

The 2005 Anne E. Dyson Child Advocacy Awards went to Jonathan Lee-Melk, MD and Paul Mullan, MD. Congratulations to the both of them on their outstanding work for children! Their projects are highlighted below.

Jonathan Lee-Melk, MD

Project name: The Rosa Vera Fund

Bolivia, the second poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere (behind Haiti), routinely witnesses a high level of pediatric morbidity and mortality that is entirely preventable. Particularly difficult conditions to treat include any illness or circumstance that requires an upfront expenditure or chronic care, as the resources required are simply not available to the majority of children. The Rosa Vera Fund (RVF) is an ongoing collection of donations that is guided to provide preventative, medical and/or social interventions for children of Montero, Bolivia, that would not have otherwise been possible. Since its initiation in May 2003, the RVF has successfully provided life-altering and life-saving interventions to numerous children and their families at a surprisingly minimal cost. Through collaboration with non-profit American and Bolivian partner organizations (“Curamericas” and “Rural Andean Health Committee” respectively), the RVF is working to achieve its mission through Prevention Services and Treatment Services. Key to understanding the RVF is illumination of the fact that completing pediatric preventative/medical/social work in Bolivia with the American dollar is exceedingly inexpensive.

Dr Lee-Melk’s principal role is to fundraise and promote the RVF among his friends, family, and colleagues, whom provide the sole funding for the RVF. His responsibilities include development of promotional materials, monthly updates, and reaching out to as many people as possible to express the goals, innovations, and effectiveness of the RVF.

Paul Mullan, MD

Project name: Camp Phoenix

Camp Phoenix is a group founded in 2000 by the medical students of Cornell University to provide a free, safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment for pediatric burn survivors (ages 6-15) who have been discharged from the hospital. Prior to Camp Phoenix, a local program did not exist that provided continued contact with the patients once their physical wounds had healed. They interact with the children throughout the year in a series of fun-filled events, culminating in a June trip to a local overnight camp for a weekend of camp-related activities. Camp Phoenix activities are designed to build self-confidence, to emphasize teamwork, to initiate friendship, and to have fun. The camp provides a setting for children to experience those activities that every child deserves but may not have the opportunity to experience. Positive interactions with other children who are having similar emotions help replace a child’s feelings of isolation and resentment with encouragement, understanding, and comfort about their situation. The interactions with the children can also create a healthy relationship of caring, role modeling, and future goal-setting. The name of the camp was conceived because the phoenix has historically symbolized a bird that has overcome adversity and prospered after rising out of the flames of hardship.

Dr Mullan is currently director of the fundraising board, overseer of the website, chief advisor to the medical student leaders, and he continues to attend and lead events with the children. Other residents from New York Presbyterian Hospital and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia continue to return to the events to act as camp counselors and also advisors to the current medical student volunteers.