



PRESS RELEASE

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vermont Non-Profit Tapped for World Health Organization (WHO) Advisory Panel
Grounds for Health Gains International Recognition

Waterbury, VT (August 1, 2012) – The executive director of the Waterbury-based international non-profit Grounds for Health has been asked to join a Technical Advisory Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO). The invitation is to participate in updating “The Pink Book” which outlines international guidelines for cervical cancer prevention. August Burns, MPH, CM, PA was invited by the WHO to join a panel of world experts based on Grounds for Health’s 16 years of experience creating cervical cancer prevention, screening and training programs in coffee-growing communities.

Cervical cancer affects almost half a million women a year, claiming close to 300,000 lives, 85% of these in the developing world. Though it is preventable, treatable and curable, cervical cancer remains the #1 cause of cancer death for women throughout the developing world, due simply to a lack of access to preventive care. It is estimated that as many as 95% of women in developing countries do not have access to cervical cancer screening.

In addition to participating in weeklong session of meetings at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, Burns was asked to author a chapter in the Pink Book. The chapter on health outreach, education and counseling will draw on Grounds for Health’s proven strengths in incorporating community mobilization as an essential element in creating the kind of prevention programs that continue with community leadership long after development agencies are no longer on the ground.

Dr. Eduardo Franco, Chair of the Department of Oncology at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, one of the invited experts advising WHO on the new guidelines and a new Grounds for Health Board member said, “August spoke eloquently about the single visit approach to prevent cervical cancer in rural communities in countries with a high burden of cervical cancer. At the outset of the WHO meeting, the impression by the experts was that screen-and-treat approaches had been restricted to deluxe research studies conducted in low-income countries by clinicians and epidemiologists from developed countries. The testimonial by August on her organization’s ability to deploy the single-visit strategy in real-world conditions and using local community leadership was a turning point in the discussion. It then became clear to the experts that training healthcare providers and empowering communities in Latin America and Africa is a great example of a sustainable model to prevent cervical cancer in the poorest countries of the world.”

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Created in 1996, Grounds for Health has established community-driven, locally sustainable cervical cancer prevention programs in rural coffee-growing areas. Its success has been made possible thanks to the support from over 200 coffee companies and individuals who seek to end the economic and social burden of losing women in their prime to a preventable disease. The organization's current focus is on training local healthcare professionals in an affordable, replicable and sustainable cervical cancer screening and treatment method called the Single Visit Approach. To date, Grounds for Health has trained more than 250 local doctors and nurses in this same-day screening model, as well as 400 community health promoters. Grounds for Health programs have screened over 37,000 women – close to half of these by locally trained providers who have acquired the skills to carry on this important work in their communities, reaching tens of thousands of women in the future.

Of her WHO appointment, Burns said, “The invitation from the World Health Organization validates the notion that even a small organization can have a big impact. Our coffee supporters have made it possible for Grounds for Health to continually improve its program and now the organization is in a position to share its approach with the global public health community. As a result, remote rural communities are gaining the skills to care for their own and women's lives are being saved.”

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About Grounds for Health

Grounds for Health is a 501(c)(3) organization that establishes sustainable and effective cervical cancer prevention and treatment programs in coffee-growing communities. Founded by a member of the coffee industry, the organization's goal is to decrease the rate of cervical cancer in coffee regions. Grounds for Health was the recipient of the 2011 Sustainability Award from the Specialty Coffee Association of America. It is located in Waterbury, VT. Learn more about Grounds for Health at <http://groundsforhealth.org> or find Grounds for Health on Facebook (<http://facebook.com/groundsforhealth>) and Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/grounds4health>)