

# ONBOARD

CANVASBACK MISSIONS | FALL 2023



# CHARTING NEW HORIZONS

There are big things happening at Canvasback and I am so glad that you will get to hear about all of it in this OnBoard magazine! Our Gynecology and Orthopedics Super Teams have been unwavering in their commitment to the people of the Marshall Islands. Their dedication to healing and restoring lives



is truly remarkable. Every patient's journey has its share of challenges, but the resilience of our patients and our Super Teams is a constant source of inspiration.

Speaking of challenges; in mission work, change is always inevitable, and our Wellness Center has recently seen a change in leadership. We hate to see them go but as Tanner and Kristin set sail for new horizons, we express our deepest gratitude for their years of dedication.

Their legacy will forever be part of Canvasback's mission. And as our new directors Rick and Lauren, come aboard; we welcome them with open hearts and eager anticipation. Together, we'll chart a course toward greater wellness for the island nations!

It is such a blessing to see God's unfolding plan in the islands and am grateful for you, our donors, volunteers and staff whose dedication have made this 43-year work possible. Together, your partnership with Canvasback has helped to bring much hope and healing to so many people. Let's keep moving forward, creating ripples of change, one life at a time.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey!

Fair winds and following seas,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jacquie Spence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J".

Jacquie Spence

Vice-President, Canvasback Missions  
Design by Sterling Spence





## CHAMPIONING WOMEN'S HEALTH

In March, 2020, COVID closed the borders and our mission to provide vital healthcare to the women of the Marshall Islands came to a screeching halt. Despite facing unexpected delays, we have triumphantly returned after three long years.

Our recent mission has yielded incredible results. We saw over 570 patients, read 484 PAP smears and 71 biopsies, took 131 ultrasounds, and performed 38 surgeries.

The key to our success? Devoted volunteers who went above and beyond to support these women, many of whom had never received gynecological care before. Twelve lives may have been saved thanks to timely surgeries prompted by pap smear results.

Our Pathology team, featuring Dr. Lauren Hammock, Mark Endicott, and Bess Cox, played a pivotal role by ensuring rapid diagnostic results, eliminating potential surgery delays.

Bess Cox's unwavering commitment shines as she overcame equipment challenges and utilized innovative techniques to process tissue samples.

Now, we need your support to sustain and expand these critical missions. Your donation will help us acquire new equipment, secure supplies, and continue to provide healthcare to those in need. Your contribution is a lifeline for the women of the Marshall Islands. Join us in making a life-changing impact today. Donate now to empower these lifesaving missions and give hope to those who depend on us.





# OUR HEALTHCARE HEROES!

As the Smith family bids farewell to the Canvasback Wellness Center, we're reflecting on their remarkable journey, dedication, and transformative impact on the Marshall Islands!

In 2015, Tanner and Kristin brought their family to Majuro to help guide Canvasback's work to reverse the epidemic of type II diabetes and other NCDs. Both had experience as RN's working the U.S. Hospital system, but felt that they could leverage their expertise to address even larger healthcare issues.

When they first arrived, the RMI was beginning to tackle the diabetes problem, with the establishment of the NCD coalition and various NGOs working on different aspects of health. The hospital had initiated a diabetes clinic, marking the early stages of addressing this critical issue.

Over the years, Tanner and Kristin accomplished a remarkable array of initiatives, including publishing articles on child health and nutrition, creating the first PE curriculum for kindergarteners to 8th graders, and spearheading local



city ordinances on health. They managed over 10 grants and the Wellness Center became the country focal point for the "Ending Childhood Obesity" campaign. The Wellness Center, under their leadership, became certified to teach Prediabetes programs via the CDC, and they played a pivotal role in establishing a national "canteen policy" for school lunch programs.



The Canvasback Wellness Center staff also flourished under their guidance. They initiated home gardens for over 100 families, expanded programs to three outer islands, and provided food handler training to kitchen staff. Notably, they developed Child Protection policies, upgraded kitchen services, established greenhouses, and launched multiple walking clubs.



