

Wilmette Doctor has traveled the globe with treatment

BY KARIE ANGELL LUC Contributor

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Without the suggestion of a cliché, it could be said that Dr. Stuart Sondheimer of **Wilmette** is a man of vision. Yes, he is a surgeon and ophthalmologist, but Sondheimer, who grew up in Glencoe and Evanston, says he's driven by a passion to serve others. With several office locations on the North Shore (Skokie, Park Ridge and Deerfield), Dr. Sondheimer, a 1970 New Trier H.S. graduate, is grateful for American medicine, especially after having traveled two years ago to Vietnam and last year to the Honduras to treat patients there for typically routine procedures. Some of those patients might have gone blind without Dr. Sondheimer's intervention. He and his wife Bonnie Lucas have two grandchildren and have blended their families. Their children are Stacey Fields of Chicago, Dana Knuth of Northbrook, Peter Lucas, Steven and Scott Sondheimer and Melissa Sondheimer, all of Chicago. We caught up with the **doctor** before he was interviewed May 8 during a taping of the Skokie cable television program "Contempo Show" with host Roberta Markbreit. Q. What's it like to be a local neighbor in **Wilmette**?

A. Wonderful. It's beautiful, quiet, peaceful, good schools, nice neighbors. Close to my offices.

Q. What are some of the trends in surgical eye treatments?

A. There are tremendous breakthroughs in our ability to diagnose and treat medical diseases. We have instruments that are breathtaking with what they can accomplish. We've got the ocular coherence tomography machine which can look at the retina in amazing detail and find out what's wrong with people and guide us in fixing things. With cataract surgery, we can now treat people so they don't need glasses. We can treat astigmatism and the need for glasses to read in the distance. And with LASIK, we can make it so people don't need glasses at all. Diabetics can be helped with controlling their diabetic eye disease. People with thyroid eye disease can be treated. We can help many people with problems such as reading or needing glasses or contact lenses.

Q. This must be exciting for you, no?

A. There are wonderful things that are changing. It's been changing the whole time I've been practicing.

Q. What did you do on your recent travels?

A. I made two trips abroad. I went to Vietnam and I went to Honduras. I did surgery on people who otherwise would be blind. And those were amazing experiences. Utterly unbelievable. We went to Wei (Vietnam) and gave lectures to the **doctors**, did surgeries.

Q. What is the power of one person?

A. Actually, there is a whole world behind us. The companies give us the supplies. There are organizations that connect the first world **doctors** with the third world **doctors**. And then, they've got their whole infrastructures and we have ours so it's a wonderful thing. We (**doctors**) become great friends. You get to see places you would never see. You make friends all over the world that you would never meet. It's utterly extraordinary.

Q. Are miracles made by philanthropic hands?

A. They are miracles. They're absolute miracles. Every day, where people were blind and now they can see. And we take it for granted having these miracles, having this first class health care. Other places don't have it.

Q. Are you grateful?

A. I am so privileged. I'm privileged in everything. ~.

Dr. Stuart Sondheimer is a surgeon and ophthalmologist who lives in **Wilmette** and grew up in both Glencoe and Evanston. Karie Angell Luc—for Sun-Times Media

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