

The Lovelight Stories

PODCAST

Ep: 14 | From Orphan with Polio to Providing Worldwide Lifesaving Medicines with Steve Stirling | President and CEO of MAP International | SHOW TRANSCRIPT

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00:01.31

lovelightstories

Steve thank you so much for joining me on the lovelight stories podcast today. It is truly just an honor and a pleasure to have you um, share your story today with everyone I've known you for a good while and you are the. Main guy at Map International and so we're going to dig into that later. But first I want to start with your story because there's so much that we have to unpack here. So can you just help us understand where your story began.

00:31.54

Steven Stirling

Sure and thank you Stephanie for having me on your love light podcast. So just a privilege to be included. Well my story goes back many many years into South Korea and when I was one year old I ended up getting polio.

00:38.30

lovelightstories

Yes.

00:50.83

Steven Stirling

And my father had gone to a friends ah ah child that passed away and then went to the funeral that unbeknownst to him he later found out the child had passed away from polio and so he then brought the virus to me and when I was one I ended up getting folio I lived with my. Biological family for 5 years and then my father realized that he could not do anything for me. Ah so he learned through my aunt about a christian orphanage called hold and so he took me there in hopes that I would have a better chance in life and so I was literally abandoned.

01:28.44

lovelightstories

A.

01:30.32

Steven Stirling

At the orphanage when I was five years old and I still vividly remember and my father telling me um to cry and somebody will come get you and I did I cried and sure enough somebody got me

and then I would crawl back the next day to where he dropped me off thinking he was gonna come get me.

01:47.70

lovelightstories

Who.

01:49.54

Steven Stirling

And so I did and then I call crawl back again. They crawl back and I did that number of times and then I start thinking you know did I do something wrong that that would be abandoned at a orphanage where I didn't know anybody and then about two weeks later my relatives brought my biological sister. Ah she not disabled and she's a couple years younger than me. So at least we could be together and so they hope the orphanage accepted her as well. So at least then we had each other ah in the orphanage.

02:10.60

lovelightstories

A.

02:16.33

lovelightstories

Um, right.

02:23.60

lovelightstories

Wow. Do you know why they had dropped off your sister too.

02:30.26

Steven Stirling

Well we by the way we found my biological family ah in 9091 so we heard the back story but they dropped her off as well because they wanted her to look after me, she was only three years old I was 5 but at least we could be together.

02:46.50

lovelightstories

Okay.

02:48.29

Steven Stirling

And so they just ah said well maybe we can at least have each other in the orphanage and thank God because we were adopted by this same American family and that's a amazing story in and of itself.

02:55.28

lovelightstories

Yeah. Yes, Oh my gosh? Well what a you know difficult situation for your family your parents to have to do your father. Um, and then for you to be alone at that orphanage and like you said at least you had her which is a bright spot in in many ways. Um in your. Book Which by the way is called the crutch of success I have read it I actually found myself as I was preparing for this interview reading it again and I was like I don't I don't have time to keep reading but it was so

good at captivated me. Um, so it's it's ah incredible I would encourage everyone to to go read it. But in your book you mention that you were unadoptable in many ways and that really touched my heart because for a young child to feel that Way. Um is sad and so I want to know why you said that why you viewed that.

03:50.85

Steven Stirling

Well at at the time I was um, by the time my parents came and and this is amazing story too and I'll share you the story there but but since I was disabled and of older child.

04:07.12

lovelightstories

And.

04:09.37

Steven Stirling

At the time when my parents came to Korea I was eight years old and I was a sibling had a younger sibling so those are really being handicapped having a sibling and having been an old child those are very very difficult situation to be adopted. Usually.

04:24.23

lovelightstories

A.

04:27.84

Steven Stirling

When people adopt they want younger infant baby healthy child and so if you're older you have disability and you come in sibling those are very hard to be to be adopted and it's amazing story because it's because of the act of kindness My sister.

04:31.83

lovelightstories

Right.

04:47.15

Steven Stirling

Showed which enabled us to get adopt adopted my parents they flew to Korea in 64 to pick up another pair of siblings not related to us biologically but they were passing that candy ah to the kids that were left behind.

04:58.79

lovelightstories

Yeah.

05:05.60

Steven Stirling

And my sister Mary Ellen she was there and she took the candy and she ran off so my parents asked the orphanage worker does she she like us what is she running off that way and they said no she has a handicke brother and she's taking him candy first. So I trained her really well she was my legs but but because they were so touched by her.

05:08.49
lovelightstories
He.

05:19.93
lovelightstories
Yeah.

05:25.65
Steven Stirling
Kindness They said oh we need to meet her brother so they took them back to the back of the orphanage where the hand they get kids who were kept out of sight out of mind and they saw you playing in the on the ground and some I smile. That's all we need to adopt them to and at that time they had immigration law. They could only bring over.

05:27.70
lovelightstories
Yeah.

05:45.10
Steven Stirling
2 children from a developing country and they already had 2 So my parents took the initiative to contact a congressman wrote letters made phone calls and it took 2 years but a writer on a bill was attached to a bill that president Johnson signed in 1966

05:48.79
lovelightstories
Um.

05:56.15
lovelightstories
Wow.

