Hampshire, there's the slogan of her sponsoring organization: "The life you change may be your own."

"It's had a dramatic impact on my consciousness of how we provide health care here," she said. Now when a patient complains about waiting three days for an appointment, she's tempted to say, "Try pushing your sick mother miles to the clinic in a wheelbarrow."

Katherine White

[A Good Neighbor]

Common Ground Sanctuary is an umbrella of direct-service, crisis-intervention programs serving one of Michigan's largest counties, and Katherine White '60 has been behind much of the organization's exponential growth in recent years. White has been a behind-the-scenes problem solver, board chair—and the voice answering the crisis hotline Monday mornings for 14 years.

Asked about her involvement, she replied, "I'm a professional volunteer." She traces that to her years in Panama with the Peace Corps in the late 1960s and sees a network of roots for her volunteerism at Colby—in the quiet example of the late Professor Robert Reuman and in the "neighborhood" sensibility of the College, where she would help out someone down the hall and have the favor returned later.

White's philosophy, from the Peace Corps, Common Ground Sanctuary and other endeavors, is: "you work with someone else to enable them to express what they wish to do, and then you give them the tools to accomplish that." Other people's progress gives her efforts meaning, she said. "Hopefully, someone is in a more optimistic state than when you started."

Stephen Kidd

[Eyes Wide Open]

Stephen Kidd '97, a graduate student in theater at Brown University, is a volunteer counselor and program director at a free summer camp in New York for inner-city children living with AIDS. His one-man stage performance, "Sigh," is a tribute to one 13-year-old boy who, Kidd said, "opened my eyes to what's important in life."

"Sigh" interweaves monologues about a youngster dying of AIDS with an Ursula LeGuin story about a utopian city whose "perfection" depends on the continuing misery of one child confined to a dungeon. Kidd hopes audiences will come away with an understanding of the social alienation the AIDS kids feel "but maybe also lend a hand to help."

Kidd accepts donations at his performances for The Starfish Foundation, an organization that he and several Colby friends established to provide year-round mentoring and guidance for AIDS children. He also instituted—and ran—The Run for Providence, a 45-mile ultra-marathon from Boston to Providence, which has raised \$10,000 for the Starfish Foundation's efforts to provide Christmas gifts to underprivileged children in the Boston area.



Sheila Marks

[A Pat and a Kick]

Once Sheila Marks's clients walk out the door, she never wants to see them again.

Marks '72 is a case manager at the Hampshire House of Corrections, a state prison for men in Northampton, Mass. A former social worker and probation officer, she is one of three managers for a unit housing about 80 inmates. Marks does initial risk assessments, release plans and everything in between. "I tell people I feel like I'm alternately patting guys on the back and kicking them in the butt," she said.

Her job has hardened her to the fact that for some people, it's too late to change. But the success stories keep her hope kindled.

"I feel I contribute in two ways," Marks said. "One is I feel my contribution makes this place a little more sane and humane and civilized, even in the jail. . . . And then I feel like I'm making some contribution to what happens to guys when they get out of here. I get letters and phone calls from people periodically saying, 'Thank you. You made a difference.' Not as many as I'd like, but that keeps me going."



Brian Connors

[The 'Counselor']

His clients are indigent, says Brian N. Connors '88, a public defender in the Colorado State Public Defender's Office. Most are homeless, abused, developmentally disabled or mentally ill. "These are broken lives," Connors said. "But people have a right to defend themselves before their freedom is taken away."

Upholding the Sixth Amendment's guarantee of the right to counsel and the right to a court-appointed lawyer, Connors travels from his base in Greeley through eight Colorado counties. He handles as many as 25 cases a day.

"You're not going to win a lot," he said. "You're a counselor at law, and the 'counselor' comes through. You really are a social worker."

Connors concedes that the job of public defender is not for everyone. "But when you could be out helping people who truly need help," he said. "I can't imagine not doing it."

Mark Wylie

[Buddy System]

It's appropriate that when Anthony Shriver, son of Special Olympics founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver, decided to start a program for persons with mental retardation, he turned to an old buddy.