Their legacy extends beyond statistics and accomplishments. Tanner and Kristin Smith have left a legacy of compassion, dedication, and positive change in the Marshall Islands. As they bid farewell to the Canvasback Wellness Center, we remain overwhelmingly grateful for their unwavering commitment to health and wellness!





# A JOURNEY OF HEALING AND FAITH

As the Smiths leave Majuro, we are thrilled to welcome our new Wellness Center Directors, Rick and Lauren Weigel to the Canvasback family.

Lauren's connection with the mission began in 1999 when she stumbled upon an article about Canvasback Missions. Intrigued by the opportunity to combine her nursing skills and her love for the sea, she reached out to join a mission to Kosrae, Micronesia, as a team coordinator.

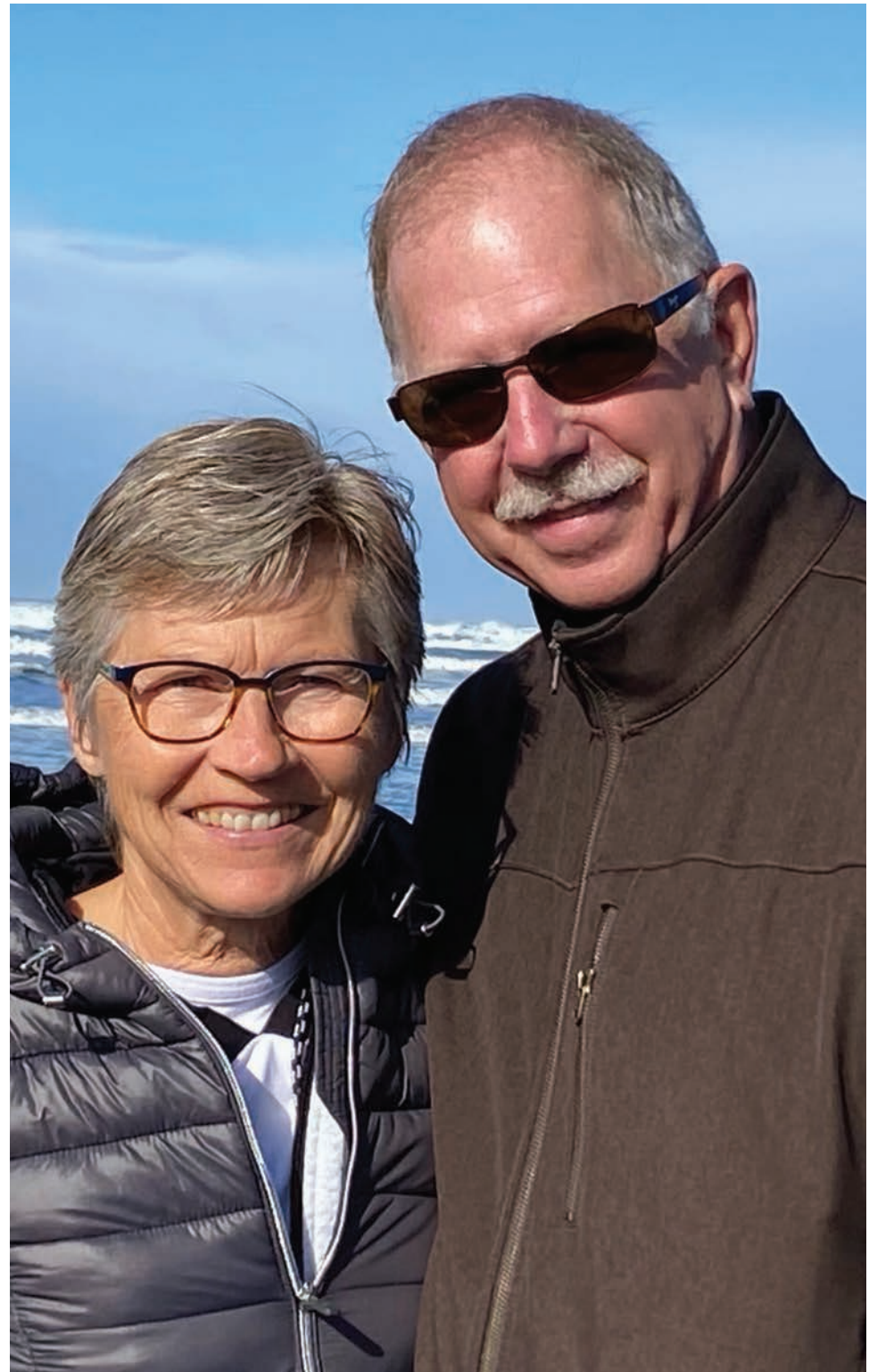
Luckily for us, Lauren fell in love with the work and continued to join us on many more missions, from Yap to Chuuk, Pohnpei to Kosrae, and the Marshall Islands. Through her works, she felt she saw God's hand guiding the teams as they changed lives.