06:05.10
Steven Stirling
And when he signed that bill. We were part of that as a writer when that bill passed and we came over an office of 1966

06:11.13
lovelightstories
Wow what a big influence your parents had in getting that bill passed. That's incredible and what a blessing their kind hearts must be so kind to come over. Be adopting 2 children and leave that day saying we're going to adopt you to It's just incredible. Yeah.

06:32.67
Steven Stirling
Yeah, um I remember the hope I had because they said um and I was you know I was eight years old at the time so I was old enough to know and they said you're going to be ours. But it's going to take some time so I used to write letters back and forth to my parents and they would translate it.

06:50.00

lovelightstories

Um.

06:50.24

Steven Stirling

And send it to them So I have letters that I've written back and forth and and it was such a time of hope because you know I had prayed to God Um, one day would you give me a family a loving family and God answer my prayer.

07:00.57

lovelightstories

Yeah, right? right? Oh that is such a beautiful story just in itself that little piece of it and this story just continues on there before we keep going I Want to ask a little bit more about the orphanage because you just mentioned where. You were back in the back of the orphanage where the handicapped children were kept and I didn't remember that part of your story. So I Want to know like what was it like in the Orphanage. What things do you remember? How did you feel?? um, was your sister able to be back with you back there.

07:34.46

Steven Stirling

Um, yeah, um, even though my sister marily was not disabled. They allowed her to stay with me that. So basically it was um, 3 big rooms one for the girls and then one for the boys and with a common area for eating and that type of thing.

07:42.11

lovelightstories

Okay.

07:52.22

Steven Stirling

We all slept in the floor literally side by side a mat and of so it was We didn't interact with other non-disabled children except for me because I went to school and that was only time that actually.

08:08.27

lovelightstories

Um, okay.

08:09.99

Steven Stirling

But I got my ah crutches I could then walk and go to school and so but at the school I was teased every single day. It was really ah, talk about bullying you know, physically and verbally kids made fun of me because in that culture in many parts of the world. Still.

08:14.22

lovelightstories

Yep.

08:22.91

lovelightstories

Um.

08:29.18

Steven Stirling

They believe that you have a disability that you or your parent send and God is punishing you So it's okay to make fun of disabled people and they do that every single day when I went to school so it was It was very difficult and when I came back to where I was staying then I would take it on on.

08:33.84

lovelightstories

O.

08:42.88

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

08:49.16

Steven Stirling

The kids there because I got so frustrated but it was not fun, especially growing with a disability in an orphanage that kids were constantly picking on you and physically and and verbally abusing you.

08:52.10

lovelightstories

Right.

09:02.72

lovelightstories

That's so sad it really is and like you said it's a cultural thing. Um I think that even happens here in America probably I mean we hear about bullying all the time but it is not part of our culture I don't think and um, that must be so difficult.

09:14.26

Steven Stirling

Um, yeah, o.

09:19.27

lovelightstories

And what else was it like to I guess live with the effects of polio as a child. Um, how did you get around.

09:31.21

Steven Stirling

Um, well until I received my crutches I literally crawl and there were other remember other other boys and girls with folio and there were kids with Cp and other degenerative diseases. Ah that left them. Enable to you know unable to walk around and so we didn't have wheelchairs so literally we crawled my sister would literally pick on my leg like a wheelbarrow and I would just you know walk around that Way. Ah later on I did get some crutches for my sponsor and so while it was difficult.

09:51.83

lovelightstories

E.

10:07.53

Steven Stirling

Learning how to walk because you know fall a fell a lot getting up a walking and then much or later on I was given up set her leg braces and so those were very very uncomfortable but leastsa could then walk around a little bit better. A little bit more stable so I won't fall as often.

10:09.85

lovelightstories

And.

10:17.71

lovelightstories

Um, okay yeah.

10:24.56

lovelightstories

Yeah.

10:26.78

Steven Stirling

But it was it was challenging but at least once I got crutches I could start walking and even though I would fall at least I could walk and get around so which was amazing things to experience, especially after you, you know, crawled around um or good part of your life because you don't have crutches and certainly there are no wallchairs.

10:29.25

lovelightstories

Here here.

10:39.30

lovelightstories

Um, yes, right? Yeah, that's exactly what I was going to ask if it felt really freeing in that moment to be able to walk around or um.

10:46.19

Steven Stirling

Ah, to be had.

10:53.12

Steven Stirling

Um, I think the main thing was it enabled me to then go to school and that I don't know why because I was very challenging. It's picked on me all the time but I still want to go to school and learn and so I went to school every day and.

11:06.20

lovelightstories

Um, yeah, Wow. Yeah.

11:11.93

Steven Stirling

Was only hand to kept kid into school with all the other able kids. But I'm thankful that I did get crutches and was able to walk and go to school.

11:22.73

lovelightstories

Yes, why do you think you wanted to go to school so bad. Um was it did you know that it.

11:24.54

Steven Stirling

Um, know I don't know I think God just put that desire in me because I I didn't have parents tell saying it's important important to go to school I didn't have a mentor that is important to go to school I just wanted to learn.

11:31.46

lovelightstories

Here.

11:38.17

lovelightstories

Um, yeah, wow.

