

UW Health: Nurse continues outreach work in Africa

Posted on Monday, Sep 26, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

MADISON, Wis. – Technically, UW Health nurse Susan Gold retired in 2017, but she has not slowed down one bit.

Since 2007, she has made more than 30 trips to Africa for humanitarian work with resource-poor communities teaching them about HIV, contraceptives and reproductive health.

“My coworkers say I am the most un-retired retired person they know,” Gold said.

Her latest trip will take place from Oct. 1 to Oct. 16 when she goes to Tanzania. The trip will be funded by a [Nelson Mandela Fellowship Reciprocal Exchange Fellowship Grant](#). This grant provides an opportunity for United States professionals to work with leaders in sub-Saharan Africa to collaborate on critical issues in the region like peace, stability and economic prosperity.

Gold’s outreach work has evolved over time, all being funded by different U.S. state department grants.

In 2007, it began as HIV education and sexual and reproductive education.

“We have expanded to work with doctors on how to talk about gender violence in relationships, mental health, COVID-19 and other urgent matters facing the community,” Gold said.

This trip is focused on pediatric malnutrition and family planning, according to Gold. She will connect with 35 families alongside an African doctor and community health workers.

“It is a beautiful partnership,” she said “There is a saying in Swahili, ‘tuko sawa,’ meaning, ‘we are all the same,’ and that is the basis of my work.”

Her inspirational work is a part of a second act for Gold. She raised a family and then graduated nursing school a week before her 40th birthday. She was a UW Health nurse from 1991 to 2017, with the last 13 years working in the infectious disease clinic at University Hospital. She worked part-time in the clinic after retirement for a few years, and now she works per diem, meaning she fills in when nurses are on vacation or out on leave, working a few days a month. She has three grown children and six grandchildren.

UW Health has played a very important and supportive role in her work in Africa over the years, she said.

“My managers always approved my time off, and my coworkers made their schedules work and many of the doctors I work with have gone with me to Africa over the years,” Gold said. “I have also taken more than 100 UW-Madison undergrads studying global health with me on these trips over the last 15 years.”

Gold feels these trips are all possible because of the Wisconsin Idea.

“I am taking my expertise beyond the hospital walls in Madison. I’m trying to make a global impact,” Gold said. “I am so proud to be a UW Health nurse.”