After her impactful years with Canvasback, Lauren returned to her career in Western healthcare, but always felt that her time in the islands was a pivotal part of her professional journey.

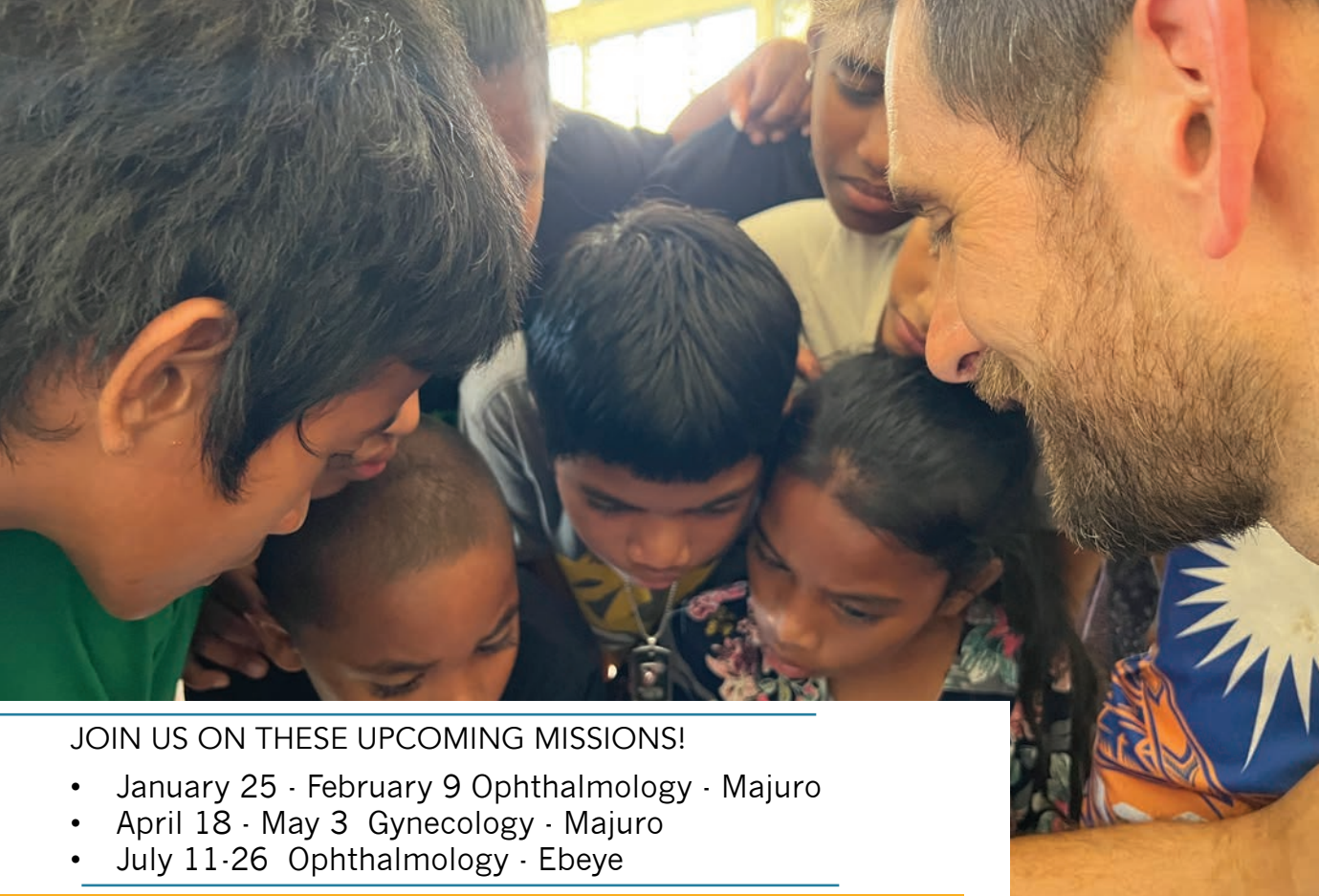
What inspired her to return to Canvasback? Rick, her husband, was influenced by Lauren's stories of the islands and the tremendous needs she shared. They both recognized the abundance of resources in the developed world and felt called to give back.

