

Alum Doug Jackson provides donated medical supplies to needy people around the world. Page 22.





Humanitarian

BY SUSAN SKOG

The premature twin boys were straining to breathe, and their hospital in India lacked even an incubator to warm their frail bodies. The babies were near death, about to join the 11 million children under 5 who die each year of preventable conditions. But not on Doug Jackson's (Law'85, PhDBus'92) watch.

Just as the preemies were failing, a 40-foot container with \$400,000 of donated lifesaving medical equipment pulled up outside the Indian hospital. The infants were rushed to an incubator, given oxygen and survived.

"We got a letter from the hospital

saying, "Thank you! This is Christmas in July for us!" says Jackson, whose nonprofit Project C.U.R.E. is the world's largest volume distributor of donated medical equipment and supplies. The Commission of Urgent Relief and Equipment has sent more than 825 cargo containers worth \$226 million to at least 105 countries around the world. Five containers now go out each week.

"I don't have Bill Gates' money. I don't have Bono's fame. But this I can do," Jackson says, surveying his new 60,000-foot Denver warehouse, surrounded by shelves covered with



Doug Jackson cheers up orphans in Malawi, a small southeastern African nation between Zambia and Mozambique.

powerhouse

scalpels, splints, oxygen masks and syringes. Operating tables, hospital beds and state-of-the-art monitors are clustered in the corners.

Project C.U.R.E. has grown so fast over the past two decades it now has a web of collection centers in Phoenix, Nashville and Houston. About 10,000 people nationwide volunteer for the organization.

“I have this many ‘employees’ and I don’t pay them a thing! People find meaning and satisfaction in this. They like that they can come to a collection center, sort and pack supplies, and get to

know other volunteers from teenagers to corporate execs,” Jackson says.

Project C.U.R.E. grew out of the angst of Doug’s father, James Jackson, who says he was a “jerk” for many years and not happy with the wealth he earned in real estate. He was a millionaire at 25. “Money was flowing to us like a river, and it was wonderful. But I had become very greedy and materialistic because you can never get enough,” he told *Latino Suave* magazine. “I had 10 Mercedes, but that wasn’t enough. I had to admit, finally, that my money didn’t make me happy.” (continued on page 24)

Doug Jackson, here with young friends in the Congo Basin, provides communities all over the world with medical supplies.



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So he started to give it away. James Jackson became haunted by the suffering he saw in the slums of Brazil where kids were living on the streets with no health care. In 1987 when he was in his early 30s he started Project C.U.R.E. out of his Evergreen garage. Nurses and other caregivers around the country kept sending unused, quality medical equipment and supplies.

Today, Doug Jackson, an attorney by trade, harbors no romantic illusions about walking in his father's footsteps — and stepping into disaster zones and impoverished villages. "The highs are higher, and the lows are lower. You meet the nicest people in the world and then you sometimes watch them die," he says pensively.

He and his wife and three young

daughters recently hosted the wife of a promising medical doctor from Africa. Jackson discovered that shortly after she returned home, her husband, the doctor, died from unknown causes. "The most disturbing thing is always wondering if he could have been saved if more supplies were available. If illness can take one of the best doctors in Ghana, it can take anyone. This is why Project C.U.R.E. strives to get as many supplies into these countries as possible," Jackson says.

But on the heels of every loss are moments of magic. "One day I got a call from a United Airlines baggage handler who used to live in Chile. He said his sick friend was lying on the floor of a Chilean hospital because there were no beds. The staff and doctors had abandoned the hospital.





Volunteers set up a new bed provided by Project C.U.R.E. for a clinic in Africa.

“This man said he’d raised about \$6,000 to help his friend. I said, ‘So how does a baggage handler raise that kind of money?’ He said he was buying hot dogs and reselling them to his friends at the airport. You know you gotta help this guy,” Jackson grins.

Project C.U.R.E. delivered four containers of medical supplies and brought the Chilean hospital back to life. “Doctors

are fighting to come back. The wait for surgery went from two years to under two days. That’s a remarkable thing!”

Project C.U.R.E. also has been very active stocking medical clinics in Ethiopia. Last year it sent 21 containers to outfit 42 clinics in the impoverished country where 1 million are living with HIV. A \$1 million heart-catheter lab — donated by the Boulder Community Hospital — was delivered in January — the first and only such lab in Ethiopia.

In addition to traveling the world and staying in disaster areas long after other relief organizations are gone, the Jacksons often host dignitaries from around the world. They’ve hosted heads of state from Uganda, Rwanda, El Salvador, Mongolia and other countries. Many officials say Project C.U.R.E. gives them one of their only impressions of the United States — and it’s a shining one.

“A State Department member once told us, ‘You do more good than all of our humanitarian junkets combined,’” Jackson says with a smile.

For further information, visit www.projectcure.org.

Susan Skog is a Fort Collins freelance writer who has contributed to magazines including AARP, Family Circle, Science and Prevention. The author of five nonfiction books, her upcoming work will focus on ways to give back globally.

Children in Cameroon are healthier thanks to Project C.U.R.E. The nonprofit delivers an average of \$20 worth of medical relief for each dollar donated.

