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Steven J. Meyer, MD, FAAOS, receives American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons' Humanitarian Award

ROSEMONT, Ill. (March 30, 2020)—The [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](https://www.aaos.org) (AAOS) presented its 2020 Humanitarian Award to Steven J. Meyer, MD, FAAOS, of Dakota Dunes, S.D.

The Humanitarian Award honors members of the Academy who have distinguished themselves through outstanding musculoskeletal-related humanitarian activities in the United States or abroad. Dr. Meyer was recognized for providing health care and human services to the underserved in Tanzania for more than 20 years.

Dr. Meyer's work in Tanzania began in 1996 when he and his wife traveled there on a three-week mission with their church. After witnessing the country's profound poverty and lack of health care and education, they felt compelled to act. Within six months of their return to the United States they established Siouxland Tanzania Educational Medical Ministries (STEMM). The nonprofit organization is dedicated to bringing medical care and educational opportunities to the East African nation.

Initially, STEMM's goal was for Dr. Meyer to travel once a year to Tanzania with medical teams to train the country's eight orthopaedic surgeons. Today, the country has nearly 40 orthopaedic surgeons and Dr. Meyer makes several trips each year to Tanzania to provide much needed surgical care that otherwise would not be available. A fellowship-trained pediatric orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Meyer has operated on hundreds of Tanzanian children with a multitude of bone and joint deformities. He also performed the first total hip replacement in the country in 2003 and the first total knee replacement in 2004. Overall, more than 1,000 general and orthopaedic surgeries have been completed in Tanzania since STEMM's inception.

"We have prioritized teaching at every opportunity and introduced many new surgical techniques. Our introduction and advancement of joint arthroplasty, in collaboration with Lawrence D. Dorr, MD, and Operation Walk, has affected hundreds of individuals and their families in Tanzania," said Dr. Meyer. "With the help of STEMM, we've been able to provide orthopaedic care that betters everyday quality of health as well as unforeseen trauma."

Motor vehicle accidents and neglected trauma are the major causes of death in East Africa, according to Dr. Meyer who has witnessed both firsthand. In May 2017, STEMM members happened upon a tragic bus accident in Arusha, Tanzania that killed 35 school children. "Dr. Meyer's STEMM team was three cars behind the bus at the time of the accident and was able to pull three children from the bus who were still alive," said his colleague Neil P. Sheth, MD, FAAOS.

Collectively, the three children sustained more than 25 fractures. Through Dr. Meyer's efforts, the children were transported to Mercy Hospital in Sioux City, Iowa, where he and his partners from the

Center for Neurological and Orthopedic Sciences (CNOS) were able to address their life- and limb-threatening injuries. Today, all three of the children are back in Tanzania and doing well.

Bridging Beyond Musculoskeletal Care

Dr. Meyer continually demonstrates his commitment to families and communities in Tanzania. Over the years, STEMM has improved the country's infrastructure, building roads, bridges, classrooms, teacher housing, and a birthing center. In 2012, it built a fully staffed 50-child orphanage and the organization feeds 5,000 kids from the local village lunch every day. Through mentoring and scholarships, STEMM has helped 10,000 kids attend high school and university. "These were kids who were herding goats and living in mud huts and now some of them are attending schools like Harvard and NYU," he said.

Dr. Meyer is deeply gratified by what STEMM has been able to accomplish over the years and looks forward to future initiatives. The organization is currently involved in a collaboration to develop an institute of orthopaedic surgery in northern Tanzania that would provide world-class orthopaedic care for 20 million people.

"There's a lot more work to do," said Dr. Meyer, who has completed more than 50 trips to Tanzania. "I'm looking forward with great excitement to the next 50."

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About the AAOS

With more than 39,000 members, the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) is the world's largest medical association of musculoskeletal specialists. The AAOS is the trusted leader in advancing musculoskeletal health. It provides the highest quality, most comprehensive education to help orthopaedic surgeons and allied health professionals at every career level best treat patients in their daily practices. The AAOS is the source for information on bone and joint conditions, treatments and related musculoskeletal health care issues and it leads the health care discussion on advancing quality.

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