

Press Release

Westminster Place Resident Redefines Retirement, Helping To Improve Health Care In Africa And Central Asia

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(EVANSTON, IL) - Dr. J. Robert Buchanan, 82, a new resident at Presbyterian Homes in Evanston, IL, should, by conventional estimate, be retired. He did, in fact, formally retire in 1994 as General Director (CEO) of Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), the oldest and largest of Harvard's affiliated teaching hospitals.

Today Dr. Buchanan devotes the majority of his "retirement" to helping establish Western-quality health care services and health professions education programs in Pakistan, Afghanistan and East Africa. Dr. Buchanan is a founding member of the Board of Trustees of Aga Khan University (AKU) in Karachi, Pakistan. The university is a part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), a group of development agencies working to improve opportunities and living conditions in the poorest parts of Asia and Africa (www.akdn.org). The organization employs more than 60,000 people and has an annual operating budget of \$450 million.

Raised in New Jersey, his parents imparted to him the belief that "To whom much is given, much is expected." A graduate and former dean of Cornell University Medical College, and a one-time member of its board of trustees, he was president of Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago and a professor of medicine at the University of Chicago in the 70's. He and his wife, Dr. Susan Townsend Carver, who died in 2007, were asked to join the Harvard University

Medical Faculty in 1982. They moved to Boston with their two children, and he soon became the General Director of MGH.

While running Massachusetts General Hospital in the early '80s, Dr. Buchanan accepted an invitation to join an international board of trustees for a new university being developed by AKDN. The organization is headed by His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan, spiritual leader of 15 million Shia Ismaili Muslims living in more than 25 countries on four continents.

“The Aga Khan is a visionary who embraces his faith as one of tolerance, compassion and upholding the dignity of man. He is interested in benefiting mankind and the greater Ummah (all of Islam),” says Dr. Buchanan. “And, he believes in the equality of men and women and in their equal education.”

Aga Khan University

Aga Khan University is the first private university in Pakistan. Its medical and nursing schools and 560-bed teaching hospital are situated on a beautiful 84-acre campus. The hospital was accredited in 2006 by the Chicago-based Joint Commission International Accreditation agency, which establishes and monitors international health care standards throughout the world. Since its 1983 inception, Aga Khan University has established other teaching programs in Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, UK and Afghanistan.

The Aga Khan, a Harvard graduate, sought a board of trustees similar to what he had seen there and at other private U.S. universities. Dr. Buchanan, impressed by the Aga Khan's

overarching vision and commitment, says “His Highness believes that people will never be able to come together unless they are better educated and ignorance is diminished. Without quality health care, education and economic development services, conditions will exist for extremist influences to take hold. Many extremists themselves were raised in insecure situations.”

The board of trustees functions largely through committees. “Staff on the ground needs oversight of projects, facilities, human resources, market feasibility. Sometimes our ambitions for a community exceed what it can afford. Any project must have a demonstrated potential to become self-sustaining before we move forward,” says Dr. Buchanan. In East Africa and Central Asia, the trustees plan to participate in developing a complete regional health care network, offering services from preventive through the most sophisticated clinical care available.

AKU extends health services to the Pakistani community, including off-campus primary care facilities, home care and other allied health services. Dr. Buchanan is particularly proud of the university’s 200 clinical labs, distributed throughout Pakistan, which provide quality data to doctors. Another important improvement he cites is the establishment of safe, ethical pharmacies.

Bringing Better Health Care To East Africa

Recently, Dr. Buchanan brought his considerable experience to the upgrading of a 200-bed hospital in Nairobi, a part of AKDN and originally established by the Aga Khan’s grandfather. “The plan is to make it a major teaching hospital that meets high Western standards with all modalities of general and specialty care. It will be a teaching site for nursing, medicine

and other health professions,” says Dr. Buchanan. “We expect that the enlarged and improved hospital, in addition to its service to the local community, will serve as the hub of a referral system network in East Africa. It will also be the location of the university’s health education programs in the region, including continuing education for practicing health care providers.”

Dr. Buchanan continued “The board also plans to establish a major biomedical research base in Nairobi. A good university must have research. A good faculty needs to be well-informed by research.”

“We recently made \$8 million worth of general improvements to the Aga Khan hospital in Nairobi. Currently, a \$46 million addition is being developed that will house, among other services, linear accelerators for cancer treatment and sophisticated surgical theatres,” says Dr. Buchanan. Post-graduate medical education (internships, residencies) has been established in major clinical disciplines including family medicine in Nairobi.

Dr. Buchanan says “Like Daniel Burnham, the Aga Khan believes in making no small plans. You need a larger vision and strategy in order to galvanize interest and support. There will be initial momentum and then expected plateaus along the way.” He keeps in mind a simple piece of wisdom offered by a social worker he met during his residency who had observed his occasional impatience with the speed of various projects. She told him “Remember, important goals are often reached through successive approximations.”

“I chose to devote the majority of my time to Aga Khan University because I wanted to contribute where I could do so most significantly. My work there embodies my two areas of professional engagement – health professions education and health services delivery. And it serves my interest in education in general. The board has established the AKU Institute for Educational Development to improve teacher education in the developing world. I am enthusiastic about participating in the establishment of a Faculty of Arts and Sciences to add liberal arts education on two, new 1000-acre campuses - one in the desert outside of Karachi and the other in Arusha, Tanzania,” he explained.

What does Dr. Buchanan want people to know from his 25-plus years working with the Aga Khan Development Network? “People need to appreciate that most Muslims are much like you and me—not radical in their beliefs or practices. The AKDN represents a centrist organization in ethics, values, commitment to personal freedom and dignity for both genders. It has been an honor to be a part of its work.”

Recently re-elected to a new three-year board term, Dr. Buchanan is not thinking about retirement—maybe, he says, in 2012 when he’s 84.

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About Westminster Place

Westminster Place, a non-sectarian member of Presbyterian Homes, is a continuing care retirement community in Evanston, IL. It offers independent living in apartments, cottages and

townhouses, assisted living, rehabilitative services, health care and memory care for more than 500 residents on a 40-acre campus.

About Presbyterian Homes

Founded in 1904, Presbyterian Homes is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization with a national reputation for creating extraordinary retirement communities. Presbyterian Homes serves older adults through its residential and healthcare programs on campuses in Evanston, Lake Forest, Arlington Heights and Chicago. The organization is accredited by the CARF/CCAC, the nation's only accrediting body for retirement communities.

Presbyterian Homes' mission also provides a significant charitable component. Last year, the organization spent more than \$7 million in benevolent programs, serving more than 300 older adults with limited financial means. Among these programs is the Neighborhood Homes Without Walls program in Lake County, providing subsidized living or rental assistance to individuals with limited financial resources.