

# The joy of nursing and a decades-long continuation of giving back

Growing up in a small town in rural Manitoba, Sara Shuster always had an interest in volunteering, strongly influenced by her parents.

While completing her undergraduate degree in nursing at the University of Manitoba, Sara learned more about possible international volunteering opportunities, thinking that nursing was a skill that could be useful in other parts of the world. After working for a few years, she applied to volunteer with Cuso International, and soon found herself headed to work in Ghana.

In Ghana from 1983-85, Sara was the nurse in charge of the pediatric unit at a local small town hospital and was given the job of reorganizing the hospital pharmacy. She later moved to another small community in the country, where she joined other Cuso volunteer nurses in the out-patient clinic, as well as taking on administrative roles.

“It was a very rewarding, interesting, fulfilling experience and I was really glad that I had that opportunity,” she said.

The experience was different than anything she had done before or since. She learned a great deal, and although there were sometimes limitations, she discovered creative and appropriate local solutions that people were using that surprised her.

“The local nurses were very skilled in many ways, and I think the real richness was that we had an opportunity to share stories,” she said.

The experience has had a lasting impact, helping foster a life-long interest in international development. It has also helped to shape how she thinks, how she views the world, and how she gets involved with volunteer work in her own community. She’s also remained in touch with some of the nurses she worked with in Ghana.

“It was only two years, it was a big part of my life that I continue to value, and I’m interested in what’s going on in international development work and how it’s evolving.”



Upon returning to Canada, Sara helped establish a nursing interest group – the Global Health Interest Group – in British Columbia. The group provided a forum for other nurses who had had international experience, or those who were interested in it, to get together and talk, learn, and share their experiences.

Now retired, Sara has more than 40 years' experience in nursing, primarily in public health, as well as teaching for 10 years in the nursing program at the University of Manitoba.

Over the years, Sara has stayed involved with Cuso International, including as the organization’s representative for the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation. She also donates to Cuso International monthly, and by leaving a gift in her Will.

“Cuso provided me with a truly special and enriching experience. I believe in the work that they’re doing. Cuso International has evolved over the years in order to remain relevant and sustainable in a changing world, which is critical,” she said. “I want to contribute to what they’re doing and the projects they’re supporting.”

**To learn more about how you too can continue to play a vital role in Cuso International’s mission by leaving a gift in your Will, please contact Nicole Burgess, Associate Director, Philanthropy and Engagement.**

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**You too can take action and leave a legacy for generations to come.**