



Meg Styles aims to loan budding nurses the money to train in their own countries

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Two years ago, Meg Styles quit commercial real estate to enter the nonprofit sector as a fundraiser. Now Styles, who is 40 and lives in Danville, is raising funds for her own nonprofit organization to increase the worldwide supply of nurses.

"My mom, Dr. Margretta Styles, known as Gretta, was a global leader in nursing. She was dean of nursing at UCSF from 1977 to 1987. Then she became president of the American Nurses Association and later president of the International Council of Nurses, which is like the U.N. of nursing, in Geneva. She is known as an international leader in nursing education, regulation and credentialing. She died in 2005.

When my mother passed away, I made a life change. I ended a career, 13 years in commercial real estate, and went back to get my master's in public administration. I started to work for a nonprofit focusing on HIV care and prevention in Malawi, sub-Saharan Africa. One of their programs is in-country nursing scholarships.

I wanted this model to go global, and the only way I could do that was to go it alone and start this foundation in her memory. The Gretta Foundation, (www.grettafoundation.org) provides in-country nursing education in disease-burdened nations. We're taking impoverished persons and providing them the tools to enter into an indispensable career. Nursing is the one career that will never go away. Globally, we are looking at a profoundly chronic shortage, and it's getting worse day by day. There are organizations

where aspiring nurses from other countries are brought to developed countries like the United States to get an education. This is specifically in-country. We're not taking persons out of their culture or their nation. We're going there.

The Gretta Foundation is taking persons who would not have the opportunity and providing them full scholarships - tuition, room and board, clinical supplies, uniforms and also a small living allowance - to enter into their own country's nursing-school system. If they go to a government-sponsored college, then it's about \$1,200 a year for a full scholarship. Worst case scenario we're looking at maybe \$3,300 a year. At the end, they will become registered nurses. Their obligation is to work in a paid position in a hospital or clinic in their country one year for every year of scholarship assistance.

We're looking at Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. I've been to Malawi. I found incredibly gracious people living in the most deplorable situations. It's a long way from Danville and anything that's Danville. It's a long way from anything any of us would know.

We have no seed money yet. To get this far I have been funding it personally. I have a board of directors, and we're looking for grants. Our goal is to offer our first 75 scholarships in September, which will cost \$112,000. My goal is to see Gretta Scholars all over the world.

Recently, I had the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., because my mother's birthday, March 19, was declared Certified Nurses Day and was read into the Congressional record. I don't want to jinx us, but we've been asked to put together a very robust proposal to do work in countries in Africa.

I don't miss commercial real estate, but having a business background is extremely valuable. I also think being a single mother for nearly my entire adult life makes me very tenacious."

The Lightbulb: I realized that to fulfill my dream of taking nursing scholarships global, I would have to go it alone. I recalled my mother's words that she would say to herself during her profession. 'I put myself in a corner and I fight my way out.' I knew this to mean 'You do something because it is right and there's a great need and you're the one to do it.' That became the Gretta Foundation.

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