A can do optimism — what a dream, what a team

By Theresa Adae

Dr. Manny Tuffuor

Everytime Manny speaks, he always leaves a thought lingering in the mind of his listener, long after the conversation had ended. Ask him about his favorite project and he'd talk about David Miller, Sr. and the fact that his retired engineering executive from General Electric (GE) has helped change his life for ever in America. He would also talk about Transol in The Netherlands and the Rotary, he would talk about his friend in South Ottawa and the flight attendant who works for KLM in Amsterdam.

Manny's full name is Emmanuel Tuffour, a doctor of internal medicine who lives in Cleveland with his family, who are totally supportive of his efforts and dreams. He was born and raised in Ghana, West Africa and, has been working on a variety of projects, but notably among them is the one he named after his grandmother — Aniwah Medical Center (AMC). The Clinic is a few miles from Kumasi in Ashanti region.

Manny's admiration towards those who have had a positive influence on his life is undaunting.

Let us go back to Africa for a moment to help understand his reasons for naming the clinic after his grandmother. In many African societies, educating women has never been anybody's priority. Traditionally, women's role has been a hair shy of indentured servants. Many men marry not for love but for lives' conveniences. For instance, some men will take a wife simply because they do not want the responsibility of cooking, washing, cleaning their homes or parenting. Others may want additional help on the farm; in which case two or three wives would be ideal. Which explains why women are not acquired any priority in education. Manny's grandmother wanted an education but it was out of the question. She thought hard and came up with a plan that will guarantee her grandchildren an education no matter what gender they might be.

She sacrificed her marriage in order to work and help educate the children of her only daughter.

According to his grandson, the grandmother had an incredible conviction in education that she opted out of her marriage, the security of her family, and traveled hundreds of miles away from her home to trade and educate every grandchild she was to be blessed with by her only daughter.

It was a challenge because Manny's mother had seven daughters and the grandmother had to work really hard to educate every one of them. Today, Manny's seven sisters have among them three businesswomen on two continents, a banker in Toronto, an accountant in Philadelphia and the rest, like Manny, are in the medical field.

In this era of explosive information technology, news about Manny's dream has galvanized many to come to his assistance. He is overwhelmed by the support he has received so far but, most of all Aniwah Clinic is a dream that has come true.

As Manny struggled through his studies in America, he could not forget the medical needs of the people he left behind in Ghana. He wanted to go back and do something about

Mr. David Miller, Sr.
sary and untimely deaths of so many. When he sought help in getting to medical school, his advisor told him to try playing basketball. Little did the advisor know that this black man definitely could not jump.

Through self determination and motivation he earned scholarships, took out loans and entered Case Western University in Ohio. While working at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Cleveland, the director of Media Services, Bill Pinter introduced him to David Miller Sr.

David Miller Sr. and his family have lived a life of putting their pain and needs aside and always coming to the aid of others. This retired GE engineering executive puts in 17 hour days to help people, many he has never met or seen and probably never will. The question he seems to ask himself often is who is in need of assistance and how can he help? Whether the need is in his own backyard, or anywhere USA, in Southeast Asia, Africa, or wherever; he is always ready to help.

He organizes meetings and fund raising, writes letters, makes phone calls, calls on Rotarians here and around the world. He says, "with a million members they do it all, I only rely on the generosity of others." He hardly does anything (I will like to see his phone bill). He uses every avenue at his disposal to solve problems. He understands the problems of people especially in the Third World. He spends sleepless nights trying to find ways to help stranded African students, and does all this privately in his own home. Ask David Miller Sr. about his favorite project and it becomes very clear to you that "Oh just keeping busy" (his favorite phrase) could mean he is involved in projects in the Phillipines, Uganda, background as engineer becomes quite evident. He is meticulous and thorough, very well organized and is at work in their home until very late every night. While others throw money at problems in the Third World, David Miller Sr. uses a different approach; he chooses his projects with one objective in mind. Help the helpless help themselves and complete the task ahead without throwing money at it. He has been very successful.

With Aniawah Medical Center, he says of Manny. "His determination to become a doctor was to go back and build a first rate medical facility in a Third World country. He was not going to rely on government aid or mile long application forms from donor agencies. The bureaucratic red tape was discouraging enough if not a total waste of one's time. This gentleman drew up the plan to build a clinic with his own money, he had the right thought, I am just happy to help." That is David Miller Sr.