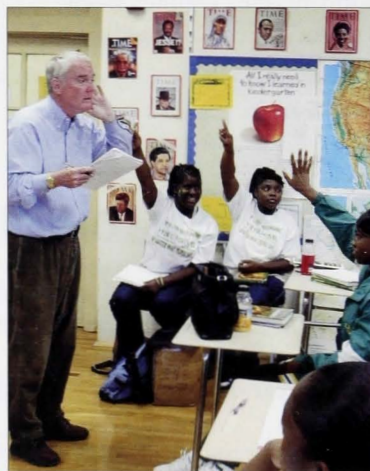
The friend was Mark Wylie '88. The program became Best Buddies International, a Miami-based organization that places college and high school students in one-on-one relationships with persons with mental retardation. In the dozen years since its inception, the program has served about 140,000 people. Wylie, now director of public affairs for Best Buddies, was the first employee. "It just kind of evolved," he said.

"What we do is try to enhance their lives by giving them opportunities to go out and do things that we take for granted: going to the movies, hanging out with friends, just going to the mall," Wylie said.

Wylie now spends part of his time in the company of actors and other celebrities who are Best Buddies supporters. But his biggest reward, he said, is the time he spends with receptionist Joyce Goldman, who has mental retardation. "She's the reason I come to work," he said. "She's amazing."

Richard Moss

[Help with Learning]



Richard Moss '70 has taught history at C.A. Johnson High School in Columbia, S.C., for 28 years—and held classes after school, visited students' homes and invited them to his, gently pushing them to excel. A white man, Moss maintains a warm relationship with his students, all of them black.

In 1963, when local public schools reopened after resisting integration for years, Moss honored his father, an outspoken opponent of the school closings, by choosing to spend his senior year at an all-black high school. "I think it had a direct effect on why I teach where I do and why I like teaching the students I do," he told the *Columbia Times-Dispatch*.

C.A. Johnson draws students primarily from a low income, inner-city area. Kids deal with unsettled home lives and work after school to help put food on the family table. Many struggle simply to attend classes.

When the opportunity to teach at C.A. Johnson came along 28 years ago, Moss knew he would get along well with the students "and help with learning, growing up, maturing," he said. "I felt somehow that I could do something."

Patricia Wheeler [All Her Children]

Patricia Root Wheeler '50 wears Levi's 505 straight-leg jeans, men's sizes, because the knees hold up best.

At 73, Wheeler spends most of her days on the floor, and eventually the jeans wear out and she gives them to her son who's a plumber—a profession that isn't as physically demanding as teaching pre-school.

Wheeler eats macaroni and cheese for breakfast and watches *Sesame Street* so she isn't out of touch in her social circles. She knows there are dinosaurs in the backyard, that peanut butter sticks to the roof of your mouth, that nap time is necessary.

For 37 years, she has run Sand Box Nursery School, a small private pre-school in a church basement in downtown Jaffrey, N.H. Jaffrey, just north of the Massachusetts border at the foot of Mt. Monadnock, is a working-class town built on New England saw and textile mills. Everyone who can work, does. Few families can afford a stay-at-home parent or a full-time babysitter.

That's been true for decades and it's a big reason why Wheeler opened the Sand Box. It was the 1960s, and though Lyndon B. Johnson's Project Head Start was just getting off the ground, a government program in Jaffrey was still decades away.

The Sand Box was to be an affordable half-day preschool, and Wheeler began it on a shoestring budget. Little has changed. She's still in the same basement room, and the decorations and photographs that adorn the walls are patchwork from decades past. The school copy of *The Little Engine That Could* was purchased new, for 39 cents.

"The boy on the floor there, in the black shirt, I had his mother," Wheeler said. "I had Nathan's dad. The little one coloring right there, I had his aunt."

For years parents paid just dollars a day. The Sand Box abhors a fee increase and today they pay \$10 a day.

"She's served the town well over the years," said Cyndy Burgess of the Jaffrey Chamber of Commerce. "She's very motherly, and she's just done wonderful work for the children of this town."