11:43.30

Steven Stirling

And so when I went to school um I learned how to read and write in Korean Um I think when I was in fourth grade. They start teaching a little bit English they start teaching you some Chinese writing and so it was just I just liked learning and.

11:54.93

lovelightstories

Um.

11:59.67

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

12:01.16

Steven Stirling

Getting information and I had no idea that was important in the future. But I just wanted to learn and maybe it was just to get out of the orphanage too with all the handica kids were because then I was in school I was with the regular able body children but I went to school until I was in the fourth grade.

12:07.51

lovelightstories

That's amazing. Yeah.

12:15.22

lovelightstories

Um, yes, ok ok, Wow. Well it's certainly in keeping with the rest of your life and all of the.

12:20.12

Steven Stirling

While I was in the orphanage.

12:28.48

lovelightstories

Ah, successes and striving that you've had So I think you're probably right? God put it in you and knowing what you're what you would ultimately do in your life and we're going to dig into that in a little bit because you've done so many things and I'm excited for people to hear that part of your story. Um, but you mentioned also in the book. Not just as a child but also and as an adult and throughout the rest of your life that your physical disability did change the way people treat you um, can you just help us understand how you are treated and in what ways you have been treated differently.

13:03.88

Steven Stirling

Um, well, um, when when I came to United States um I didn't at least at least and went to Anchor Alaska of all places till I was adopted. It's more Korea to Anchorage Alaska and the amazing thing was kids then pick on me I think they thought I was different I was the.

13:18.90

lovelightstories

He.

13:23.90

Steven Stirling

Only Handica cha the regular school but they didn't pick on me and which then was really for me was just a great joy and I had friends. Um, but then again, you're not normal in the sense of being able to you know run around and.

13:39.83

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

13:41.85

Steven Stirling

And do other things. So even though I tried and I had some had some friends but I think the main thing growing up was I had friends. Ah and you know I was pop I tried to be friendly to people because then I can make friends and then then I would be liked so I was more trying to.

13:55.67

lovelightstories

Yeah. Okay.

14:01.76

Steven Stirling

Accepted. Ah so I was upgoing and tried to it was just amazing difference between Korea and America so I was just very thankful. Ah, but then growing up in high school. You know I had a lot of friends but they were platonic girlfriends who were not girlfriends boyfriend the sense of.

Going together. So but then they were nice to me but I can feel like well yes, so I'll go out with you just on a you know junior problem or whatever. But you're not my boyfriend type of thing so you'll fill that separation and and and then.

14:32.84

lovelightstories

Um, right right? yes.

14:38.39

Steven Stirling

Living with a disability people sort of stereotype you um and in things like you're in a wheelchair people. Don't think you're smart. So even now I try to walk as much as possible because of being in a wheelchair ah people.

14:46.59

lovelightstories

Okay.

14:58.24

Steven Stirling

Automatically assume that you're not smart and people Don they choose you differently and I travel quite a bit for map international and internationally when I travel I will try to wear a suitot jacket even thoughm uncomfortable in many places hot and wearing a suitot jacket is not comfortable, but.

15:01.74

lovelightstories

E.

15:17.98

Steven Stirling

But do that then people will say oh he must be at least smart because fad don't don't Well, he's just an invalid and won't won't treat you with any respect.

15:24.29

lovelightstories

Um, oh oh that is really sad. Actually um.

15:37.60

lovelightstories

It's surprising to me because as adults we understand like a physical disability does not affect your mental ability by any way. But yeah, that's just a sad reality that it's it's like your first impression or something that you're perceived I guess.

15:54.33

Steven Stirling

Right? But even in the Us you I was this is wild the number years ago now but you know the store like ah big box stores is huge so I would get a wheelchair and then my wife would push me and it was a furniture I won I almost in the name of the store but it was a very large store.

16:06.92

lovelightstories

Um.

16:11.34

Steven Stirling

And so my wife was pushing me and then I went to the counter and I asked the person a question so instead of answering me this person answers. My wife it's like well hey I'm the one to ask the question. Can you answer me but they automatically assume that you know between me and pushing a wheelchair.

16:25.90

lovelightstories

Um, yeah, oh yeah, Wow Yeah, that's just that's really sad and I'm so sorry that you had to deal with that your whole life and.

16:31.18

Steven Stirling

That something's wrong with you physically and mentally and people treat you differently.

16:42.30

lovelightstories

Um I Guess it's a good reminder for those of us listening that to be more aware and intentional of how you're showing up around people that do have something different about them of physical disability or something else that. You know or just someone from a different culture that speaks a different language I think sometimes we we treat them differently because we think that they can't hear us or understand us or whatever it might be and I think it's a really great reminder to try to be more aware of that.

17:11.57

Steven Stirling

Yeah, but you know going back to our US history where Franklin D Roosevelt was president of United States he had polio and when he spoke they always got him on his feet and standing up he was he never spoke sitting in a wheelchair. They always got him upstanding.

17:14.57

lovelightstories

Yeah.

17:21.63

lovelightstories

Yep.

17:26.56

lovelightstories

E yeah.

17:30.47

Steven Stirling

Because then people as oh he's a president and he needs to leave and he can't be leading in a wheelchair So that's why they always got him on his feet and standing because people will believe what he's saying or on the radio obviously can't say.

