

Meg Styles Aims to Loan Budding Nurses the Money to Train in their Own Countries

Sam Whiting
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Two years ago, Meg Styles quit commercial real estate to enter the nonprofit sector as a fundraiser. Now Styles, who is 40 and lives in Danville, is raising funds for her own nonprofit organization to increase the worldwide supply of nurses.

"My mom, Dr. Margretta Styles, known as Gretta, was a global leader in nursing. She was dean of nursing at UCSF from 1977 to 1987. Then she became president of the American Nurses Association and later president of the International Council of Nurses, which is like the U.N. of nursing, in Geneva. She is known as an international leader in nursing education, regulation and credentialing. She died in 2005.

When my mother passed away, I made a life change. I ended a career, 13 years in commercial real estate, and went back to get my master's in public administration. I started to work for a nonprofit focusing on HIV care and prevention in Malawi, sub-Saharan Africa. One of their programs is in-country nursing scholarships.

I wanted this model to go global, and the only way I could do that was to go it alone and start this foundation in her memory. The Gretta Foundation, (www.grettafoundation.org) provides in-country nursing education in disease-burdened nations. We're taking impoverished persons and providing them the tools to enter into an indispensable career. Nursing is the one career that will never go away. Globally, we are looking at a profoundly chronic shortage, and it's getting worse day by day. There are organizations where aspiring nurses from other countries are brought to developed countries like the United States to get an education. This is specifically in-country. We're not taking persons out of their culture or their nation. We're going there.

The Gretta Foundation is taking persons who would not have the opportunity and providing them full scholarships—tuition, room and board, clinical supplies, uniforms and also a small living allowance—to enter into their own country's nursing-school system. If they go to a government-sponsored college, then it's about \$1,200 a year for a full scholarship. Worst case scenario we're looking at maybe \$3,300 a year. At the end, they will become registered nurses. Their obligation is to work in a paid position in a hospital or clinic in their country one year for every year of scholarship assistance.

We're looking at Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. I've been to Malawi. I found incredibly gracious people living in the most deplorable situations. It's a long way from Danville and anything that's Danville. It's a long way from anything any of us would know.

We have no seed money yet. To get this far I have been funding it personally. I have a board of directors, and we're looking for grants. Our goal is to offer our first 75 scholarships in September, which will cost \$112,000. My goal is to see Gretta Scholars all over the world.

Recently, I had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., because my mother's birthday, March 19, was declared Certified Nurses Day and was read into the Congressional record. I don't want to jinx us, but we've been asked to put together a very robust proposal to do work in countries in Africa.

I don't miss commercial real estate, but having a business background is extremely valuable. I also think being a single mother for nearly my entire adult life makes me very tenacious."

The Lightbulb: I realized that to fulfill my dream of taking nursing scholarships global, I would have to go it alone. I recalled my mother's words that she would say to herself during her profession. 'I put myself in a corner and I fight my way out.' I knew this to mean 'You do something because it is right and there's a great need and you're the one to do it.' That became the Gretta Foundation.

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"Imagine a world without persons who know what nurses know; who believe as nurses believe; who do what nurses do; who have the effect that nurses have upon the health of individuals, families and nations; who enjoy the trust that nurses enjoy... Imagine a world without nurses."



This challenge was made by the nurse scholar renowned globally as an international leader in nursing education, regulation and credentialing: the late Dr. Margretta Madden Styles or "Gretta," as she was known to her fellow nurses.

For those living in developing countries, conceiving a world without nurses takes no imagination at all. Today, many are in a death grip due to chronic shortages in the healthcare workforce. These shortages profoundly undermine global efforts to improve maternal health, decrease child mortality rates, and fight the devastating and disproportional advance of diseases such as HIV.

Nowhere are these conditions more evident than in Africa. According to the WHO World Health Report 2006, Sub-Saharan Africa has 24% of the global disease burden but only 3% of the health care workforce worldwide and 1% of the global health expenditure. Where the need is most dire, the healthcare resources are nearly nonexistent.

Exacerbating the healthcare crisis is a problematic trend of the nursing "brain drain." Due to higher pay and better workplace conditions, many skilled nurses are migrating from disease-burdened countries to more industrialized countries in the north. As a result, the loss of this essential human capital negatively affects healthcare availability and patient's quality of care.

These conditions are crying for relief and The Gretta Foundation is answering that cry. Gretta's daughter, Meg Styles, is proud to honor her mother's memory through the creation of The Gretta Foundation. The Gretta Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) charitable corporation, whose mission is to provide in-country nursing scholarships to disadvantaged persons living in disease-burdened nations while bolstering desperately depleted healthcare workforces.

The Gretta Foundation's nursing scholarship



Joshua Gerchev

strategy is based on four important principles:

- ❖ Nursing scholarships are granted to persons most vulnerable and disadvantaged;
- ❖ Nursing education empowers persons by providing the tools to enter into an indispensable and remunerative profession;
- ❖ A nurse's contribution to humanity through a career of care and cure is incalculable;
- ❖ By increasing the nursing workforce globally, there is greater hope to stem the relentless advance of diseases like HIV and improve patient care worldwide.

As professor and dean of nursing colleges throughout the US, and as a past president of the American Nurses Association (ANA), the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN), Gretta demonstrated a lifelong commitment to leadership in nursing. She defined nurse credentialing: critical work that recognizes and differentiates quality in all aspects of nursing practice. She spearheaded ICN's definitive work on nursing regulation. Gretta's most enduring legacy is her signature work in credentialing and its contribution to better patient outcomes globally.

Nursing scholarship recipients will enter into nursing programs in their country's system of education. Each scholarship will provide its recipient with an annual tuition, room and board, living allowance, books, school uniforms, shoes, and clinical supplies, such as stethoscopes and blood pressure readers. Once students have completed their nursing programs and have passed the exit exams administered by their nursing colleges, they are qualified to take their nation's registered nursing exam and become licensed to practice nursing. In repayment for the scholarship, graduating scholars will serve in their country's clinics and hospitals for a predetermined period of time commensurate with each year of academic assistance.

With nursing school education being cost prohibitive for many around the globe, The Gretta Foundation will provide young people in disease-burdened countries the opportunity to enter into this noble profession. For a sum modest by most economic standards, donations to this requisite work can have an exponential impact.

The Gretta Foundation is proud to contribute to the noble aspirations of future nurses while increasing healthcare capacity around the world. Nurses are instruments of change who empower their communities by caring for the ill and provide the only real hope for disease prevention and cure. A nurse's impact on the world is inestimable.

To learn more about The Gretta Foundation and how you can support our mission, please contact:

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