In September, Burgess and the Chamber named Wheeler their Citizen of the Year, an honor they managed to keep secret until the night of the banquet—no small feat in Jaffrey. She was shocked to find out the whole night was about her. "She's always thinking of herself last," Burgess said.

Wheeler's husband, Alan, died in a plane crash in 1972, and she raised their six children. Along the way she served three terms on the Jaffrey School Board and sat on the Recreation Committee. She's been a Girl Scout leader, a deacon and a church trustee.

She taught Sunday school, and it looks like she will again, as church officials have said they will end the program if they cannot find a teacher. For years, when only Boston hospitals had the technology to accept platelet donations, she would drive nearly two hours each way each month to give blood. She's type O negative, the universal donor—and that's a phrase that doesn't just apply to her blood.

For the past 18 years, she's served as a court liaison for an early youth intervention program. Jaffrey pre-teens charged with minor



crimes are sent to her. She sets up community service, makes sure they follow through and files the paperwork with the court.

Originally Wheeler wanted to go into social work, and she got her Colby degree in psychology and sociology. Now she says she can spot in pre-school the children she'll likely be working with six years down the road—the ones whose parents don't or can't read to them, who don't get a fast start off the blocks in the race of life. "That's the toughest part," she said. "When you get assigned by the court to work with a kid you remember."

There are lessons to be learned in life, and Wheeler begins teaching them early. It's not just about the ABCs, though all Sand Box alumni enter kindergarten knowing how to write their names. There are other things to be learned, and one of them gets reinforced every day before snack. "Please and thank you helps to make the world a happier place to be," the children say in unison.

After snack time is nap time, accompanied by soft children's music from the record player. Just recently, the school's original record player checked out after three decades on the job, leaving Wheeler scrambling for a replacement. She plastered the town with fliers seeking a used record player. In the end, she shelled out \$134 for a new one.

Her retired friends, who are more inclined to act their age, don't quite understand such passion.

But Wheeler, who now has 27 grandchildren, says she will continue spending her days on the floor, wearing out the knees in her jeans, at least until her knees wear out.—Matt Apuzzo '00

Melissa Wilcox

[Divine Intervention]

Melissa Wilcox's father, grandfather and great-grandfather were Episcopal priests, and her grandfather went on to become a bishop. But even after job-shadowing two Episcopal priests during her senior year Jan Plan, Wilcox '94 says joining the priesthood was only in the very back of her mind.

It took a 1997 sermon in Swahili, in a dirt-floored Anglican Church in East Africa, to hear her calling. The sermon was her own.

From 1995 to 1998 Wilcox worked as youth coordinator for nearly 7,000 youngsters in the Anglican Church in northwest Tanzania, about 15 miles from Rwanda. While living in several refugee camps of up to 350,000 Rwandans who had fled ethnic violence, Wilcox worked on outreach projects, such as AIDS awareness and prevention, and visited with AIDS sufferers. In Africa "AIDS is such a shaming thing people don't talk about it," she said.

During her foreign service Wilcox was repeatedly asked to preach in Anglican churches but always declined because she wasn't theologically trained. Realizing that parishioners simply wanted to hear from her as a visitor, she agreed one week. "I looked up the readings," said Wilcox. "They were on the Holy Trinity, which is the hardest concept to explain."

Wilcox wrote her five-minute sermon in Swahili, prepared to read it word for word. That Sunday, in front of the congregation in the grass-roofed church, she placed a cooking pot with water atop three stones, the local cooking method, and explained who each stone represented. She asked what would happen if one was missing. Inevitably, when she removed one stone the water spilled onto the church's dirt floor. Riding her bike home, Wilcox felt the pull toward an ecclesiastic life.

In 1998 Wilcox returned to the United States and entered the Virginia Theological Seminary, from which she graduated last year. In September she became a deacon, and this February she was ordained as an Episcopal priest at the Church of the Holy Comforter outside Chicago. In addition to preaching, she can now celebrate the sacraments and share in "the most meaningful parts of people's lives."

Wilcox's sense of ministry was shaped well before entering the priesthood or serving in Tanzania. "It's always been important for me to be connected to something beyond myself," she said. "From a theological standpoint, God created all of us. To be right in your relationships with others, it helps to be right with God."

