

IN GIVING WE RECEIVE (Winter 2005)

Five loaves and two fish were nothing for feeding 5,000 men. But it was everything the boy had in his possession that day. In responding to a need, we may be challenged to give it our all. But in giving we receive, in abundance. This is Joe's story.

Joe was one of the founding board members of PESI. After medical school, he went to work at a refugee camp in North Thailand. At the end 10 months, he felt called to return and decided to specialize in infectious disease.



When he completed his training in Southern California, the medical school invited him to stay on as faculty. Throughout the 80's, there was no shortage of research funding for HIV work. His was a promising career. His wife too had a good job as an engineer. But even as their first child was starting kindergarten, Joe realized that he had a promise to keep.

In 1989, the world was shocked to learn of the HIV explosion in Thailand. In the spring of 1991, Joe took his family to Chiang Mai. There he helped a Christian NGO mobilize Christians to do health education in schools and factories, develop materials to educate hill tribe minorities in HIV prevention, and provide anonymous testing and counseling for HIV victims and families. When the Thai leadership was able to take over the work, a door opened for Joe to become the local coordinator for an HIV vaccine project jointly sponsored by US and Thai institutions.

For nine years, Thailand was home for Joe and his family. But his father was a widower and aging; he was the only child. So although he did not know what job he could find after a long period abroad, he decided to return to the U.S.

Joe was in for a pleasant surprise. He landed a position with a leading research institution and helps facilitate international collaboration in HIV vaccine development. Today, he travels to different places around the world, including Asia, the flashpoint for the global AIDS epidemic in the coming decade. Joe continues to serve those who are suffering from this deadly disease.

To be there for his neighbors, Joe was willing to relocate his family, learn a different language and adopt a different culture. He gave it his all. But he has enjoyed a rewarding career over 20 years - clinical treatment and research, community education and prevention, vaccine trial and coordination of international projects. Truly, it is in giving that we receive.