The earliest memory Delight Wing, M.D.’75, has of her husband, Jack Long, M.D.’75, was seeing him enter Hall A, the College of Medicine’s main lecture hall, in pink bellbottoms on the first day of medical school in 1971. The first conversation with him that she recalls was at an orientation event, where he talked passionately about rugby, a sport that bored her at the time. It may have been one of the few topics they weren’t immediately in sync on.

Long, who noticed Wing in Carpenter Auditorium on that opening day, remembers their first substantive talk late one night in the anatomy lab — Wing asked for help moving her cadaver. So, in a small way, began a collaboration that has been the hallmark of the couple’s life together for 40 years, years that have found them working at a South Burlington pediatrics practice for more than three decades, serving as UVM advisers for the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Program, and building deep relationships with groups working to improve health care in Haiti.

In addition to the abundant contributions the couple has made to the pediatrics field at home and in Haiti, part of their legacy is how many students and colleagues they have inspired — and how profoundly.

In recognition of their work, Wing and Long, UVM clinical associate professors of pediatrics who live in Jericho, Vt., were among five physicians honored with the 2015 Service to Medicine and Community Award at the College’s Medical Reunion in June.

“We are happy to provide one example of how service can be compatible with a traditional medical practice and raising a family,” Long says.

That the couple could make those facets of their lives compatible is a lesson in compassion, commitment — and grit.

Wing grew up in Littleton, N.H., with a best friend whose father was a general practitioner. She and her friend spent a lot of time after hours in the doctor’s office, counting tongue depressors and doing other tasks. She knew by fifth grade that she wanted to pursue medicine in some way. That goal was reinforced by volunteering in her local hospital and attending summer camps in biochemistry, before attending Stanford University.

“I had the opportunity to experience the scope of the human interactions special to the medical field and the excitement of the science involved,” Wing says.

She briefly considered a teaching career. “But I realized that I most enjoyed the more intimate, one-on-one relationships and that I prefer learning and applying science to teaching it.”

Long, born in Washington, D.C., grew up in a military family and lived in states all over the country. During most
of his undergraduate years at UMass Amherst, he envisioned a career in oceanography. But a Life magazine article on a family physician captured his interest.

“I decided after my junior year that I was more interested in a career which would bring me into contact with people and offer the opportunity to be of service while satisfying my interest in science,” Long says.

At the College of Medicine they were encouraged by the late Charles Houston, M.D., in the College’s former Community Medicine Department, to pursue opportunities to help underserved people in other countries. Former College faculty member Renee Bergner, M.D., and her husband, Arthur, M.D., introduced them to Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Deschapelles, Haiti, and were role models for aiding the poor while maintaining a medical practice.

“Most people go into medicine with the idea of helping people in need. That was the primary motivation behind it for us, coupled with an interest in the wider world,” Long says of their decision to work in Haiti.

For nearly 30 years, Wing and Long volunteered at Hospital Albert Schweitzer. They went annually for a few weeks at a time with their two sons when the boys were still at home. Since they retired from their practice in 2012, they have made significant contributions in Haiti: developing a neonatal resuscitation course at various sites and creating a system for ongoing monitoring and education of staff.

“We have seen dramatic cases of children in advanced stages of HIV and tuberculosis combined and looking literally at death’s door. Seeing them later, they’re happy, healthy, thriving adolescents,” Long says.

That kind of success, and close work and social connections with colleagues, have sparked them to return each year.

In their South Burlington practice, “The bulk of our work was office-based healthy children,” Wing says. “As much as we loved our work in primary care in Vermont, our work in Haiti has afforded us the opportunity to use more of the ‘doctoring skills’ we learned in medical school and training — procedures and solving diagnostic dilemmas.”

Their doctoring skills and Haiti experience have motivated many medical students. Wing and Long mentored when they were UVM advisers for the Schweitzer Fellows program.

“They were always so idealistic and altruistic,” recalls Little, professor of family medicine at the College. “They have reminded me that clinical medicine can find meaningful, sustained ways to give back to their community, our kids would be lacking in resources.

Without a common understanding and language, it requires more direct teaching when we’re working on a new project or program. The understanding we would have here (in the United States) that we could proceed in a certain way isn’t a given in this setting. Realizing a common goal and a common approach to that goal takes a lot more effort and time, so the scope of the project is much larger, and the time it takes to get from A to B takes much longer,” Wing says.

Despite the time to get from A to B, the couple has made significant contributions in Haiti: developing a manual of protocols to help standardize acute and chronic pediatric care, teaching an imaging course at various sites and creating a system for ongoing monitoring and education of staff.

“We realized by not living in a more diverse community, our kids would be lacking in social and language connections with colleagues, have sparked them to return each year.

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