



# The Wisconsin Medical Project

Spring 2021

## NEWSLETTER

### *Message from the President*

We are pleased to let you know that we are now packing a container for Camagüey, Cuba. With the new Biden-Harris administration, tensions between the US and Cuba have somewhat eased and we have the necessary paperwork from both governments in order to allow us to ship medical equipment and supplies to Madison's sister city in central Cuba. There are four high-tech hospital beds to go in the shipment along with wheel chairs and regular clinical supplies.

We are also introducing new officers in this newsletter. After many years as our treasurer Jack Kenny has decided to give up paperwork and concentrate on working at the warehouse. Caroline Garber, who has been our secretary and chief party-planner, will concentrate on keeping up the extensive inventory of what is in the warehouse. My great appreciation to both Caroline and Jack and thanks for their continued involvement with WMP.

*Bernie Micke, M.D.*

### *Destination Ghana*

Ghana is small country, about the size of the state of Oregon, on the west coast of Africa, and is bordered to the west by Ivory Coast, to the north by Burkina Faso, and to the east by Togo. There are twenty-two recognized languages, ten major ethnic groups. Religions? Ghana is 71% Christian, 17% Muslim, and 5% traditional faiths.

European colonial plundering began in the 15th century with the Portuguese, but England controlled it by the 19th century. It became independent in 1960. Apparently, the Brits were good at extracting wealth, but not so good at leaving infrastructure. So goes colonialism.

This will be our second shipment to Ghana and each time our contact person was Ama Koranteng, M.D., a neonatologist at St. Mary's Hospital. Dr. Koranteng, who has extensive contacts with family and others back in Ghana, is someone for whom one could apply the term "no nonsense," yet has a ready laugh.

### ***OUR NEW MAILING ADDRESS:***

**26 N. Prospect Avenue  
Madison WI 53726**

**OR**

*Go to the website to donate & to learn more about the WMP and our partners*

**<https://wismedproject.org/>**



*Goods received by priests for Catholic hospital in Offinso.*

Currently, the biggest medical concern in Ghana, aside from Covid-19, is providing general medical care. And while health care is, ostensibly, provided by the government, it's still not free. Further, due to staff shortages, patients often take family members with them. Supplies can be in short supply, also. As Dr. Koranteng pointed out, donated items such as adult diapers, are provided for free, offsetting that expense for cash-strapped patients. One of the terms of agreement with these shipments is that items cannot be resold, and must be provided to patients, gratis.

On February 12<sup>th</sup> the shipping container was packed at the Wisconsin Medical Project warehouse, and then sent on its way. It will end up in the bustling port city of Tema, Ghana. The previous shipment stayed in the capital, Accra. This time, however, the shipment is bound for the Ashanti Region, and to the city of Komasi, in particular. There, the Catholic Diocese will oversee itemizing the contents, and see to it that no duty is to be paid to the government. The goods are to be distributed to fifteen regional hospitals.

Again, the Wisconsin Medical Project is very happy to have arranged this shipment to our, in this case, Ghanaian partners.

## ***Introducing our new officers***

### **We welcome Rachel Perlman as our new Secretary and Don Schneider as Treasurer**

Rachel became involved with the Madison-Camagüey Sister City Association a few years after relocating to Madison from Seattle. She first traveled to Cuba in early 2000 under the people-to-people license that was then available, and was able to visit Havana, Camagüey, and a number of points in between. "The following year, I again traveled to Cuba with the sister city association, this time accompanied by my 14-year-old son. At the time, he was involved with the study of democracy and was participating in mock governments. His first international travel broadened his thinking, and the generosity of our new friends in Camaguey left us both with strong bonds." When the WI Medical Project was created after Sister City travel to Cuba was banned, Rachel was instrumental in preparing travel license and export applications and organizing new travelers for trips. "The organizational hurdles thrown up by the US and Cuban governments were sometimes confusing and often changing, but we persisted and managed." Rachel left Madison to roam the Southwest in a camper in 2015. "Covid and new grandchildren brought me back this year, and I am honored to once again be part of the WMP.

Don Schneider is retired from the WI State Department of Health Services which gave him familiarity with medical equipment and supplies. He reconnected with Bernie Micke, his family physician, after they both retired, at a seminar on Health Care Policy. In October 2019 Don traveled with the WMP group to Camagüey, Cuba. Don lives in Monticello, WI and served on the local village board for five years. He was President of the Monticello Historical Society and acted as treasurer for them. We're happy to have him join the WMP board and take care of our finances.

### **News from the Warehouse**

- We continue to work within Covid 19 precautions and fewer volunteers at one time
- Most of our volunteers are now vaccinated
- In the first quarter of 2021 we've packed 500 cartons
- 4 Hospital beds with more sophisticated electronics have been checked and are working.
- We found & printed user manuals to send with the beds and other special equipment
- We purchased rehabbed wheel chairs from Badger State Industries, part of the WI Dept. of Corrections training program
- Wheel chair parts that we have accumulated were sent back to Badger State Industries to further their work