17:35.51

lovelightstories

Yeah.

17:45.26

Steven Stirling

So that's why it was so important but him to get him on his feet that's standing tall when he spoke and so that you know that's just the psychologically people just think that if you're able body standing then you're you must be a you know a good leader but you're sitting in a wheelchair speaking.

17:48.79

lovelightstories

Um, Wow. Yep.

18:04.15

Steven Stirling

They just have a different lens of of what you're saying.

18:05.47

lovelightstories

Right? right? Do you just as you've gone through your life and again we'll talk about like that your experiences and and the work stuff that you've done and. All of that. But as you've progressed higher in your roles have you seen people in the way they treat you differently like has it improved.

18:24.00

Steven Stirling

Um, know, um in the us. Um I think they know who what my position is so if I'm am the president' Ceo of map international or when I was working in corporate America vice president then the taddle will say oh okay, he must be.

18:30.55

lovelightstories

Yeah.

18:43.37

Steven Stirling

Doing Okay otherwise you won't pin that role. But if they't know me they'll they still think people are you know if you have a in a wheelchair, they still think and not as as a smart and so and particularly traveling internationally always wear a suit jacket because and.

18:44.58

lovelightstories

Yeah.

19:02.24

Steven Stirling

People will treat you like you are at least knowing what you're talking about because you don't they literally will treat you as invalid and again they and it's it's ah if they present me as when I'm traveling as Ceo of map international then people will show me the respect. But if they just see me.

19:09.37

lovelightstories

Yeah.

19:21.60

lovelightstories

Interesting.

19:22.30

Steven Stirling

Ah, just on Crutches or in a wheelchair then they'll cheat you differently.

19:26.15

lovelightstories

Wow How have you dealt with that emotionally and you don't have to answer this necessarily if you don't want but how how what has kept you moving forward with that.

19:37.43

Steven Stirling

You know that's that's a good question Stephanie what I tried to do in a proactive way is to be outgoing and try to make the initial contact so people feel they don't feel awkward around me.

19:53.57

lovelightstories

E.

19:55.38

Steven Stirling

So because they don't know how to act and it's It's not their fault. You know our society portrays people with disabilities in a very negative way you think about it growing up right? captain hook with the whole hook. You know you got a pan you know I mean the guy with the you know any any evil thing. Um.

20:03.61

lovelightstories

Oh yeah.

20:15.32

Steven Stirling

It's usually some kind of a disability. Um Moby dick and so people think you know people with disability are portrayed evil so that doesn't help either. Um, so you know you try your best to make other people uncomfortable feel comfortable. But then for me I just say you know what I can't let people hurt my feelings because if I do I won't do anything so you so sometimes you put

up a callous wall almost like well I don't really care what they say because if I did I was I would not do anything.

20:39.26

lovelightstories

Yeah.

20:48.41

lovelightstories

Yep.

20:51.22

Steven Stirling

In the sense I'm not in a bad way I Just say you know what? I'm just gonna let it roll off and not worry about it and just go forward because it's just just like ah you know I before the pandemic I will swim or swimming and you'll put the pool and then if I go to some places.

20:55.41

lovelightstories

Yeah.

21:06.81

lovelightstories

Um.

21:10.47

Steven Stirling

You know you you know people aren looking at your legs because you're it's you know its kind of just deformed that it's you're dragging and all that but I'm not going to let that stop me from not swimming and staying healthy and so and and also gives opportunity to.

21:20.58

lovelightstories

Right? yes.

21:29.62

lovelightstories

E.

21:29.96

Steven Stirling

Struck up a conversation know little kids will say Oh how come that man has crutches and that will say you know when I was little I didn't get my polio shot and so when you get your polio shot in my heart a little bit but you at least you won't get folio when you get older and just give a chance to talk about.

21:47.34

lovelightstories

Um, yeah, right.

21:48.55

Steven Stirling

Have a conversation that way and trying to do some educating but you had to live your life and can't worry about what other people think about you Otherwise you're just so afraid of what others will say that you won't do anything.

22:02.29

lovelightstories

Right? And in some ways it's forced you like you said to have more courage and push outside of your boundaries all of the time and and kind of put that wall up to a sense of saying I I don't really care which honestly like more of us. Need to probably do and get comfortable doing. We don't live for other people we live for God and we live for the purpose he's given us Um, but when you're not forced into that. It's easier kind of to sit back and get more comfortable and so in some ways it sounds as though it's pushed you and.

22:25.96

Steven Stirling

They met.

22:37.54

lovelightstories

In that way. It's It's been a positive thing to some degree too to help form your character and and all that. So yeah, right? and to be able to use it as an educational tool and advocate for things that are important is also another positive that has come out of that. Um.

22:41.73

Steven Stirling

That's right? yeah.

22:55.84

lovelightstories

Okay, so let's shift into what life was like as you were growing up in the United States like tell us a little bit about your childhood and going to school and just the family life.

23:09.95

Steven Stirling

Um, well um I was the only hand to get get in my family and then also in my school in Anchorage Alaska and you know I think one of my toughest toughest thing my father and mom had to deal with was ah. anchor alaska snow I will fall but they would purposely let me get up on my own not help me up because I would have to do that anyway. So that they told me later on you know it was really hard. He would be the easier phone and pick me up when I fell but I would I would just learn how to get up on myself.

