



Julie Gluck Laifer '75

Physician

Julie Gluck Laifer's journey to her current job at the Seton's Women's Center, a free obstetrics-gynecology clinic in Bridgeport, Connecticut, was a winding one. On her acceptance to college by Cornell University, Julie decided to defer for a year and travel to Israel. There she spent six months on a kibbutz, a communal environment that recalled her formative elementary school years at MCS. Julie worked in a chair factory and picked fruits in exchange for the food she needed. Everyone was on equal ground. Julie attests to doing and feeling her best in such circumstances.

After her freshman year at Cornell, that yearning for the experience of community surfaced again. Julie took her sophomore year at Tel Aviv University, where she developed the interest in women and infant health care that eventually became her life's work. After she graduated from college, Julie studied in the Public Health of Developing Nations department of the University of California Los Angeles, where she focused on international maternal and child health. While there, she protested against aid to Nicaraguan Contras and participated in the sit-ins that successfully convinced the University of California Regents to divest from South Africa. Nelson Mandela's subsequent visit to Los Angeles to thank the groups involved in the protest helped Julie settle on her "big life plan"—to set up clinics overseas.

In medical school at the University of Vermont, Julie specialized in OB/GYN

prenatal care. During her residency at Magee Women's Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, life plans changed for a while, as Julie married, had four children, and moved to Bridgeport. She had come to believe that the United States has a two-class health care system, however, and she made a commitment to addressing that inequity.

Seton's Women's Center opens its doors every day to the community, which includes many undocumented immigrant families, and offers free care and services. Julie also travels abroad every year with different organizations to share her medical expertise. She has volunteered in Peru and Sri Lanka and provided relief to tsunami victims in the Tamil region of India. Recently, Julie traveled to Ballenita, Ecuador, with Builders Beyond Borders (BBB). BBB organizes groups of high school students and adult mentors to participate in humanitarian projects overseas; students must raise a significant portion of the trip's cost, and learn building skills. In Ecuador, Julie and her group worked hard to build a school, while gaining invaluable life skills. In the future, Physician's Research Network Relief International will take her to Liberia.

Each of Julie's carefully considered steps has been fueled by her value of community and has resulted in meaningful change for herself and others. She is deeply passionate about the politics of medicine and views her medical skill as a vehicle to help even the playing field and increase access to quality health care. Julie believes that "MCS shapes you deep inside;" in retrospect, it was her most profound and influential life experience.

I think of MCS every day. I love what I do, and it has direct ties to MCS. When I think of the people I met there I always feel like I have a home—a family—at MCS and with the friends that went there too.

Erika Gibson '86
Veterinarian