

## Busman's Holiday

Most people's spare time interests provide a contrast to their "day" jobs. Not in the case of **Sean Bonnington**, whose interests outside of work mirror closely his career of 25 years as a professional fundraiser.

Sean has worked at charities such as The Children's Society, Great Ormond Street, University of Cambridge and St Mark's Hospital amongst others.



After a fascinating year as Acting Development Director at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Sean is about to take on a new and exciting role at Marie Curie Cancer Care. Here, Sean talks about his voluntary work.

### Could you give an overview of the work of the Worldwide Fistula Fund UK (WFF UK) and your particular involvement in it?

Obstetric fistula is a severe medical condition which leads to incontinence in women after severe or failed childbirth and the inability to have further children. It is prevalent in West Africa and caused by the unavailability of adequate medical care.

I helped to set up WFF UK in 2005 following a conversation with Prof Christine Norton, at the time a colleague at St Mark's Hospital. She had a clinical interest in incontinence, and I was very familiar with West Africa. We agreed to establish WFF (UK) as the sister charity of Worldwide Fistula Fund, already established in the US, and work towards establishing a clinical facility dedicated to the surgical treatment of fistula in West Africa. The Centre would also aim to rehabilitate and reintegrate the patients into their local society.

Apart from the obvious stigma attached to incontinence, there is considerable social stigma attached to the future inability of the woman to have children. In many cases this results in ostracism from their community, and is often reinforced by the husband divorcing his wife due to the shame attached to both the condition and to her future child-bearing prospects. Divorced women can cease to have status in the community, and many are forced to leave home with no means of future support, without any skills to seek employment, and in no physical condition to do so.

The key is to prevent the fistula happening in the first place through improved access to pre-natal care and better birth attendant training. However if the fistula can be repaired, then the woman can be rehabilitated and offered

## Summer Offer

Currently we are offering a discount of **10%** on all of our recruitment fees up until the end of July 2011.

the chance to learn new skills and become economically independent.

My main role has been to act as Secretary for WFF UK, which has meant handling the accounts and making sure that the necessary financial returns have been made on time to both the Charity Commission and to Companies House.

Wearing my fundraising hat, we secured \$1m from a major US bank to establish the Centre. The funds were channelled via the US for tax purposes. Receiving the pledge for the cash was only the start; it took over 3 years to identify a suitable location in a country where the problem was recognised. We had just started building the Centre in Danja, Niger, when there was a coup and we weren't too sure if we would be able to continue, but thankfully we were, and we completed the Centre in November 2010. We are now winding up the UK Fund and transferring our assets to the US Fund for them to take the work forward.

### Given that you are a professional fundraiser, this could be construed as being a "busman's holiday". What prompted you to become involved?

Being asked! That, and a strong personal empathy with the cause and a personal connection to West Africa. After securing the major grant via the US, the fundraising side of the role has been restricted to dealing with the occasional donation and maintaining good relations with our counterparts in the US. That said, we have been able to make a couple of significant grants to the US Fund to purchase particular pieces of equipment, such as a field anaesthetic machine, which has made a change from asking for money!

### How much time do you give over to it?

The time commitment has been quite variable; some months as little as 2 or 3 hours, but when the accounts need to be signed off this can require meetings with the accountant and the like. The important thing for me has always been to focus on the fact that this is actually making a real difference to people's lives, so the time has always felt well spent. **Continued on page 2**

## What sort of fundraising skills have you employed in order to raise the funds needed for the WFF UK project?

The key skill turned out to be the ability to make the face to face ask; we were very lucky that we hit the right person from the right organisation at the right time, but we also did some serious preparation and ensured we had the right people in place to be able to deliver operationally.

## More generally, how has your professional fundraising career informed your voluntary fundraising efforts and vice versa?

I started out as a volunteer fundraiser back in the mid-1980's, and my key principle then was the same as it is now as a professional fundraiser; if you don't ask, you don't get. Working as both a voluntary fundraiser and a trustee of a charity does help inform my professional practice, by giving insight into the pressures that many volunteers and potential donors face. For many of those people, volunteering or giving money is not their major activity and I think that my professional behaviour is better for that realisation.

## Now that the WFF project has been completed, what is your next challenge outside of the confines of the "day job"?

I am also involved in two other organisations as a volunteer. The first is the British School of Osteopathy, where I have been a regular patient for the last four of five years. Somehow the School found out that I am a professional fundraiser around 18 months ago and invited me to chair the Fundraising Committee and become a Board member and Trustee, which I do very willingly as a grateful patient. The second is the Worshipful Company of Broderers (an old word for embroiderers), which is one of the smaller City Livery Companies. The Company is about to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the granting of its charter with a year-long fundraising appeal aimed at supporting City Gateway, a youth charity based in Tower Hamlets. I have been a member of the Company since early 2007, and was asked to join the Steering Committee in late 2009 as Chief Fundraiser. So far we have raised over £50k before the official start of the appeal and are planning a number of initiatives to take this total much higher. All I can add is look out for the giant sewing machine at the Lord Mayor's Show in November!

I am very lucky in that I love what I do for a day job and have had some wonderful opportunities as a volunteer to use my professional talents to both benefit others and to develop my skills, as well as learning some new ones. I realise that I have also been very lucky in having the time to give, but would recommend getting involved outside the day job if possible; it really is worth it!

## State of the Market

- Largest number of roles received in first quarter were in the area of corporate fundraising
- Number of major donor and direct marketing roles were also high
- Decrease in number of trust and statutory roles
- Continuing lack of junior roles due to the increase in internships

## Say Hello, Wave Goodbye

After nearly 7 years at the Kage Partnership, we reluctantly say goodbye to Lizzie Tebbs who departs to spend more time with her son. We welcome her replacement, Holly Jenkins, who comes from a media sales background working previously for companies such as Channel 4 and the Big Issue.

## About Us

**For those of you not familiar with the Kage Partnership, we have been recruiting Fundraisers, PR and Marketing professionals to positions at all levels within the not-for-profit sector for the last 13 years.**

**We conduct our business with integrity and courtesy, providing a tailored and effective service to all of our job seeking and recruiting clients.**

**If you would like to discuss any aspect of recruitment please do not hesitate to contact us.**

p.s. The scariest interview question we've ever heard?

"Tell me what you think of the outfit I'm wearing?"