



# EMPOWERING THE EXPERTS

JOHNSON & JOHNSON KNOWS THE BEST IDEAS OFTEN COME FROM WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

YOUth magazine spoke with Conrad Person — Director of International Programs and Product Giving, Corporate Contributions, at Johnson & Johnson — about the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, key lessons from the field and what inspires his passion for the job.

In December 2006, Johnson & Johnson joined the International Youth Foundation to support its HIV/AIDS prevention program in Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. Empowering Africa's Young People Initiative (EAYPI) works through partner organizations to reach more than 500,000 youth and 200,000 adults with HIV prevention interventions, including peer education and community outreach.

The grant from Johnson & Johnson supports capacity-building initiatives in Zambia to strengthen youth peer-educator program activities, such as the distribution of educational materials and regular meetings with peer educators and their supervisors.

#### **Through its corporate contributions, J&J supports health initiatives around the world. What is the company's core strategy in putting these programs into practice?**

We are committed to developing community-based partnerships wherever we are actively engaged. In the case of Africa, this approach is particularly appropriate. One of the best ways we, as a donor company, can help is to identify and support individuals and groups that have found the impetus and the means to address health issues in their own communities. We want to work with the people who represent the ideas emerging at the local level because they are the ones whose commitment will persist. Even when faced with the inevitable rough patch, people who consider a program or service their own will persevere and offer their continued support.

#### **What do you look for in a partner organization to carry out J&J's CSR initiatives?**

Those of us on the corporate contributions side of the company represent a lean division with a small staff, so we have to be strategic in all we do. For instance, we do not tend to support "one-offs" or one-time-only partnerships and programs. Instead, we work to establish a relationship with an organization and grow it while continuing to clarify where our goals overlap. J&J also prefers partners who have a desire and an intention to establish real measurements around impact.

We especially value programs that leave a residual intellectual benefit in the community — such as health-related programs that not only train people but also train the trainers. That's so important because after a program "ends," that information stays in the community, along with the ability to transmit the knowledge to others. J&J wanted to work with IYF because, among other activities, it trains young people to become peer educators who can share knowledge with the entire community. IYF can also leverage new partnerships by bringing together a group of players who may have separate — but overlapping — goals and achieve consensus.

#### **J&J's corporate contributions include product giving. How does that work?**

Yes, contributing health-related products is a significant

part of our CSR efforts. For example, when a natural disaster hits, such as an earthquake or a tsunami, we donate health care products to experienced relief organizations that reach out to the victims. But real challenges arise when it comes to contributing the more complex health-related products. We have to be sure an appropriate distribution process is in place so only health care providers receive and are trained to use complex products.

For these reasons, J&J became a founding member of the Partnership for Quality Medical Donations (PQMD), an alliance of organizations committed to adhering to high standards when delivering medical products to underserved communities and disaster victims worldwide. We're interested in establishing best practices and policies for both the donor and the organizations receiving the products. We also encourage groups to document the health and socioeconomic impacts of these donated products.

**What have you learned in your years at J&J that you would like to share with others in corporate philanthropy?**

One key lesson, as I have mentioned, is that you can't walk in with a canned solution and expect it to gain

broad support. The best ideas come from within the community — from the people whose needs you've set out to address. Companies should also bear in mind that a small amount of money can make a big difference. My advice: Think small and act small until you get your footing. Some corporations invest relatively large sums with a clear vision of how they think an initiative will unfold and are disappointed if it doesn't take shape as planned. I am a believer in operating close to the ground when you're doing something new. When you're more experienced and have developed sound relationships, you can be more aggressive with your plans.

**You've visited programs that J&J supports around the world. What are the most impressive moments that stand out in your mind?**

When I visited the HIV/AIDS prevention program in Chibombo, Zambia, that we support with IYF, I sat beside the Senior Chief and watched young peer educators promote their health messages. They began by playing drums in the village square, to alert the villagers that something important was about to take place. Slowly, people started to gather around. The educational process was interactive, using music, dance and

**“I watched as young peer educators began playing drums in the village square to alert the villagers that something important was about to take place.”**





storytelling. I saw firsthand how peer educators share critical information about HIV/AIDS in the community—including the fact that your situation isn't hopeless even if you're infected. As impressive, they do it all without any payment. Hundreds of them are still active, long after their training, because they are committed to making a difference.


I left feeling confident that peer educators are powerful forces in the community, capable of teaching people not only about HIV/AIDS but about other important health issues as well. In fact, J&J has been exploring with IYF how we might be able to enlist these remarkable young people to educate communities about a broad range of health concerns.

#### How do you think the world's current financial crisis will affect corporate philanthropy?

Of course, every prudent company right now is thinking about how to manage resources most effectively. Yet I've never experienced tough times that didn't have at least some good results, as long as we see them as opportunities to be creative and re-shape our work in areas where we may have grown complacent. An

economic downturn can force us to be more innovative, look for alternative strategies and consider interesting partnerships.

My colleague Bill Lin, for example, is moving forward on a plan that our work with IYF helped inspire. The micro-enterprise program will supply girls in Kenya with reusable sanitary napkins—and address a major reason adolescent girls there drop out of school. One day I heard a young girl talk to a group of some 300 peers about how her family had to make the most of every shilling, sometimes only having enough money for basic food. She smiled broadly as she spoke about having soap to wash her reusable napkins and, thus, being able to stay in school. The girls around her clapped their hands and cheered her on as she spoke. We probably can't provide everything this child should have, but we can remove significant obstacles from her path. We can make it possible for a determined child to meet her goals.

For those who think that small things don't matter, they do. 

For more information on Johnson & Johnson's Corporate Social Responsibility programs, please visit the company's website at [www.jnj.com/connect/caring](http://www.jnj.com/connect/caring).

*IYF's HIV/AIDS prevention program in Zambia has trained 2,330 individuals in peer-to-peer education, parent-to-child communications and community advocacy through music, dance and drama. Through these activities, the Empowering Africa's Young People Initiative (EAYPI) has benefited more than 67,800 individuals in that country.* PHOTO BY BEATRICE SPADACINI; (INSET) COURTESY JOHNSON & JOHNSON



Conrad Person applauds EAYPI peer educators as they deliver their health message.

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IYF works with companies—big and small—co-creating Corporate Social Responsibility programs to improve young people's lives. Since 1990, IYF has helped these visionary businesses—and many others like them—implement effective, sustainable and scalable solutions that deliver results. Corporate partnerships are critical building blocks upon which youth worldwide can reach their full potential and build a future with confidence. IYF makes it happen.

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