

GIVING BACK



Direct Relief's Home Team

A group of Santa Barbara High School grads is having a positive impact on worldwide healthcare while headquartered in their hometown. No less than four SBHS alumni—all friends from the classes of '97 and '98—are part of the 24-person staff of Direct Relief International, the locally based global nonprofit agency that provides

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essential materials to areas hit by disaster. Annie Maxwell, a 1997 graduate, was the first in this wave of Dons. She caught wind of the organization in 2002, when Thomas Tighe, the organization's president and CEO, was on the cover of *Santa Barbara Magazine*. "My mom, in one of her valiant efforts to keep all of her children close to home, sent it to me at college in Michigan and said, 'You should work here,'" says Annie. Starting as an unpaid intern, she's now chief of staff and is currently on special assignment in New York, working at the United Nations under former President Bill Clinton, the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. Regarding her relocation to Manhattan, Annie says, "I went from a warehouse in a beach town to a UN high-rise with security and bomb-sniffing dogs. I keep waiting for the director to call, 'Cut!'"

Three of her longtime friends—Lucy Anderson, Damon Taugher and Brett Williams, all class of 1998—have since followed Annie to Direct Relief, which has been on the forefront of such relief efforts as Hurricane Katrina. "The organization has gotten this great lift from having them here," says Thomas, who praises his young colleagues as hardworking, incredibly smart and disarmingly polite.

At the nonprofit's offices, the quartet's affection and respect for each other, as well as for the Direct Relief mission, is contagious. "It's great work because the more you do, the more people you help," says Brett, the warehouse manager, calling from Ecuador, where he also visited potential partners for Direct Relief.

Lucy also took time off from serving as development coordinator to visit Direct Relief hospitals while vacationing in Nepal. "It was far and away the highlight of my trip. Just seeing the difference that one Direct Relief shipment can make was incredible," she says.

Based on his own vision, Damon is now spearheading a new program that has already provided \$12 million in free medicine to clinics throughout California, a new focus for Direct Relief.

"I don't think anyone when they're 14 years old says, 'Wow, do you think in 10 years we could be influential in running the largest international aid organization in California?'" muses Annie. "It's just not something that you say over lunch in the quad. I was more worried about not failing my English quiz and hoping that we'd beat San Marcos." — **LESLIE DINABERG**

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HOW DIRECT RELIEF HELPS

HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA

Aug. 29 and Sept. 24, 2005 At least 37 tons of medical and personal care supplies—soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc.—have been shipped (FedEx did it free of charge) to at least 41 health facilities in the Gulf region. DRI also donated \$1.1 million in cash grants to clinics and hospitals there.

INDIA FLOOD DISASTER July 26, 2005

More than \$800,000 of anti-infective and antiparasitic agents, analgesics, rehydration salts and water purification tablets were sent to the Mumbai Public Health Department.

EARTHQUAKE/TSUNAMI IN SOUTHEAST ASIA Dec. 26, 2004

More than \$32 million in cash and supplies—enough to administer full courses of pharmaceutical treatment to at least three million people—were donated to healthcare facilities and nonprofit organizations in the affected countries.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

WILDFIRES Oct. 21-Nov. 4, 2003 With a donation from Alcon Laboratories, 6,000 units of eye lubricant were sent to firefighters and public safety officials in San Diego.

To donate, contact Direct Relief International, 27 S. La Patera Ln., Santa Barbara, 805-964-4767, directrelief.org.