



## Low ZIRKLE

A surgeon was in Northern Tanzania at a small hospital, helping with surgeries to replace three broken femurs. All three patients were in their 70s, and because the resources for fracture care were limited, had been consigned to crawl as a means of getting around. Following the procedures, the surgeon walked into the recovery room and witnessed three happy smiles, filled with gratitude. That was a day he could be pretty sure the work was worth it.

The surgeon was Lew Zirkle '62, and the experience in Tanzania was thanks to the SIGN network, which builds orthopedic capacity in developing countries by collaborating with local surgeons to develop training and implants to better serve the poor.

SIGN's founder? Zirkle, himself.

"My passion for correcting at least some of the inequality among people began during my service in the Vietnam War, when it was clear that military patients received much better care than civilian patients," said Zirkle. "Even more, when my work with SIGN first began, I spent one month in Indonesia each year for 10 years. There was one surgeon when we began, and we trained 56 more. But, what they did not have was the infrastructure to support the education being received. So, we had to do more."

Zirkle, who humbly considers himself "just one of 5,000 SIGN surgeons in the world," has given hope to those with little left. Fracture care has been transformed. Care for those suffering from fractures has also been transformed.

"Through SIGN, we donate implants and instruments, and in return, the surgeons send reports to our database, which validates the implants and the surgery, serving as a conduit for education," he explained. "When the number of reports reaches 20 for that surgeon, we send replacement materials automatically."

An incredible 140,000 surgeries have been performed since 1999.

Zirkle credits his strong sense of service—a lesson fostered every day at Davidson College—with driving him to enact change, though he admits heredity has a lot to do with it, too.

"It's not just about feeling empathy," said the college football player who appreciated that Davidson allowed athletes to be scholars first. "It's the drive to change the circumstances that you observe. In addition to that, you must have an innovative, creative sense."

SIGN is growing every day, and Zirkle is always looking for ways to improve.

"We have very innovative implants and very innovative instruments, but now we're looking at the way care is dispensed in developing countries because it is not efficient," said Zirkle. "Our systems of care must get fracture patients to a place where they can be treated promptly. It's a big and expensive step, but it's what's next. We are never done."

Visit [www.signfracturecare.org](http://www.signfracturecare.org) to learn more about the amazing work being done by SIGN surgeons around the world.