

## TENNESSEE VOICES

# Caring for poor has simple solution

By Dr. Ming Wang

America needs to provide adequate health care for the poor, but there seems to be no way to pay for it. More government control and higher taxes are clearly not the solution, but what is? As a physician who has provided care for more than 20 years, I believe that there is, in fact, an effective yet often overlooked measure that can help reduce the financial burden to care for the poor: volunteer medical care.



Wang

If physicians were asked if they would be willing to donate a small amount of time to provide charity care, most would say yes. However, since there is no system in place to identify these patients and to connect them with the appropriate doctors, charity medical care in this country is, in reality, very limited.

If there were such a system to facilitate charity

care, would it really work? The answer is yes, as it has been demonstrated over the past decade through the work of our foundation.

Ten years ago we established a 501(c)(3) nonprofit sight-restoration foundation. It provided a system to identify indigent patients and make the arrangements to get them to the appropriate doctors. The foundation consists of three parts: a team of eye doctors who donate their services, a group of medical companies that contribute supplies and a board of philanthropic leaders in our community who donate financially and assist in fundraising.

To show that this system does indeed work, I will share one recent example.

Last year at the foundation's annual gala—the Eye-Ball—attendees were captivated and deeply moved as Christian missionaries Steve and Lynn Hendrich shared the story and photos of Maria, a 15-year-old blind girl whom they had found in an orphanage in Moldova.

Maria was born prematurely and had a retinal detachment in her left eye that resulted in total blindness, and an end-stage cataract

and uveitis in her right eye that left her with only light-perception vision. To make matters worse, since Maria was 15, she had only one year left before she would have to leave the orphanage.

Lacking the skills to survive, she would most likely be forced into human trafficking and prostitution, a devastating fate that has fallen upon many Moldovan orphan girls. The foundation decided to take Maria on as our next patient.

After a year of challenging efforts, Maria finally received her visa and made the long trip to America. Maria's first visit was to our clinic for a complex and high-risk cataract surgery, which, by the grace of God, went miraculously well. When the patch was removed, Maria was able to see herself and the world around her for the very first time! Maria was then sent by the foundation to another doctor, Dr. David Shen, who provided optical care.

The remarkable success of Maria's journey from darkness to sight shows that such a system to facilitate charity care does work. We have used it to help underprivileged patients, both in-

ternationally and domestically. To date, the foundation has helped patients from more than 40 states and 55 countries worldwide, with all sight-restoration surgeries performed free.

If such a system of making charity care available is duplicated throughout all medical fields, we will not only be able to reduce the financial burden of caring for the poor, but also help protect what Americans care about the most, our freedom and choices.

There are simply not enough financial resources available to care for the poor, but if we don't want a bigger government and higher taxes, we need to be proactive and take more responsibility ourselves in helping devise solutions.

Through a grass-roots volunteer effort to build such a system that makes free care available, we will be able to help those in need and ourselves by reducing our health care costs.

Dr. Ming Wang is the founder of Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration ([www.wangfoundation.com](http://www.wangfoundation.com)) and director of Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center ([drwang@wangvisioninstitute.com](http://drwang@wangvisioninstitute.com)).

## TENNESSEE VOICES

# Rotary Club proud to help Feed the Need

By Greg Bailey

Members of the Rotary Club of Nashville this morning will deliver boxes of food to 1,200 needy recipients in our city, continuing a 100-year commitment to serving Nashville.

Today marks the 12th annual Feed the Need project, a cooperative effort with Second Harvest Food Bank. Fanning out across five locations throughout the Watkins Park neighborhood in North Nashville, more than 240 Rotarians and family members will participate.

This year and into 2014, the Rotary Club of Nashville will be celebrating its 100th anniversary as the 94th chartered Rotary Club in the world. It was founded eight years after Chicago businessman Paul Harris gathered some friends and business associates to start the first Rotary Club.

Our club, known informally as the "downtown Rotary Club," has a long history of service and commitment to Nashville. The club's tradition of feeding the needy during the holidays goes back to 1914, when club members adopted Big Brothers and started selling papers on the Sunday before Christmas to buy boxes of food.

In 1917, the club provided funding to open Nashville's first YMCA, and a year later, members organized a rescue team to help survivors of the "Dutchman's Curve" train wreck near Belle Meade. That train wreck is still the deadliest in U.S. history, with 100 fatalities.

In 1920, Rotarians contributed more than \$18,000 to create the Nashville Area Boy Scout Council, and for more than 70 years sponsored the Scout troop at the old Tennessee Industrial School, later called Tennessee Preparatory School. In 1941, the club funded Nashville's first bookmobile.

In 1964, as part of the club's 50th anniversary, members donated \$50,000 to construct a wing of the city's Children's Museum (now Adventure Science Center), and in 1977, the club built and opened Youth Town for Girls in Williamson County, a residential facility for girls who had been removed from their homes by the courts.

Since 1991, members of the club have contributed more than \$1.8 million and provided thousands of volunteer service hours in the community, primarily in the neighborhood surrounding Watkins Park. We know, however, there is much work still to be done in Nashville.

This year, in addition to our year-round efforts with Second Harvest, the Rotary Club of Nashville will provide funding and volunteers for an array of organizations, including Nashville Rescue Mission, Book 'Em, the YWCA and the 18th Avenue Enrichment Center.

Where there is a need, the Rotary Club of Nashville responds. We have done so for the past 100 years. Our club will continue to do so, hopefully, for the next 100 years as we epitomize our motto: Service Above Self.

