A DR.
IN THE DR

Founder of Health Horizons International, family physician Craig Czarsty '71 brings his brand of medicine and compassion to the underserved of the Dominican Republic.

By Marc Vanasse '73

In the remote hills of the Dominican Republic, family medicine physician and founder of Health Horizons International, Craig Czarsty '71 works with a local physician in a church that temporarily serves as a doctor's office.
largest city in the country. “We serve four villages on the outskirts of Puerto Plata, one off the main coast road and three in the hills,” says Craig. “The people we serve either have no health insurance and/or limited access to the medical system. We try to provide them with chronic care family medicine.”

Through Craig’s leadership, HHI has established a chronic care program that treats people with diabetes and hypertension. “That’s where we can really decrease the burden of disease for these folks,” says Craig. The program also trains local community health workers – 20 of them so far – spread over the four locations. They are the day-to-day healthcare providers, who monitor and maintain patient care between visits from teams of doctors who travel to the DR three times a year. Right now Craig visits once a year, but because his term of the American Board of Family Medicine ended in April, next year he’ll start making the trip twice a year.

Craig is rightly proud that HHI has been recognized by the Dominican government as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization). During a recent cholera outbreak in two of the villages HHI serves, the DR’s Public Health Department requested HHI’s community health workers lead efforts to educate people about cholera prevention.

HHI’s key partners for their medical service trips are Tufts University Community Health Program, Quinnipiac University Physician Assistant Program, and the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center Family Medicine Residency Program. Medical teams are composed of four or five physicians with eight to ten allied health professionals, and students. With an eye toward the future, Craig hopes that one day HHI will be able to turn over the care of the people the organization serves to local physicians.

Craig also credits Canterbury with instilling in him his desire to serve. “When I was a student at Canterbury, I felt that a culture of service existed,” recalls Craig. “That feeling of giving back probably shaped me in ways that even I don’t understand.”

"When I was a student at Canterbury, I felt that a culture of service existed,” recalls Craig. “That feeling of giving back probably shaped me in ways that even I don’t understand.”

C}