



## Bangor native brings medicine to Third World

NOK-NOI HAUGER, OF THE NEWS STAFF. **Bangor Daily News**. Bangor, Me.: Sep 13, 2004. pg. 3

**Full Text** (662 words)

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BANGOR - A photo of a small, unnamed, dark-skinned boy with bright eyes looking through a chain-link fence is displayed in the living room of Bangor residents Lester and Honey Cohen.

The photo represents the children who have been helped by the Cohens' son, Scott, 42, who grew up in Bangor, became a doctor and started an organization to help Third World countries with health care needs.

"I asked Scott, 'Why are you doing all this?' and he said to look at this picture," Honey Cohen said during an interview at her Bangor home. "He sent that to us and he doesn't even know who the boy is."

Scott Cohen was born and raised in Bangor and attended William S. Cohen Middle School and Bangor High School (Class of 1980) before heading to the University of Vermont and then to Tufts University to earn his medical degree.

Growing up in Maine did not prepare him for the hardships of working in less-developed countries, Cohen said during a phone interview Saturday.

"To me, the global statistics on children's health are simply unacceptable," he said. "Close to 23,000 children die each day in developing countries, with most of these deaths due to preventable diseases."

One of the biggest killers of young children is simple dehydration, Cohen said.

In 1988, on a three-month Albert Schweitzer Fellowship in West Africa, Cohen saw first-hand how a lack of medical resources, which are readily available in the United States, can mean a death sentence.

"It was a very, very enlightening and challenging experience, for sure," he said. "Lots and lots of children died. It definitely enlightened me to the challenges in Third World medicine."

After returning home from Africa, Cohen finished medical school, started his residency at the Children's Hospital in Oakland, Calif., and spent time traveling to several Latin American countries to offer his medical services.

In 2002, after returning from a three-month stay in the Mayan jungle of Guatemala, where he served as a volunteer doctor and educator, he came up with the idea for an organization to help teach the people of undeveloped countries basic health care skills.

Soon afterward, he created the Global Pediatric Alliance.

"Global Pediatric Alliance offers educational training workshops for village lay health care workers and health promoters in Latin America," Cohen said.

The GPA has traveled to Central and South America 12 times since 2002 and held educational workshops in 70 different villages and communities in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Guatemala.

These educational workshops have taught more than 250 health care promoters and 100 midwives basic techniques for identifying basic problems, purifying water, re-hydrating people, and child birthing skills, including how to stop hemorrhaging after giving birth.

"A lot of these people didn't have a formal education," Cohen said. "Maybe their grandmother or their uncle [taught] them. What we offer is hands-on workshops with role playing."

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The education continues after the workshops are over because the participants return to their villages and train others.

“We want to give them sustainable education so they’re self-empowered to take care of themselves,” the Bangor native said. “We just did a workshop in Guatemala where we did suturing of a machete wound.”

Cohen’s parents said they did not encourage their son to become a doctor.

“I think he has a passionate, burning desire to help less fortunate people,” Honey Cohen said. “It means so much to him.”

“He went over to all those countries on his own,” said his dad. “He goes to help those kids - that shows his character.”

The next GPA trip is Oct. 6 to Ecuador, where two U.S. doctors will join forces with a local physician for travel into the Amazon basin to teach health care and offer medical assistance.

The Global Pediatric Alliance has formal collaborations with the Peace Corps in Ecuador and with Brown University’s division of International Emergency Medicine.

To find out more about the organization, check out the GPA Web site at [www.globalpediatricalliance.org](http://www.globalpediatricalliance.org).

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