

DAILY POINT OF LIGHT

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OPERATION MEDICAL LIBRARIES

DAILY POINT OF LIGHT # 3932 | FEB 27, 2009 | BY [JAY TENNIER](#)



Operation Medical Libraries (OML) collects and distributes current medical textbooks and journals through a partnership with American medical schools, hospitals, and physicians and the United States military. Its purpose is to foster the creation of permanent medical libraries and support the expansion of existing collections in conflict regions where healthcare education and the practice of medicine are suffering. An economical and efficient shipping model was developed using the Army Post Office (APO) system. OML acts as a book broker and matches willing textbook/journal donors in the United States with deployed US Air Force, Army, and Navy medical Corps (MC) and the US Air Force and Army Nurse Corps (NC) representatives, who are struggling to get textbooks back in the hands of Afghan and Iraqi medical professionals.

OML volunteers update the website and blog, pack textbooks for shipments, and answers phone and email inquiries from potential and current OML participants and recipients. Valerie Walker, the founder of OML, volunteers her time and talents because she believes every person is entitled to have quality health care. Diseases and injuries do not recognize country boundaries. OML exists to shrink the educational gap in all areas of health sciences in developing countries, which globally face the same problem: doctors and nurses go without the latest professional information they need to provide proper health care to their patients.

OML's impact has been immediate and its affects will be felt by millions of people for generations to come. According to former OML recipient stationed in Heart, Afghanistan, LCDR Bruce Deschere, USN, MC, "A typical doctor can have 200,000 patients over his or her career. Do the math, and the lack of up-to-date medical textbooks can literally impact the care of millions."

Since the projects inception, Walker has facilitated the shipment of more than 16 tons of medical materials. This figure continues to increase due to a collaboration of over 20 partners from across the country, including publishers, authors, university medical schools, hospital libraries, and organizations. Physicians have been inspired to give because they feel a kinship toward their foreign medical professionals.

OML has and will continue to significantly enhance the initial and continuing medical education of healthcare professionals in communities crippled by the lack of materials. Through its support of everyday healthcare and academic medicine, OML will impact the long-term health and welfare of people and ultimately support the development of essential services and human rights in regions torn by conflict. Seven countries have received OML medical textbooks/journals. The majority of these materials have been donated Afghan and Iraqi medical universities and hospitals.

In addition to advancing medical education and improving health care, OML makes a "green" difference. According to the Clinton Global Initiative, over 7,000 tons of usable medical materials and supplies are discarded every day in American hospitals and clinics. Most of these items are outright incinerated or deposited in landfills. The global impact of OML includes extending the productive life of a product made by cutting trees, as well as reducing the pressures on the landfill sites and the pollution from incinerators.

OML has given Walker the opportunity to significantly touch the lives of strangers, including burqa-clad women. The OML ripples have already improved the lives of children and adults living in developing countries.

The best way to improve your life is by improving someone else's life. There are thousands of volunteer organizations focusing on causes from pets to people. There is a project for everyone's passion, and once you find your passion; your life will be enriched.

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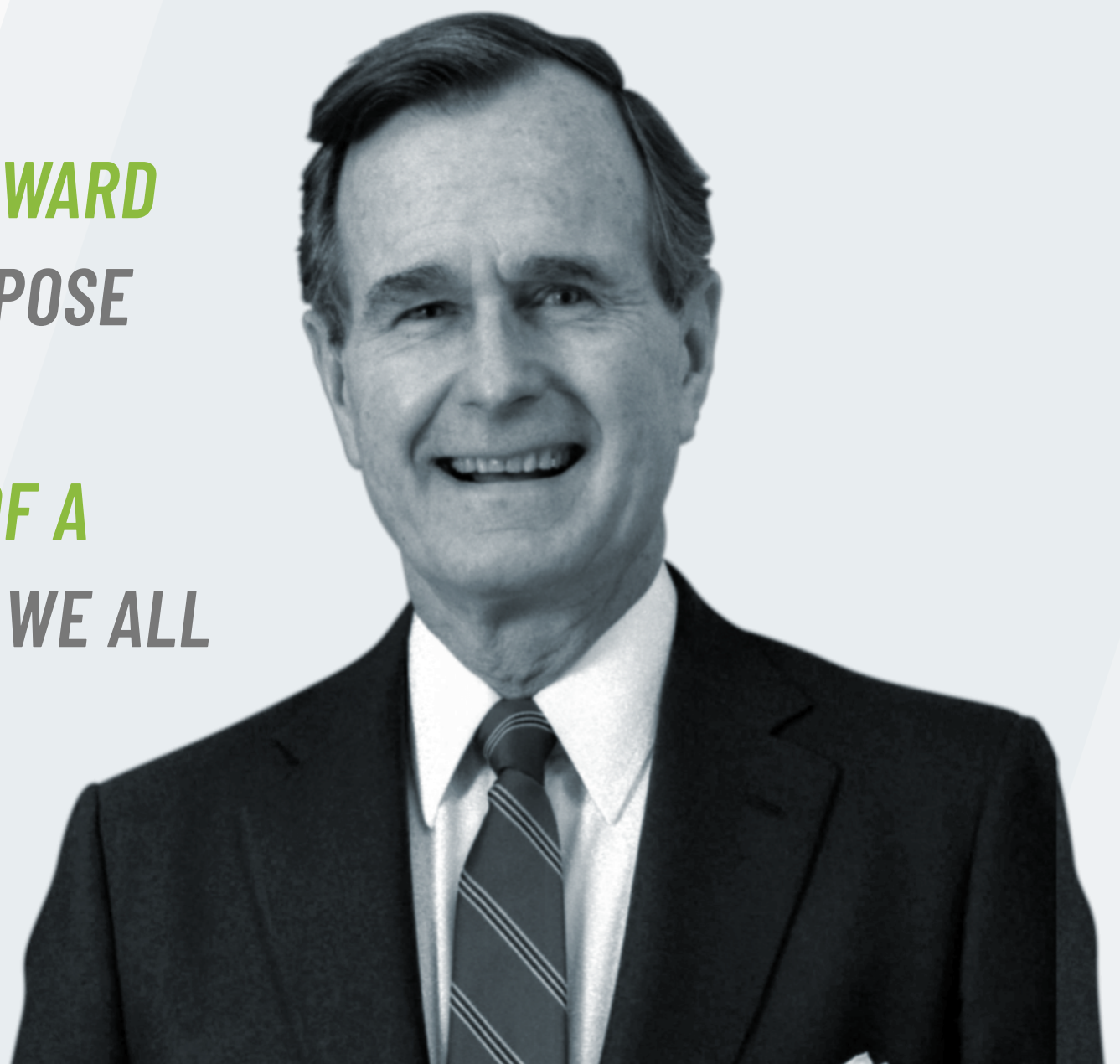
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BY SERVING SOME HIGHER PURPOSE
THAN OURSELVES, A SHINING
PURPOSE, THE ILLUMINATION OF A
THOUSAND POINTS OF LIGHT... WE ALL
HAVE SOMETHING TO GIVE. "

— PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH, FOUNDER OF POINTS OF LIGHT



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