
Why I Keep Giving

Dr. Maureen Connolly



LEFT: Maureen Connolly in 2008 with CFLR Colleagues in La Romana



RIGHT: Dr. Connolly in 2020 at her clinic in Detroit, MI.

The following is an exchange between Beth Rosenthal, Managing Consultant at Children's Global Health Fund (CGHF) and Dr. Maureen Connolly, a past volunteer and longtime donor to Clínica de Familia La Romana. Excerpts of this interview appear in the CGHF November 2020 newsletter.

BR: *Please share your history with Clínica de Familia La Romana.*

MC: When I was 22, I received a college travel fellowship and moved to the Dominican Republic, where I contacted Dr. Stephen Nicholas to learn about the amazing work in La Romana. He invited me out and I stayed on for the next year, helping with the coordination of student volunteers, the program for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and directing *Camp Esperanza y Alegría* for children living with HIV. I returned to the US to attend medical school and came back to La Romana during my fourth year to help develop the clinic's strategic plan. I am now a pediatrician and director of a clinic for homeless youth in Detroit. I have continued to support the clinic financially and have been back to visit several times over the years.

BR: *How has your experience with Clínica de Familia made a difference in your life?*

MC: The time I spent at Clínica de Familia was incredibly formative, both professionally and personally. I got to see first-hand the type of team-based approach to healthcare that I have tried to implement in my own work as a physician. I was lucky to work very closely with a group of peer navigators and made home visits to pregnant women living with HIV. I observed as my colleagues built trust with these patients and offered deep and genuine support. I saw them reduce barriers to care, by bringing medications to people's homes or meeting them at home to accompany them to their appointment. The physicians were only one element in a whole

network of support created by the clinic. I have used many of the strategies I observed in La Romana in my own work in Detroit when trying to reach young people experiencing homelessness.

On a personal level, the relationships I formed during my time at the clinic have continued to be meaningful to me. I became very close with a coworker, Elisabeth, and her two young daughters and have maintained close contact with them for the past 14 years. One of the daughters is now attending medical school and wants to be a pediatrician! Elisabeth has always reminded me that being able to help others and serve your community is a blessing and that joy should always be a central part of our work.

BR: You have generously supported a number of Clínica de Familia's programs over the years. What has motivated you to be a consistent longtime donor?

MC: During my time working at the clinic, I got to see first hand the level of passion that exists for providing high quality services to those that need them most. Now that I am a practicing physician, I know how unusual that level of dedication is. Clínica de Familia is the real deal! It means so much to know that my donations are being used to have a direct impact on a community that I love.

BR: Can you speak about a program that stands out to you? And, what inspires you to keep giving?

MC: *Camp Esperanza y Alegría* is such an amazing experience for children living with HIV and my time working there had a huge impact on me. I think it just speaks to the ways in which Clínica de Familia is focused on a holistic approach to wellness. The experience of being at camp, free from stigma and the stress of daily life, was truly magical for the campers. I believe that experience contributed to their long term health as much as medications or lab work. That kind of creative, joyful programming is why I love Clínica de Familia and will continue to support it. I can say from experience that the clinic leadership is phenomenal, truly dedicated and with a strong sense of mission. I always know that any donations I provide will be used for exactly what is needed to best serve the community.

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