After retiring, their journey as a couple took them cruising, hiking, and exploring, enjoying a fulfilling family life with grandchildren, but when the opportunity arose to serve as Directors in Majuro, they felt it was a divine calling. Their decision was further affirmed by their faith that God has orchestrated this path for them.

Their journey is one of gratitude, faith, and surrender to the calling of sharing God's love through a healing ministry. It is a privilege to have them as part of the Canvasback family, bringing their wealth of experience, compassion, and unwavering faith to the Majuro Wellness Center. We look forward to the positive impact they will make in the years to come!







## JOIN US ON THESE UPCOMING MISSIONS!

- January 25 - February 9 Ophthalmology - Majuro
- April 18 - May 3 Gynecology - Majuro
- July 11-26 Ophthalmology - Ebeye

## MOBILITY IN THE MARSHALLS

After three long years of closed borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Marshall Islands finally saw the return of Canvasback Missions' volunteer medical teams. For those who have dreamt of making a meaningful impact on this remote Pacific nation, the opportunity is here to join us on an upcoming team!

Early this year we brought Dr. Del Schutte and an amazing orthopedic team to Majuro. Dr. Schutte last visited the Marshall Islands on a medical mission in 1990, but his passion for helping those in need brought him back along with a dedicated team including Dr. Izabela Barnes, who went above and beyond to secure anesthesia supplies and equipment. Drs. Derek Johnson and Spencer Smith rounded out the team and saw as many patients as possible.

The challenges faced by the Majuro hospital are immense, with the COVID-19

pandemic taking a toll on their equipment. The c-arm and x-ray machines were unreliable, making it difficult to provide the necessary care. However, the Canvasback Missions team swiftly stepped in to bridge the gap.

In a single week, this remarkable team accomplished an astounding 138 exams, 31 clinic procedures, and nine surgeries. Moreover, they identified 24 patients in need of surgical procedures, paving the way for the next orthopedic mission.

This is where you come in. Joining Canvasback Missions on their volunteer medical teams means becoming a part of a life-changing journey. It's an opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of the Marshallese people, who desperately need the expertise and care that you can provide.

So, if you're seeking a meaningful adventure and a chance to give back to the world, consider joining Canvasback Missions. Your skills and compassion can make a difference!

## EMPOWER HOPE: PARTNERING WITH CANVASBACK MISSIONS TODAY!

Your financial partnership will allow Canvasback Missions to continue the life-changing work being done for the people of Micronesia. Your gifts make a real impact in many so ways!

As we approach December 31, please consider a special end-of-the-year gift that can take many forms: credit cards, checks, precious metals, stocks, real-estate and even vehicles in good working condition. As the pages of OnBoard have testified, your gifts change lives.

If you haven't joined the Mission, do it today and become a life-changer.



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