

FOCUS

HEALTH CARE HEROES

What makes a health care hero?

This year's Health Care Heroes are health care professionals who have gone above and beyond to change the lives of their patients, their institutions and the communities they serve. Their innovations have improved lives in quantity and quality. Their leadership has guided institutions through meaningful growth and change. Their partnerships have changed neighborhoods from Detroit to Kathmandu.

This year's awardees were selected from nominations by a panel of judges:

■ Chris Allen, founding CEO of Authority Health; 2018 Health Care Hero

■ Greg Auner, Professor, Department of Surgery and Biomedical Engineering and Paul Strauss Endowed Chair, Wayne State University School of Medicine; Founder and Chief Science and Technical Officer, Seraph BioSciences; 2018 Health Care Hero

■ Tolulope Sonuyi, M.D., M.Sc., Assistant Professor, Wayne State University Department of Emergency Medicine; Detroit Medical Center: Sinai-Grace Hospital/Detroit Receiving Hospital; Founder and Medical Director, Detroit Life is Valuable Everyday (DLIVE); 2018 Health Care Hero

■ Jay Greene, Senior Reporter, Crain's Detroit Business

An event celebrating the winners will be held in conjunction with Crain's Health Care Leadership Summit in October.

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PHYSICIAN

Richard Keidan, M.D.

President and Founder, Detroit2Nepal Foundation; Surgical Oncologist, Beaumont Health

By Doug Henze

Special to Crain's Detroit Business

After exploring Nepal for more than 25 years, Richard Keidan found a purpose he didn't know he was searching for.

A surgical oncologist with William Beaumont Hospital and an avid outdoorsman, Keidan had been taking hiking and climbing trips to the South Asian nation since 1983. It was a connection with guide Namgyal Sherpa in 2009 that changed Keidan's life forever.

That's when Keidan traveled back to Sherpa's village to provide short-term medical treatment. But the level of poverty in the remote community stuck with Keidan — leading him to create the Detroit2Nepal Foundation in 2010.

"I grew up with privilege," Keidan said. "I floated through life on a very easy path. I needed a little bit of a push to get involved."

The village, Dipsung, gave him that nudge. A three-day walk from the nearest road, it lacked the Internet access, running water and toilets Americans take for granted.

While life expectancy in the nation's capital, Kathmandu, is in the lower 70s, villagers only survive to about 50 on average, Keidan said.

Keidan found water taps tainted with the fecal bacteria associated with human and animal waste, but he had to let



Richard Keidan, M.D.

villagers choose the problems to tackle.

"When I came back, three months later, they said, 'Dr. Richard, we want toilets,'" he said. "They were very effective in getting the entire village to buy in."

Detroit2Nepal focused the bulk of its efforts in Nepal on bringing toilets to 10,000 people in three villages, until 2015. That's when a devastating earthquake killed nearly 9,000 people and wiped away schools and medical facilities.

Since then, Detroit2Nepal has built 12 schools, four medical clinics and four birthing centers, Keidan said, all with earthquake-safe engineering.

The foundation also provides \$75 grants to 130 school girls to buy shoes, uniforms and other supplies.

"We targeted girls because in all developing countries, girls are discriminated against," Keidan said. "If they become educated, it has a profound effect on pover-

ty. We've tried to give them a chance."

Detroit2Nepal, which has raised about \$2.5 million in private donations, added a local arm in 2012 to give poor residents of Detroit and Highland Park that same chance.

Detroit2Nepal has partnered with the SAY Detroit Family Health Clinic to set up free gynecology, podiatry and other specialty clinics for homeless women. Keidan's group is also working with Highland Park activist Mama Shu to fund a music camp, plus a Homework House, which will provide healthy meals and homework help. Detroit2Nepal operates with three full-time employees in Nepal. In Detroit, Keidan and his wife, Betsy, along with the foundation's board members, carry the load.

Outside his foundation work, Keidan is no stranger to helping people. A 1980 graduate of University of Michigan Medical School and former faculty member at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, Keidan has been on staff at Beaumont since 1992 and splits time between patient care, teaching medical students and research.

Keidan also is an associate professor of surgery at the William Beaumont School of Medicine at Oakland University and has a clinical practice where he is targeting better outcomes for later-stage melanoma patients.

"Really, the greatest joy in life is being able to give back," Keidan said.