

# Saddle River couple spread care, comfort in Kenya

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By **EVONNE COUTROS**  
**STAFF WRITER**

When pediatrician Mark J. Wade made his first journey to Kenya seven years ago, his plan was to do missionary work, not to provide health care.

"It was for the purpose of preaching the Gospel - period," Wade said of the trip.

But Wade, 50, of Saddle River, says he realized he could offer both medical and spiritual help to people in the East African nation by becoming a medical missionary.

"With just a little bit of help, we could change the lives of hundreds of thousands of people," said Wade, who made that first trip to Kenya with his pastor, Eric Butler, of the non-denominational True Vine Christian Center church in Englewood.

Afterward, Wade decided that by starting a foundation he could help curb the malaria, pneumonia, sexually transmitted diseases, and meningitis that plague the country of nearly 30 million people.

So four years ago, Wade and his wife, Mayra Suero-Wade, a dentist, formed Arise and Walk Ministries Foundation.

"When Mayra and I started this foundation, we took \$25,000 of our savings - our children's college money - to start it," Wade said. "We have given away, to churches for missions work, over \$75,000 and sent or supported medical supplies that ... for value would be close to a million dollars."

The foundation has focused on two Kenyan cities, one of which is the base for Wade's missionary activities.

"The host church was in the city of Nakuru and now we - Arise and Walk as part of U.S. church medical missions - go to Nakuru every time," Wade said. The church medical missions also do work in Eldoret, which Wade said is "a six-hour rugged drive away."

"There are pockets of wealth, but by far the country is poor by American standards," Wade said of Kenya.

The biggest struggle is to provide clean water, Wade said. He explained that something as basic as water purification can eliminate some of the most threatening diseases.

In addition to the foundation's efforts, Wade, along with other doctors, has returned to Kenya to offer free medical care.

"As part of the church medical missions groups, we've treated more than 25,000 patients over seven years," Wade said. "We've worked with a team of about a dozen different doctors with specialties from internal medicine and obstetrics and gynecology to anesthesiology and emergency medicine."

Wes Broomfield, associate pastor of True Vine, praised the medical efforts of the Wades and their foundation.

"It has done so much for so many people," Broomfield said. "We go for two weeks, and all the work is gratis. Mark has been the main contact for all the doctors that have come."

Wade and his wife run Wade Healthcare Systems, a physician-owned and operated health-care delivery and consulting company.



▲ Dr. Mark J. Wade on a medical mission to Kenya. Wade and his wife, Dr. Mayra Suero-Wade, created Arise and Walk Ministries Foundation.

"I always wanted to be a doctor," Wade said. "I always had a God-given gift of understanding the sciences and math."

The second of five children, Wade never knew he was a poor kid while growing up in Washington, D.C.

"We were so loved that we didn't realize we were poor," Wade said. "We qualified for welfare but never went on it, because my parents taught us that we take care of ourselves. They promoted education."

Wade was senior class president in high school and a straight-A student. "For one main reason," Wade said. "It made my mother smile."

His interest in medicine was heightened when, at age 12, he was diagnosed with diabetes.

"In interacting with children and teenagers, if they have to even take a pill, I can tell them that I understand what they are talking about because I've been there," Wade said.

Wade received a degree in biology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., and his medical degree from the University of Florida.

His first job after his residency was as medical director for Montefiore Medical Center's Health Services in the Bronx. Wade was responsible for a comprehensive health-services program provided to all juveniles arrested and detained in New York City.

Within three years, the program was recognized by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care in Chicago as the No. 1 comprehensive prison health program in the country.

Wade joined the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in 1993 and was medical director of ambulatory care services. He was a vice president with United Healthcare until 1996, when he opened Wade Healthcare Systems. Through one of its entities, the company provides health care to the New York Department of Juvenile Justice.

"Pediatrics became a focus of mine early on because my mother took care of our family by baby-sitting," Wade said. "She cared for 15 or 20 children every day, plus her five children."

Mayra Suero-Wade graduated from New York University and the Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery. She received a master's degree in public health from Columbia. A former fashion model, Suero-Wade operates a program called Dentistry in Motion that serves children in some of New York's foster care agencies.

Jeffrey Liva, a physician in Paramus, recently donated a medical evaluation van for Suero-Wade to make dental-care rounds.

"Anyone who would give as much time as they do is rare in this day and age," said Liva, of Saddle River. "They donate so much of it to those in need."

Wade credits his wife for giving him a nudge into ventures he never thought possible. Suero-Wade, who grew up in the Dominican Republic and Manhattan, said she couldn't help it.

"What I saw in him are leadership qualities," she said. "He has a drive ... a quality and ability to run things."

Even with three children of their own, ranging in age from 8 to 15, the couple has found time to take their missionary work to the Caribbean and Central America.

Wade was raised Baptist and 20 years ago became a born-again Christian and a student of the Bible. "I recognized my call to the ministry as well as medicine," he said.

"What stirred my desire to go to Africa was that living in a very blessed country with opportunities and a wonderful gift of medicine, I knew that most of the world did not benefit from access to the care and resources we have," Wade said. "I was able to preach the Gospel as part of my spiritual calling and provide medical care as a tangible demonstration of God's power and love for all people."

Laurel Epstein of Saddle River is a supporter of the foundation and of the Wades' efforts.

"They are generous, selfless people," said Epstein, who has run the Wandell Foundation, which benefits Saddle River's only public elementary school. "When we met as part of Wandell, I found that they had a sense of the world and world needs. For so many people, things revolve around them. But they look at the

world. I was so moved and taken by their cause that I offered help in any way I could."

For information about Arise and Walk Ministries go to [www.awmfoundation.org](http://www.awmfoundation.org).

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