In His Late 60s, This Man Quit His Job So He Could Fight AIDS Abroad

Peace Corps Response volunteer Brian Sway's work just earned him a prestigious award.

August 12, 2019 By Caroline Tien

Peace Corps Response volunteer Brian Sway received the Benjamin Franklin Award for Public Diplomacy, one of the highest honors an American citizen can receive, for his work to increase the efficiency of 350 South African clinics, many of which focused on fighting HIV.

Sway was assigned the job via the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Peace Corps Response, a program that sends professionals abroad to offer targeted assistance and create lasting change.

When Sway, a solutions architect in his 60s from Davis, California, arrived in Pretoria, South Africa, in November, he found that local HIV clinics were relying on obsolete patient records-storage systems that rendered wait times long, clients frustrated and treatment inadequate. More often than not, Sway told The Sacramento Bee, it took providers more than three hours to find a single file.

Over several months, Sway, assisted by a team of locals, implemented an entirely new storage system, considering the needs of both patients and providers at every step along the way. The new system was an instant success, so much so that it was rolled out in hundreds more clinics throughout the country, as well as the South African National Department of Health. Now, providers can expect to find a patient file in under five minutes, and patient flow and satisfaction have improved accordingly.

The results were dramatic enough to attract the attention of the American government. On June 5, the Department of State presented Sway with the Franklin Award, which recognizes individuals, schools, foundations, associations and corporations that actively contribute to advancing America's ideals around the globe through public diplomacy.

But according to The Sacramento Bee, Sway said the award pales in comparison to the joy of having effected meaningful change.

In a Peace Corps press release about his accomplishments, he said, "I like to think I'm making a contribution in some small way, getting to meet and work with wonderful people, and I can't wait

to go to my Peace Corps Response job every day.”

For now, he continues to bring “all of the skills I’ve developed over my personal and professional life” to bear in the improvement of the medical prospects of South Africans living with HIV/AIDS.

To read a roundup of POZ articles about this nation, click #South Africa.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/late-60s-man-quit-job-fight-aids-abroad