



Courtesy photo

**Dr. Jamer Chamberlain, of Maryland Primary Care Physicians in Arnold, recently traveled to India to aid tsunami victims. Here he examines a young Indian girl affected by the tsunami. He treated about 100 patients a day.**

## **Arnold doctor back home from tsunami relief work**

**By ELIZABETH LEIS  
The Capital**

It was faith that led Jamer Chamberlain to work in India 25 years ago, and it was faith that led him back.

Dr. Chamberlain, now a Maryland Primary Care physician who practices in Arnold and Stevensville, first went to India in 1980 before attending medical school at University of Maryland, Baltimore. At the time, he was there as an untrained volunteer to help people with leprosy.

When the Dec. 26 tsunami ravaged sections of south Asia, Dr. Chamberlain began asking some of his Jesuit contacts if there was a way to go back and help.

By mid-January, he found himself part of a traveling medical team with the Catholic Health Association of India, working in villages along the southwest coast.

The trip resulted in not only a renewal of his Catholic beliefs — he is a member of St. Andrew by the Bay Catholic Church — but also a desire to help one village where *dalits*, considered the untouchable class, live hand to mouth.

When the tsunami flooded the fields and killed their goats, the villagers were left with nothing.

The village leader, who was giving Dr. Chamberlain a tour, told the doctor through a translator, "that he wished the next tsunami would take us all because we have nothing to live for."

CHAI's plan to rebuild the village will take three years and \$400,000. The problem Dr. Chamberlain is running into is that for many, the sympathy that created so many offers of money has been tapped out.

"I get a sense people are not ready to reach into their pockets again," he said.

While uncomfortable with organizing a relief group or publicizing his trip, Dr. Chamberlain said he also wants to testify to what he has seen.

Each day, from dusk to dawn, his team treated both physical and psychological wounds. A primary care physician for 15 years, Dr. Chamberlain said he felt more equipped in handling respiratory and gastronomical illnesses than acute trauma care.

"It's just being there, just laying on the hands," he said. "The nuns would say, just put your stethoscope there, or lay your hand there. You got the sense that was enough sometimes."

The Rev. Joe Lacey, the pastor at St. Alphonsus Catholic Church in Woodstock, who met Dr. Chamberlain in India in 1980, said even then, his skills were exemplary.

"As a young kid he was very impressive and dismissive of his abilities and his goodness," the Rev. Lacey said. "I really encourage him — it's a heck of a thing in the middle of life to say, 'hey, I'm going to go work with tsunami victims,' but I think it's a neat thing."

Donald Buntz, the chief executive officer of Maryland Primary Care Physicians, said sending Dr. Chamberlain was an easy choice, and the business additionally donated a substantial amount to help.

"To send one of our own to help, it's more personal, and we knew how skilled he was," Mr. Buntz said. "It put a face on it, a direct link to it."

Since returning to his life here, which includes raising three daughters ages 16, 14 and 10, Dr. Chamberlain said he has tried to promote living in a way that's more connected to his core values.

There's a journal his wife gave him, where one quote from Mahatma Gandhi sticks out: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

"I realized the way we live here is sort of disconnected and so over-scheduled ... by definition, it makes us unbalanced and un-harmonious," Dr. Chamberlain said. "(The trip) has had a ripple effect."

*To make a donation to CHAI, via the Salt Street Foundation send checks to The Salt Street Foundation, PO Box 9763, Arnold, MD 21012 or contact Jamer Chamberlain at [info@saltstreetfoundation.org](mailto:info@saltstreetfoundation.org)*

By J. Henson \_ The Capital

**Closer to home, Dr. Chamberlain examines Tucker Wilson, 2, of Arnold, at Maryland Primary Care Physicians. The best part of being a doctor is "connecting with people," he says.**

