

REFLECTIONS: OPERATION MEDICAL LIBRARIES

Laura Pacha, M.D. '98, is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, serving as the Disease Epidemiology Program Manager in the Army Public Health Command, located at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. On April 4, 2007, she sent an email to the UCLA Medical Alumni Association (MAA), which became the inspiration for a program that was honored on February 27, 2009 as a Daily Point of Light.

It is exciting and even overwhelming, as I reflect on what has happened since I emailed the MAA during my deployment in Iraq. From my request, the MAA created Books Without Borders, now Operation Medical Libraries (OML). Scrolling through the OML blog entries literally brings tears to my eyes. The postings represent a truly grassroots effort and reflect the generosity of so many – from an 18-year-old student who wants to become a doctor, to corporate and university support.

OML's continued success in providing medical books and other support to under-resourced, even war-torn, medical facilities and schools around the world shows how individuals coming together can do amazing things and assist those in need – a welcome contrast to the events that typically make international news. I am filled with tremendous pride and appreciation for the MAA. Six years later, the project continues to send books overseas. To date, medical education resources valuing \$2.5 million have been donated and distributed to 13 countries. OML has exceeded my expectations.

It has been said that the pen is mightier than the sword. OML is certainly one example of the truth in that statement. On behalf of the patients and practitioners who have benefited from this program, I offer my most sincere appreciation to all those in the UCLA medical enterprise who have embraced this effort.

Information available at the following:

OML blog <http://operationmedicallibraries.blogspot.com>

Daily Points of Light <http://www.pointsoflight.org/>