

History of Partners for A Greater Voice Initiatives:

2002-2011: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Partners for A Greater Voice coordinated 23 initiatives with the Dominican Republic that has made a tremendous impact on parents, teachers, schools and communities serving deaf and hard of hearing children in low resource communities. More than 100 in-country workshops, meetings with over 500 parents, United States visitor programs, hearing devices and FM technology donations, school and supply donations, and a bountiful of educational materials have been given. Programs met the interests and needs of teachers, parents, hearing health professionals in San Pedro de Macoris, Boca Chica, Andres, La Romana, Santo Domingo, Pimental, Moca, Cotui, and Santiago.

2003: HAITI

In 2003, Partners for A Greater Voice sponsored a 3 year old child, Lotie, by counseling Swiss friends of Lotie's family via internet and telephone. Joanne coordinated the audiological evaluation and a donation of two hearing aids and educational materials were given to Lotie's mother via Give the Gift of Hearing. Determined to give Lotie a better education, the parents since moved Lotie to relatives living in southern Florida, where educational and habilitation services are more available.

March 2006: INDIA

Teacher of the Deaf, Uma Soman-Gokhale and Executive Director, Joanne Travers traveled to assess and visit 10 programs for the deaf in Mumbai and Pune, India. Observations and program discussions involved audiology clinics, early intervention centers, private therapy centers, mainstream programs, Rotary projects, and schools for the deaf. Joanne was also invited to speak to parents in both Mumbai and Pune, holding three parent meetings totaling more than 80 parents of children with severe and profound hearing losses. Parent meetings incorporated discussion on the following topics: social emotional growth, transition, assistive technology and general information on hearing loss. Joanne consulted Vahishtai, parent and teacher of deaf, on how to start an informative and productive parent group. Her program is now successful with visiting speakers and program content relevant to the needs of parents.

October 2007- present: HONDURAS

Cornell graduate Carol Serna was a program manager for water projects in Honduras, Agua del Pueblo, when her host family in Ojojona had no support for their young daughter, Angie, with hearing loss. Carol contacted Partners for A Greater Voice and Joanne guided Carol in finding audiological services, appropriate school placement and language development therapy. Through the Gift of Hearing program, Angie received her first hearing aid and her parents have received educational materials. Angie is now placed at a private school, Frederico Froebel, requiring \$250/mo in tuition and speech therapy. Email communication continues between school, parent, Carol and Joanne. Partners for A Greater Voice visited Tegucigalpa in June 2009 to assess Angie's school and services. This in-country visit explored the Honduran market serving children with hearing loss. This included hearing health and related professional services, mainstream education for the deaf, parent meetings, speech and language therapies, as well as Deaf culture. A visit to Angie's home and training to SPED teachers at Angie's school was also conducted. Much information about hearing health in Honduras was obtained from business meetings/discussions with 7 different institutions: 3 schools, 2 hospitals, 2 hearing health foundation, 3 therapists. In 2011, Carol returned to assess Angie's progress and Partners for A Greater Voice continues to support Angie, the mother, and Angie's team of professionals.

2007: KENYA

Communication with Abraham Namukoa, who worked for East Africa CARE, mobilized training of two deaf youths of age 23 to pursue a certificate program in ECDE (Early Childhood Development and Education). Upon completion, they will have achieved skills to work with children of age between 3-10. He received information on hearing health and support from Partners for A Greater Voice and shared this knowledge. He also coordinated and presented to 500 women from surrounding villages who shared a common interest in helping children suffering from hearing loss with limited or no services. The educational materials presented to Abraham were invaluable to the topic of disability support for families.

GIVE THE GIFT OF HEARING:

Since 2003, over 50 hearing aids have been donated through the Give the Gift of Hearing program. Though more than 200 hearing aids have been donated to children in developing countries, Partners prefers to donate new analog or non-programmable devices through a direct sponsorship. Donors receive information about the child they give to.

OTHER:

Joanne has also conducted educational workshops that introduced hearing health and hearing habilitation to educators and doctors from Armenia and Ireland.