A women's studies minor, Wilcox worked on a local domestic violence hotline while at Colby. During her junior year, in Kenya, she conducted a month-long independent project interviewing women in refugee camps, and she spent the year after graduation working for the International Rescue Committee's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, which assists with refugee camps overseas and resettlement in the United States.



CHRIS VOLK

In the broadest sense, ministry is a call to service, Wilcox says, and as priesthood is an offering to God, it is also an offering to the community. Wilcox's current pastoral duties at the Church of the Holy Comforter include pastoral care of the elderly and homebound, outreach with a nearby African-American and Afro-Caribbean parish and participation with a soup kitchen on the north side of Chicago. Currently Wilcox is looking into ways to assist the "Lost Boys of Sudan," refugees from Sudan's two-decade civil war, some of whom resettled in the Chicago area. Her husband, whom she met in seminary, is also an Episcopal priest.

"As priests we point people to the holiness in their lives every day and especially on those days when they need it the most—in sickness and in death," said Wilcox. "If they can glimpse God through my work, I know I am fulfilling my vows." —*Alicia Nemiccolo MacLeay '97*

Nisha Purushotham [A Common Pulse]

Nisha Purushotham '92 likens traditional Afro-Caribbean drumming to community building. "The full experience requires that everyone falls into a common pulse and listens to what others are expressing," she said. But solos are also important and "call for individuals."

Two years ago Purushotham, a self-proclaimed community organizer, founded the nonprofit Rhythm & Roots in Providence, R.I., to raise issues of racial and economic injustice—from educational inequalities and lack of living-wage jobs to racial profiling—through drumming. She teaches traditional beats, composition and cultural history to predominantly working-class and minority children and teens in free weekly classes.

For Purushotham drumming is a creative expression that can empower youths to recognize and analyze critically systems of oppression and ultimately alter social consciousness. Through discussion, reflection and original compositions—often influenced by rap and hip-hop—her students connect injustices they witness with their potential to influence change.

"I don't want to direct what they do or how they affect political change later in life," said Purushotham. "I want to lay the foundation for them to do it."

Robert Loynd

[Mutual Understanding]

In the course of serving his country, Marine Corps aviator Bob Loynd '86 has gotten around.

There was Operation Desert Storm, during which he flew 35 combat sorties in the pilot's seat of an EA6B Prowler set up to jam enemy electronics. There were deployments in Japan, Korea, the Philippines. There was a year at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University—where Loynd earned a master's degree in international affairs—and six months as a specialist in Central Asia and Russia.

And now there are regular training "road trips" in which Loynd and his crew of three, take off from Cherry Point, N.C. for destinations in the U.S., none of which are more than a day trip (Cherry Point to Brunswick, Maine? Ninety minutes.).

Now a major soon to be made colonel, the American studies major entered the Marine Corps after graduation. Now he oversees a squadron whose sole purpose is to provide air support for Marines on the ground, and in the process, help others, too.

"By going into some of these areas [like Afghanistan], we're also developing contacts with them and helping them develop economic conditions that will make life for these people a little bit better.

"There's definitely the mutual understanding that will be a positive benefit to all of this."

Amy Millett [Light in a Child]

All of Amy Millett's students have to stay after school.

Millett '01 teaches at the Epiphany School, a free, private school for students in grades 5-8 in Dorchester, Mass. All of the students' families are at or below the poverty line. Many of the students are in state foster care.

The school day at Epiphany is 12 hours long, every day. Students arrive at 8 a.m., work in class until 3 o'clock. They do sports, sit down for dinner, then study until 8 p.m. "They love it," Millett said. "Most of them are happier here than they are at home."

She is, too. Pursuing her goal of teaching in an inner-city public school, Millett was hired the summer after graduation from Colby and plunged right in. She teaches, coaches track, swimming and cross-country, lives in Dorchester like her students and visits them on weekends. "I never leave the job," she said recently, squeezing in a phone call while her kids were at recess. "I take it home. I take it with me wherever I go."

It's exhausting but rewarding, especially when children make strides, she said. "You see light in every child."