23:34.30

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

23:44.88

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

23:45.55

Steven Stirling

And so then you start learning how to do things yourself So that's that's important and then when you can't then you could ask somebody to help you. But if you can just figure out how to do that yourself and that was same thing going to Junior high school and high school.

23:59.53

lovelightstories

Um.

24:04.17

Steven Stirling

Um, you know I learned how to drive a car with hand controls and so that was a great um thing because the first time I could you know I can't run fast I can't swim fast but I can't I can't drive fast. So know if that's a s speedel on there right? So that was wonderful and then just.

24:17.65

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

24:23.49

Steven Stirling

Trying to fit in with the my friends and so it really had a ah great experience. Growing up in Anchor Alaska really didn't feel the prejudice that you will feel in some places but I didn't feel it and and I wound up.

24:26.44

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

24:38.71

lovelightstories

Yeah.

24:42.71

Steven Stirling

University Alaska and then Cornell University you know from undergraduate and then northwestern from Mba so it was just I just it was I was so thankful to be given opportunity to go to school because that is the game changer.

24:45.29

lovelightstories

Yes.

24:59.78

Steven Stirling

If you can go to get educated then you can use your brain instead of your physical body because that's why I knew 1 thing that I had to go to school because I cannot dig ditches or do physical manual labor that I would have to earn a living using my brain instead of my bron.

25:00.46

lovelightstories

Um.

25:14.31

lovelightstories

Yes, Wow Yeah, that was a really smart insight and I'm sure it was a natural realization for you to want to continue to go to school and it's really served you well um in your life and I want to mention too like I thought it was really interesting I read in your book. That you were you did cross country skiing and you were the high school class president like you you um like you said really overcame the physical aspect and we're able basically it sounded like everything.

25:35.51

Steven Stirling

Um, get this.

25:48.46

lovelightstories

Do everything that everyone else did even though you did have that physical.

25:50.14

Steven Stirling

Yeah, and I always so just you know some of us just I enjoyed being with people like Christ kind seeing and up my dad made me a sled that's sat down with a wheelchair and then put skis on and I just use my arms to pull myself and so I would go everywhere and.

26:04.30

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

26:07.32

Steven Stirling

It was a lot of fun. So I like I could beat together with my family and friends and doing things I play hockey using the sled. You know I was a Goalie so it was It was a lot of fun to you know to go out and be with and enjoy being kids and so that's really important.

26:18.42

lovelightstories

Um.

26:21.89

lovelightstories

Um, yeah, right? yep.

26:26.65

Steven Stirling

Its we're all kids at heart. So you know I feel thankful that I had the opportunity to do that growing up and and I even took up in the University University Alaka took a dog mushing 1 on one class where I actually had you know dog mushing 3 dogs on a sled. So.

26:31.56

lovelightstories

Right? yep.

26:45.42

Steven Stirling

Ah, tried to as much as possible. Do things that I was able to do physically and I can't climb Mount McKinley that you know I tried to do much as I could growing up.

26:48.97

lovelightstories

Yes.

26:54.94

lovelightstories

Right? Yes, again that thread of just striving to do everything like everyone else and and be with everything because of course you were just the same Steve Regardless if you had your legs working. Perfectly or not and um, it's really inspiring I think it's It's like those really inspiring stories that you hear of people who have just kind of not cared about having like you could have sat back and and wallowed in this fact, but instead you took life by by a ah. Storm if you will and move forward with it and so that's really inspiring. Um, Okay so tell us about your experiences in the corporate world and I know by reading your book that some of the time it was. Difficult in many ways and just kind of give us an overview you worked at a lot of different companies.

27:55.20

Steven Stirling

I know I was very fortunate because of where I wanted to go into marketing and northwestern had very good marketing school so I was precluded ah by some very good companies fortune 500 companies and. Working at Jane and J and the Johnson And Johnson and the coloninwa business and whatnot and it was really just a great environment to learn and grow. Ah, but then the challenging part is this now I know I was the only ah disabled handicap ah person in in this type of role. Plot being asian as well. So I had had double things I was trying to then break through I guess the third would have been if I was a woman it would have been woman asian or woman asian and disabled but that was I had 2 out of 3 so they're not used to that so they're not used people used to what they're who they are.

28:32.70

lovelightstories

A.

28:42.78

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

28:52.12

Steven Stirling

So when I was in some of the things culturally like you do things Socially, you will play basketball you play golf and I really can't do that with with the with the colleagues. So and I would try to do with other things I would try to then you know work out. Um.

28:52.40

lovelightstories

Yep.

29:10.60

Steven Stirling

Just doing you know workouts I could do that together with them. So I tried to fit in where I can but in certain thing you know I don't play golf I can't fit in that way or play tennis or play basketball. So and that sometimes that's where the things happen socially and I wasn't able to do that. But I look for things where I could get involved.

29:12.96

lovelightstories

And.

29:23.40

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

29:29.45

Steven Stirling

And things like after work when they get together socially I try to do that. So whenever I cannot try to fit in so I could be part of that group and you know I would um, watch like I watch golf um tournaments and not. I Want to play it. But at least I can talk about it or sports I don't play it but I can watch it and I could talk about it with people. So I do that in a way to be able to socialize when I get together with other individuals who are not disabled.

