

Grand Ronde intern doctors from clinic to Kenya

■ Dr. Kristi Seidel is rapping up her med school residency at her tribe's clinic and is taking her new skills were she says they are needed most — back to Africa.

By Oscar Johnson

For Grand Ronde tribal member, Dr. Kristi Seidel, helping those most in need is as natural as going home. The resident physician-in-training has spent the better part of a decade studying to be a Family Medical Practitioner and most of last month honing her new skills while interning at the Tribe's clinic.

As she nears the end of her residency, her thoughts turn — not to the conventional boons of private practice or the plush positions of corporate run hospitals — but of returning home to help those who need her the most.

But Seidel is not returning to practice medicine in Grand Ronde.

The University of Kansas med school graduate and her husband, Scott, a registered nurse, will return to, Turkana — a remote arid region in northern Kenya where doctors, like running water and electricity, are virtually nonexistent.

"I grew up there and there's just such an overwhelming need that if I stayed in the States it would haunt me," she explains. "If I'm not there, there's virtually no physician there — in an area the size of Rhode Island."

Far from being out of the ordinary, Seidel is merely following in the footsteps of her parents, Karon and Dr. Bob Chapman.

Her mother, the granddaughter of Eva LaChance, shared her husband's desire to be a medical missionary and the family moved to Ethiopia when Seidel was just two-years-old.

She recalls following her father around and helping out as needed in Ethiopia and later in Kenya where the family eventually moved to continue their work. They still live there today.

Thanks to the financial support she got from the Tribe to get a medical degree, Seidel hopes to take this family tradition one step further.

This month she will return to the University of Kansas for the rest of the year to finish her education before spending 18 to 20 months working with Christian Missionary Fellowship to raise local financial support for her work.

The interdenominational group works with churches throughout the world to help coordinate and fund such missions.

Seidel says she plans to draw on her and her family's experience and contacts with Kenyan government and medical officials to accomplish a specific goal.

"My goal is to set up at least four to five main clinics and train people to handle the main things like malaria, cholera and midwifery," she said. "The



ABOVE: Dr. Seidel is flanked by a young patient (left) and her assistant, Nasikae, and nurse, Natir, in front of the rural clinic of Turkana, Kenya where she will return to practice family medicine.



LEFT: During her last week of residency at the Grand Ronde clinic, Dr. Seidel examines patient, Holly Anderson, as the youth's grandmother looks on. Photo by Oscar Johnson

idea is to some how set up a system that supports itself."

Although Seidel is looking forward to getting back to the place she calls home, she says her brief sojourn in Grand Ronde has taught her a lot about her family and where she is from by attending genealogy meetings and talking with fellow members.

She says the Clinic has kept her busy seeing patients on average every 15 to 20 minutes and she has welcomed the chance to learn more about Grand Ronde life and meet new relatives.

"People have been very friendly and open to me. They say 'oh we're cousins,'" says Seidel. She says this is also important to her mother who "pours over every inch of the *Smoke Signals*" issues she receives in Kenya.

Most of all, she has enjoyed getting a glimpse of Grand Ronde culture by attending pow-wows, mocassin making classes and watching the Tribe re-learn the Chinook Wawa language.

"That's what was really special to me, seeing how they maintain the culture. I would have to say it's all about culture — that's where the wealth is," says Seidel. "I'm proud of the culture I come from and to be going back to the culture that needs me."



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