The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Alumni Network is a global community of over 1,600 alumni who believe in the power of community and the mission of the Gates Foundation. In addition to alumni, we also have over 500 foundation employee members. We help alumni and employees stay connected through events, news and resource sharing, and monthly newsletters.

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In the Spotlight: Felice Apter
Alumni Profile

What position(s) did you hold at the foundation and when?

I've had the privilege of working across three amazing groups; from 2007 to 2009, GHPA, supporting a host of special projects; from 2009 to 2015, Africa Team, as the Inaugural Zambia ‘County Consultant’; and 2016 to 2017 ‘Parental Leave’ backstop with US Government Relations in the DC Office.

What are you doing now?

I’m lucky to have not just one but two wonderful passion projects. The first is with the Center for Global Development as a Visiting Fellow in the Global Health Program. The second is as the inaugural Director of the Global Infectious Disease Graduate Program at Georgetown University, where I also serve as an Adjunct Professor at the School of Medicine and as an Affiliate of the Center for Global Health Science and Security.
I’m also excited to be actively engaged in the Alumni Network as a DC Ambassador Lead, together with my fellow alums Deepti Tanuku and Desiree Furness. It’s great to be able to contribute tangibly to strengthening our alumni community. This month I hosted an event at the Center for Global Development – which was a great occasion for both for the Center and our alumni community.

Can you share more about the new Global Infectious Disease Graduate Program at Georgetown University? What would be your guidance for those who may want to apply themselves or who may want to recommend the program to others?

Foundation alumni recognize that infectious disease remains among the top challenges facing populations around the world. The Georgetown Master of Science in Global Infectious Disease (GLID) program emphasizes the reality that combating these diseases requires a range of tools across multiple, inter-related disciplines. We’re looking for individuals dedicated to understanding a range of solutions, from biomedical advancements to policymaking. The GLID program parallels this multidisciplinary focus with commensurate educational opportunities across the full range of Georgetown’s esteemed graduate schools. With an emphasis on the intersection between policy and biological sciences; the GLID program is the only masters level program in the United States to offer an opportunity to train in infectious disease modeling.

Please feel free to share this information widely. The program is interested in attracting both early/mid-career professionals as well as recent graduates.

Was there a project at the foundation you were most proud to be a part of? Why and what was your role?

As a member of the newly defined Africa team in 2009, I was honored to work with an unrivaled set of professionals to advance the Foundation’s understanding and engagement across the continent. Within that team, I served as the Inaugural ‘Country Consultant’ in Zambia. In that role, I enjoyed strategizing with a wide range of foundation representatives with the highlight being Bill’s 2012 trip to Zambia. In addition, I supported Africa regional efforts on the foundation’s Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) partnership with Mrs. Graca Machel and covered a host of regional health-related convenings for Seattle colleagues. The picture above was taken on my very last day in Zambia; for five years, we rode horses on the property of the man who became the Vice President our second year there. He just happened to drop in – his pilot settling down the helicopter in the middle of the riding ring!
What are you most excited about and proud of since leaving the foundation?
My husband and I successfully launched our daughters, who both have taken to University life like fish to water! Hallelujah!

Who is the person who influenced you most in the path you’ve taken in life?
My maternal grandfather Max was born in 1899. As was the expectation in his day, he had to leave school permanently in 8th grade to support his family after his father died. He lied about his age to get steady work at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Eventually he owned a successful textile business, however, his true passion was learning. He voraciously read multiple newspapers and magazines every day and always clipped interesting articles to send to us in the mail. I loved receiving these special packages of knowledge. His loving mantra was always ‘stay in school kid’. So, following my grandfather’s advice, I managed to stay in school for a very long while…first at the University of California at Santa Cruz and then a PhD in Medical Sciences at Harvard University. And now, experiencing a full circle moment, I find myself back ‘in school’ again at Georgetown University.

What’s a great book, movie, exhibit, play or experience you’ve read/seen/had recently that you would recommend?
The movie ‘I am Not a Witch’ is a haunting and beautiful fable filmed in Zambia. It has received numerous BAFTA and British Independent Film awards + 97% on Rotten Tomatoes. Absolutely Worth Watching!