29:48.11

lovelightstories

Yes.

30:02.57

lovelightstories

Wow. Okay, that's really interesting insight because I hadn't thought about that aspect of it because when you think about working in a corporate job. Um, you're using your brain and it's not as physical ah outside of probably the international travel and everything that you had to do which. Would have probably been very difficult as well. But like you said culturally, um, there were these activities that again, you had to be conscious of to be able to continue to strive and make those connections relationally Um, but you did it because I mean you had a very successful. Career in the corporate world and how long were you in the corporate world again. Ok Ok yes, yes, and and I know it was difficult on your family as Well, right? because you were traveling so much and you moved quite often.

30:39.83

Steven Stirling

Um, now about eighteen years eighteen years so this is wild.

30:55.37

Steven Stirling

Yes, and that's that's one of the you know I say I had you know about 10 jobs tried more than that we probably move 15 times. Um, but at least I had 1 wife that's stuck by me all those years. So you know he's traveled a lot and that was it was challenging.

31:10.51

lovelightstories

Yeah, yeah.

31:10.95

Steven Stirling

My ah my family growing up two kids and you know, but my wifeuki had to really do a lot of the parenting by herself when I was traveling ah on the corporate side. But even when I was joined Nonprofit I ended up traveling a fair amount and you get so involved with work.

31:20.40

lovelightstories

Um.

31:28.55

Steven Stirling

That you spend a lot of time at work. So that also is challenging making sure you have the right work life balance to keep that in check.

31:34.50

lovelightstories

Yes, definitely for sure and and then you mentioned that you when you worked in the Nonprofit World. You alluded to that so help us understand that transition. Why did you. End up transitioning to working in nonprofits and how did that work.

31:51.65

Steven Stirling

Um, you know I never planned on. It was not my goal to go work at a nonprofit so in ah to end the 99 early 2000 ah the founder of the orphanage where I grew up in. Um. Passed away and so I attend I was in the board of whole for 9 years and when betha hold passed away sukki and I flew to Korea to and attend her life celebration and I met my one of my childhood friends.

32:24.43

lovelightstories

E.

32:30.24

Steven Stirling

And his Kim su he has severe cyrel pasing and so he was smiling at me. So I thought he must be my friend I asked the kims. So do you remember me and he said yes mengu that's my Korea name. So what do you remember me about because the world used to beat me up all the time.

32:43.87

lovelightstories

Oh.

32:46.19

Steven Stirling

And I felt really bad because I'm really strong upper body and I had shared with you earlier that when I went to I was only school in Korea I was only handnaicapped kid and kids would physically pick on me every single day. So when I came home with Hanna kept because we're all saying I would literally lag them up I would hit them really hard.

33:02.26

lovelightstories

M.

33:05.40

Steven Stirling

At a time just every day and this guy could barely feed himself and you cant cant defend himself and I was hitting him because in my frustration and that I was you know I felt really bad about it I said Kimsu would you forgive me for what I did to you growing up and he looked me ranma in my eyes. He said yongsu.

33:12.57

lovelightstories

Yeah.

33:24.33

Steven Stirling

Ah, forgave you a long time ago because Jesus for forgive me of my sins when he said that I was speechless and I start thinking you know what I might do with my life I'm working to make the companies rich myself rich I remember praying to god as a god lord show me what you want me to do and I will do it anything.

33:28.85

lovelightstories

Um.

33:43.27

lovelightstories

Um.

33:43.42

Steven Stirling

And then I learned later that the orphanage je grew up in was initially helps started with initially by Bob Pis of the world vision founder and so then I literally picked up the phone and and talked with the senior vp marketing and. After many interviews they hired me as vp market operations and that was 2000 in the springtime. So that's how I got it to nonprofit.

34:09.17

lovelightstories

Wow what a testimony that your friend I mean you can just see the breadcrumbs right? like god's plan to bring you to him and do the work you are you have done in the last years and are doing today started back in that orphanage and. You are taking out the frustration which is so understandable and sad in a lot of ways. It makes me sad but um, his his testimony and your testimony of just having that grace and saying I forgive you because god forgives me and um I mean it changed your life. That's incredible, really incredible.

34:47.40

Steven Stirling

Um, it really did and who would have thought you know a childhood friend who has severe sort of Palsy would change the trajectory of my life because I had no plans on working for nonprofit. But God used them to say no I have other plans for you.

34:59.53

lovelightstories

Um, yeah, yes.

35:05.12

Steven Stirling

And it was it was a major change because I love working corporate America and you know doing well and you know took a big calor salary cut company nonprofit but you know it's been worth every ah moment of it because we're doing god's work and helping people in need.

35:12.49

lovelightstories

And.

35:22.66

Steven Stirling

That is so important.

35:24.88

lovelightstories

Yeah, yeah, that's wonderful. Okay, so you mentioned you started by working with world vision and then can you just share with us a couple of the other organizations you worked with um, leading up to map.

