

PUBLIC POLICY FINALIST

DR. MARK  
**Manary**

Professor of pediatrics, Washington University School of Medicine; attending physician, St. Louis Children's Hospital

College: Bachelor's in chemistry and chemical engineering, MIT; Medical degree from Washington University

**A hero because...** He has spent the last 15 years providing undernourished children in Malawi with key nutritional supplementation to improve their health.

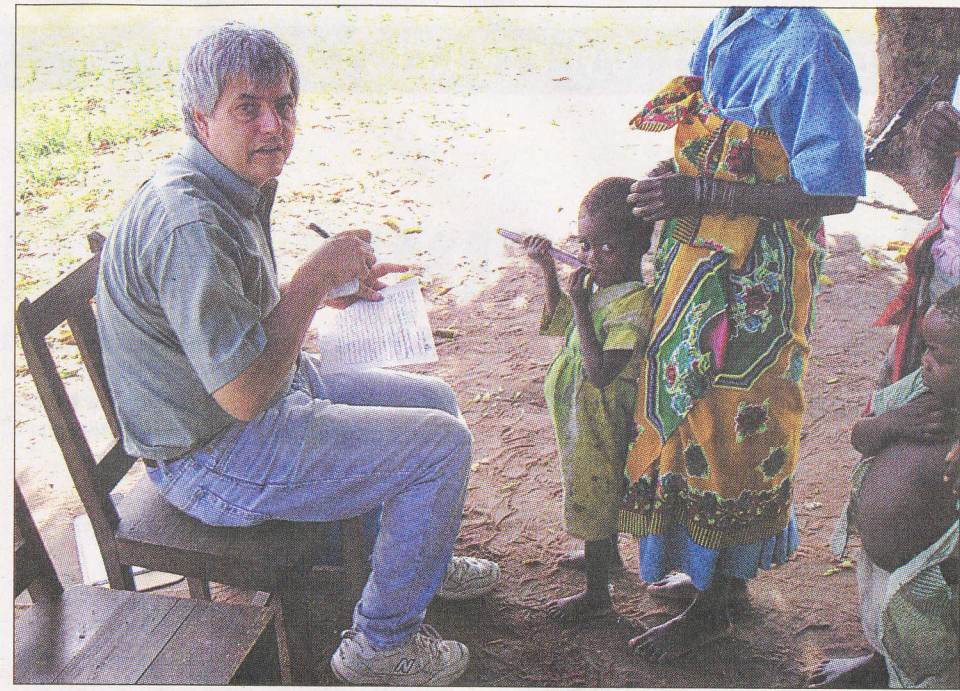
**What do you consider the most important accomplishment of your medical career?**

The development of ready-to-use therapeutic foods. I originally went to Malawi in 1994 to take care of malnourished kids, which is a huge problem there. I worked for seven years improving care in hospitals, and I saw that there was about a 25 percent recovery rate for malnourished children. In 2001, a French researcher made test recipes of a peanut butter food supplement and he was looking for people with an interest in it. We did clinical trials of the supplement versus a couple others; with the ready-to-use food, there was about 95 percent recovery among patients. The food has now been

adopted by United Nations agencies as the standard way to treat malnutrition. It contains peanut butter, sugar, oils, milk powder, vitamins and minerals.

**What inspired you to get into this type of work?**

In 1984 when I was in my pediatrics training, I asked my wife, "What do you want to do when I'm done?" She said, "Go to Africa." We went, and we really fell in love with working in the hospitals there. Every day we were making a life-and-death difference. Here at home, when I work in the emergency room at St. Louis Children's Hospital, I know those kids are still going to be taken care of even when I'm not there. In Africa, we were filling an



essential need; there was no one there to take our place.

**What advice would you give to young medical professionals who want to help?**

About 10 people a week call about working with me in Malawi. I tell them, "That's great, but you have to go into it with your eyes wide open." It's monotonous work. You're doing the same thing over and over, and the workday never really ends. You can't get tired of it. It's the same dusty villages every day, and the same kinds of problems at our factory making the food in Malawi. With that said, usually about nine out of 10 don't come back. To the ones who do, I say, just give your whole strength to it

and put your whole mind and heart into it.

**What would you most like to be remembered for?**

My life goal, fixing malnutrition for kids in Africa. The projects I've talked about, the peanut butter food and treatment, make up about one-third of my activity. The other two-thirds are prevention strategies — active ones, where mothers feed their kids differently to prevent malnutrition, and passive ones people can participate in without having to try, like when they put iodine in salt. We're working on improved crops, like a more nutritious, virus-resistant form of cassava, a root crop that is the staple food of 100 million of the poorest Africans.