As Manny shuttled between Ghana and the U.S., a passenger on one of his trips on a Royal Dutch Airline (KLM) flight to New York needed immediate medical attention. (He always travels with a stethoscope in his pocket.) He volunteered his services and soon made friends with the passenger (patient) and the crew of the airline. One of the flight attendants, Jeanette Eggengor has taken a very keen interest in AMC and with the cooperation of her employer KLM, makes frequent visits to Ghana to see first hand the progress being made. She successfully campaigned hard for three buses from the Centraal Nederland District Bus Company and had them donated to transport patients to the new Clinic. The Dutch embassy in Accra decided to build the Center a warehouse to keep its inventory. Philips (the global industrial conglomerate) sent out specialists to conduct a feasibility study in order to supply guaranteed electricity during major operations.

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As details of his project became known in Amsterdam, dedicated volunteers began spreading the word to those who might be interested in giving him some help. Rotary International stepped in and through the director in charge of the club in Gorinchem, Carl Kamper, a suggestion was made to Transol (An international oil, chemical shipping and real estate company) to consider making a contribution to Aniwah Clinic.

On Transol's 25th anniversary last year, instead of some badly needed rest and relaxation on some sunny island beaches around the equator, the founder, and chairman of the board of Transol, Jan Onderdijk personally made the cash donation to Aniwah Clinic.

Other employees in its German branches as well as the Rotary's system of matching funds kicked in more donations for the project.

Manny's enthusiasm for

Others have donated tropicalized refrigerators at a fraction of their cost to the Clinic. AMC has not waned since he started dreaming of it over a decade ago. "When you have people like David

volunteered to go to Ghana and help with building the Clinic.

The clinic has 50 beds and sees an average of 150 patients a day since it opened its doors almost two years ago. The growing reputation of this clinic has attracted some of the most experienced and knowledgeable professionals in the medical community to render their services and to help train the locals. With the latest in current medical technology, the clinic is fast gaining a reputation for its quality of care. Which must be of great comfort to anyone who visits the area or to those who live there. Everyone pays for services rendered. They perform surgical operations; have a pharmacy, and provisions for x-ray and laboratory services. The facility needs to expand its services in the very near future.

The first ultrasound training center in the country is on course at the clinic. Pathology specimens are sometimes flown into either Amsterdam or the USA for analysis at the Clinic's affiliates. It is a success and now the need to seek outside medical attention by some Africans may reduce.

Left to right: C. Kamper, Onderdijk, Verheyden, Eggengoor & Tuffour
Manny would like to change the attitude of Africans in a positive way. He likes bringing needed hope to a continent with limitless potential by encouraging the young and those willing to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations to pursue their dreams. Currently, Africans with money, and the elite often are flown to the West for medical treatment. They consider their own facilities as of inferior quality because of the shortages, inefficiencies and corruption in the system.

Manny’s dream is to have a first rate medical facility available to everyone. The rich will be offered the conveniences of luxury air conditioned rooms and whatever else would make their stay as comfortable as possible for a price.

The poor who do not live in air conditioned rooms in their homes and want basic care would be charged accordingly. But everyone pays. If you can not afford to pay, you turn to your family as Africans have always done. The family is the pension plan, life insurance, medical insurance, in short they are responsible for each member of the family. It is a fact of life on the continent.

On the drawing board are plans for an eye clinic, a laundry system, chapel, kitchen, a pathology department. A paved road that will lead to the clinic, communication facilities such as telephones are all needed.

In the meantime, he and some friends have developed a bread baking cooperative for the village women. It helps them earn some extra money to help their own families. Maybe it could help educate more women and another grandson like his grandmother’s vision provided some time ago. A lot still needs to be done.

David Miller Sr. is still "staying busy." 17 hours a day doing what he loves to do and spending some time with his grandchildren.

Manny is on the road as always, working to raise the consciousness of Africans and non-Africans to the medical needs of the continent and educating them to support the clinic. He continues to seek interaction for positive endeavors. The government may not always be the answer, People can and do make a difference. A lot still needs to be done. In the future Manny plans to:

- Develop a Kaiser type Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) at the clinic to make health care more affordable to the very poor in the villages who cannot afford to pay.
- Set up an Endowment Fund in the USA to help offset some of the cost for caring for the indigent at Aniawah Clinic.
- Attract volunteer medical personnel to train Village Health Workers or giving of their time and expertise to the clinic.+

Doctors everywhere who desire to visit Ghana and do some work at the hospital may want to contact Manny at the following address:
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American doctors may receive some tax benefits.