35:37.24

Steven Stirling

Sure it worked to world vision and then have for international child fund international enrichment Virginia and so I was ah about 9 years over nine years ago now I was at the child fund and I get a. And I was Ceo od then chief operating officer and I get a call from a recruiter and they said ah we have a perfect job for you at Ceo of Map International and I jokingly said map who uses map air. Everybody has Gps and they said oh map stands for medical systems program.

36:07.32

lovelightstories

A.

36:13.89

Steven Stirling

And we think with your background you will be perfect for the role and I told the recruiter no no thanks because I had given the Ceo of child fund by commitmentment that I would be there 3 to 5 years and so I had just been there two and a half years so I came home and told Suki about it.

36:25.39

lovelightstories

Okay.

36:32.61

Steven Stirling

And Suki said it's my wife Suki she said what do you tell them I said no she said you said their christian organization math I said yes, she said don't you think we should at least pray about her

first and so you're right she's right 99% of the time so we prayed about it and then I looked at the nine ninety S which is the.

36:42.27

lovelightstories

A.

36:52.40

Steven Stirling

Tax form that with filed Irs and they had a lot of gifting kind but you know not too much in cash and I pray some more it's gonna be another cut and salary and so I said oh no I'm not ready for this role and my wife reminded me I think you are ready for this role think about why god likes you to get polio.

36:56.56

lovelightstories

Um, yeah.

37:09.54

lovelightstories

A.

37:11.30

Steven Stirling

Why god let you work in corporations pharmaceutical companies and at nonprofits at world vision and child fund and and she said and she was right god had prepared me for the role and so an example I listened to Suki and so. but but nine years ago I joined map international as Ceo. It's a best decision for wise I made because map had such huge impact and lives of people around the world.

37:31.36

lovelightstories

Yes, yes.

37:41.12

lovelightstories

Yes, Okay, so I think it's also really incredible too. Um, how your experiences actually in those corporate roles and in the nonprofit roles actually prepared you for map as if it was part of the grand plan which.

37:56.58

Steven Stirling

Um, yes, a death.

37:58.56

lovelightstories

It was but you didn't know that I mean having worked with the pharmaceutical companies and then um I think there was there was other things you explained to in the book about the nonprofits how it just really uniquely positioned you for map.

38:13.95

Steven Stirling

Yes, and you know international ah woe vision me international ah child you know sponsorship agency and then you know heifer was small scale farming and then your child fund was an out seal where. Ah, so oversaw the whole operation except for programs. So I had finance ah Hr Legal Marketing all of that reporting to me so it was kind of getting trained to be the Ceo and you know with just every day I'm reminded what it's like to. Live because of not having to access the vaccine polio vaccine when I was younger and so if if you can prevent that it's so much easier and then if but if you do it end up getting sick then you need medicines to help you be healthy and so you know people.

38:53.15

lovelightstories

Yes.

39:05.74

lovelightstories

Right.

39:09.79

Steven Stirling

Have hypertension cardiovascular problems diabetes you have asthma problems. You need antibiotics and Map is able to provide all those products free of charge. Ah to our partners in the ground and because map works with pharmaceutical companies. Ah where they donate it to us before they expire. But we can then get it to people that need it around the world.

39:32.53

lovelightstories

Right? exactly and that is where we're going is map international and telling us all about the incredible mission that you serve and um, that's like you said having this this polio has been such a reminder for you because I think. Was it sixty cents was a dose and if you had gotten a sixty cent dose when you were a child. You wouldn't have this polio and what it is really truly quite a reminder. As you're advocating for people around the world who don't have access to these lifesaving medicines. So explain again, you have um what kind of medicines vaccines. Um the different parts of your work and map.

40:18.60

Steven Stirling

But the way map works is that we get pharmaceutical companies that donate donate medicines and last year they donate us seven hundred and fifty million dollars that's the wholesale acquisition cost of prescription medicines otc's and supplies. But most of the value dollarwise are Ex-m Medicineicine and these are for chronic diseases like hypertension cardiovascular diabetes um asthma and also you know we get prenanobitamins to antibiotics and other lifesaving type of medicines and health supplies.

40:41.80

lovelightstories

Um.

40:57.26

Steven Stirling

Ah, face masks gloves ah papes and all that's needed to support the health care system and so before they expired they donated to map and then we raise money and then we ship work with partners on the ground who they in in turn will get it to hospitals and clinics in 80 countries around the world. And then we also have support doctors who go on medical mission trips surgical teams that go and then we provide medicines for them to take with them sutures that if they do surgical teams ah heart valves and catheters and other specialty products like that and so we are literally impacting. Ah, millions of people's lives through these medications and you know the reason that we have such a long lifespan in this country is that because for the most part we are able to get access to medicines when we are diagnosed with hypertension because if you don't treat it eventually you're going to have. Kidney problems and other issues and you're not going to live as long and that is why it is so exciting and such a privilege to be able to do this work and it's really literally pennies on the dollar because since the medicines are donated for the most part ah \$10 that we spend provides.

41:56.35

lovelightstories

Right.

42:13.86

Steven Stirling

Ah, \$400 worth of medicine. Think about that leverage there \$10 providing \$400 to medicine.