Greg Bailey is the 2013-14 president of the Rotary Club of Nashville. With more than 540 members, it is the eighth-largest out of 34,000 Rotary Clubs around the globe.

## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

# Going far beyond the call of duty

By Frank Daniels III

There was little tradition of honoring the valor of American servicemen until Dec. 21, 1861, when President Abraham Lincoln approved a Navy Medal of Valor.

The first formal recognition of military performance, the Fidelity Medalion, was awarded to three in 1780. In 1782, George Washington authorized the Badge of Military Merit, which was not awarded after the end of the Revolutionary War. Congress also made several awards, to George Washington, in 1776, Horatio Gates, in 1777, and Henry Lee, in 1779.

In 1847, the Army briefly awarded a Certificate of Merit for distinguished performance in action, but Gen. Winfield Scott, an imposing man who served in the American military from 1808 to 1861, was scornful of the European tradition of awarding medals.

Scott, who earned the nickname "Old Fuss and Feathers" for his insistence

on military appearance and sharp discipline, refused to endorse the idea of a decoration for battlefield valor shortly after the Civil War broke out.

Scott retired at the beginning of October 1861, and on Oct. 9, Sen. James W. Grimes introduced the bill that Lincoln signed two months later.

The medal was "to be bestowed upon such petty officers, seamen, landsmen, and marines as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry and other seaman-like qualities during the present war."

On July 12, 1862, Congress passed Sen. Henry Wilson's bill to create the Army Medal of Honor to be presented "in the name of the Congress, to such non-commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities."

The Medal of Valor and the Medal of Honor were the only service decorations during the Civil War, and recipients from the war repre-



Army Medal of Honor, 1862

sent about half of the medal honor roll. The first recipients of the medal were six soldiers who captured the General, a Confederate locomotive, while operating behind the lines in April 1862. The soldiers were led by a civilian spy, James J. Andrews, who, along with six others, was hanged as a spy in Atlanta on June 18.

The first Navy Medal of Valor was awarded to Marine Cpl. John Mackie for his actions on May 12, 1862; the medal was awarded on July 10, 1863.

The Army Medal of Honor was extended to officers in March 3, 1863, and Congress also made it a permanent decoration. The Navy

medal was not extended to officers of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard until March 3, 1915.

The first medals to be awarded for action on foreign soil were awarded to three sailors for their valor on June 9, 1871 in Korea.

The guidelines for earning the medal have been revised regularly, and some recipients have been removed from the honor roll. In February 1917, the Medal of Honor review board removed 911 names, including Buffalo Bill Cody, whose name was removed because he was a civilian scout.

Almost 3,500 Medals of Honor have been awarded since 1861.

The most recent recipient, on Oct. 15, was Capt. William D. Swenson, of the 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry, 3rd Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, for his actions as an adviser in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, on Sept. 8, 2009.

Contact Frank Daniels III at [fdanielsiii@tennessean.com](mailto:fdanielsiii@tennessean.com), 615-881-7039 or [fdanielsiii.com](http://fdanielsiii.com).

## letters to the editor

### Praise for West Nashville clergy for making case for Medicaid

The West Nashville clergy who advocate expanding Medicaid (Tennessee Voices, Dec. 16) deserve applause for their courage, even from those who disagree with their view.

Church certainly is separate from state, but the actions of government should never be severed from principles of ethics. In our democracy, we voters and taxpayers bear some moral responsibility for the acts of the agents we elect and fund. To help us, we need ethical umpires from all faith traditions to call them as they see them.

Reasonable people certainly can differ on the merits of Medicaid expansion. However, some good people I know and care about suffer from serious medical problems but cannot afford medical insurance.

Three months ago, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, a Republican, signed into law a similar Medicaid expansion. He said, "This is about the health of fellow Michiganders. ... The right answer is not to talk about politics, but to talk about our family of 10 million people."

KELTNER LOCKE  
Brentwood 37027

### 'Duck Dynasty' star misjudged

The media has, once again, intruded into the privacy of a giving father and family. Only to judge and demean their right to think, speak and put God and thankfulness before what is considered politically correct.

Phil Robertson is elderly, sits at the head of the table and gives thanks for each meal that is hard-earned. He, like my deceased father, has always treated all people with the Golden Rule. Please



MATT ANDERSON  
THE NEW ORLEANS  
ADVOCATE

don't judge until you walk a mile in his shoes.

STEVEN BROYLES  
Winchester 37398

### Remember hospice care during the holidays

Hospice care is not about dying, but about living with the time you have left. Not only does it offer care for the patient, it also provides many services to the family and caregivers.

Hospice caregivers have provided for several of my family members over the years. These are kind and compassionate nurses, social workers and chaplains.

Hospice care is available with a doc-



tor's referral and the patient is in charge of his or her care. Even if the patient outlives the diagnosis, hospice caregivers will continue to provide for the patient and families.

Hospice does not leave the family after the death. Many agencies have support groups and provide services a year after the loved one has passed.

I give to several hospice organizations throughout the year because they gave unconditionally to me during very difficult times.

Each person involved with hospice has a special gift to help everyone involved. I call these wonderful people "God's special angels."

SUSIE LARSON  
Old Hickory 37138

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### questions?

**Editorial Page Editor Ted Rayburn,** 615-259-8063; [trayburn@tennessean.com](mailto:trayburn@tennessean.com)

**Community Conversations Editor Frank Daniels III,** 615-881-7039; [fdanielsiii@tennessean.com](mailto:fdanielsiii@tennessean.com)