42:14.65

lovelightstories

Um, yes, yes, that's incredible and you mentioned that um you are able to share medicines and supplies and stuff on for mission Teams Medical Mission teams all of that and. Children Also like like you're saying preventing things like hypertension. But there's also I know you've mentioned how when children get a very curable disease and they don't have access to something like an antibiotic or something it can actually kill them and so. This medicine is extremely vital and very cheap for us for you I should say for you to be able to get it in the hands of the kids and families who need it. Um and it literally is life-saving medicine.

43:09.50

Steven Stirling

Um, that's that's right in the number one killer babies and under the age of 5 is diarrhea and with diarrhea you have to stop it yet. You have the antibiotics to treat the root cause and then you need the oral rehydration salts.

43:24.60

lovelightstories

He.

43:26.70

Steven Stirling

Ah, like Pia Lite design is an example to rehydrate them and then if they have some underlining fever or whatnot. You need you know toenol or ibuprocaline or something to help treat that child and so something as simple as that or to be cholera with pneumonia you had to treat those diseases.

43:34.99

lovelightstories

Right.

43:44.16

Steven Stirling

Ah, fairly quickly. Otherwise the child is not strong enough to to live and another example will be 75% of people living in developing countries end up getting warmms. So if you don't treat the underlying problem the worms and we have this very effective you take.

43:47.51

lovelightstories

E.

44:02.44

Steven Stirling

1 tablet of ab benoszol twice a year. You just chew it comes into water with it will it will kill the worms in your body. So then you can get the benefits of the nutrition that you take in instead of the worm. So you know things like that. It's so critically important that we provide these type of medicines.

44:15.76

lovelightstories

Yes, yes, yes and I want to highlight too because I think it is so interesting that these pharmaceutical companies that are donating these medicines and supplies. Um, it's good for them like it's ah it's a wonderful partnership because it benefits you it benefits them and it benefits the end recipient. Um, and the reason why it's good for them and correct me if I'm wrong, but it's good for them because these are medicines that are expiring but yet have a long enough window that you are able to. Get it to the person in the people in the country who need it and they can use it? Um, otherwise the pharmaceutical companies can't sell it and they end up having to actually pay to have them incinerated and of course I Assume that must have an effect on the environment and there's just this ripple effect and so. It's just really incredible. How you're able to make so much good out of something that is would otherwise be unused.

45:15.72

Steven Stirling

Yeah, you, you really summarize that well Stephanie yes because they don't donate it to us and which then really helps them because it helped they did care about people. You know the culture there. There's social ah corporate responsibility. There's. Employees feel good about it because they're helping people here in the us as well as around the world and if they not donate it to us. They would literally have to they can't take it to landfill. They have to ininennerrate it and and that hurts the environment as well. So it to li a winwin and they get a small tax deduction as well. So.

45:48.24

lovelightstories

Yes.

45:55.16

Steven Stirling

So it's really a win-win and there's no way the people that we're giving this medicine could afford to buy it and by the way they said that up to 40% of medicines that's available in retail in developing countries are counterfeit. They have sub par ingredients or there are not even any

ingredients at all and so they don't even know what what they're buying is can't do any Good. So the medicines we provide free of charge ah to these donations for pharmacopeceutical companies are are really valued because they can't even buy it in those countries.

46:12.39

lovelightstories

Um.

46:17.88

lovelightstories

Right.

46:30.95

Steven Stirling

Because oftentimes it's not even available.

46:34.46

lovelightstories

Right? right? Exactly I also know that um, you've expanded your model if you will to go beyond just the donations of the pharmaceutical companies but to actually be able to purchase medicines with donations that other donors are providing Map. So that you can reach more people. Um and can you explain a little bit about that or is there anything more I guess to elaborate on there.

46:59.77

Steven Stirling

No, there's um, sometimes we don't get enough medicine donated like pediat pediatric antibiotic to this is an example so now with the donations we will actually purchase um through and we buy pretty large quantity millions of dollars so we can then buy it. And a much better cost and if gu map is we have a foreign tray zone in Brunswick Georgia we could actually purchase medicine from Europe Netherlands bringing it into the us and then combine it with other medicines and ship it usually in a container to our partners in the ground.

47:31.57

lovelightstories

Yeah.

47:34.96

Steven Stirling

Then they could distribute it. So It's really a big service and then so the purchase that medicine that we purchased we to you know recover a cost. So Our partners will pay a cost plus a little bit of markup to cover or handly chart. But that helps to round out the order So the gifting contest. That's there, not everything can be. Given by gift and kind but this really helps us quite a bit to be able to purchase medicines as well.

00:50.10

lovelightstories

So. Not only do you receive donations from pharmaceutical companies and purchase the medicines to fill in those gaps but I know that you also do work in um America with some

medicines and you also respond to disasters and crises. So can you just share. Give us a little insight into how that works.

01:10.89

Steven Stirling

Sure I'll be happy to in Georgia believe it or there's one point Eight million Georgians who do not have health insurance. So these are the working for they are able to go to the safety net clinics. But when the doctor writes a script for hypertension and cardiaia or whatever the type of medicine. They don't have the money to go to a drugstore and purchase it so Matt provides free of charge 1 bottle at a time to georgians through the sickney neck clinics and as an example, right here in Clarkston Georgia next to the g there are sixty people of people groups. And in this refugee area and we actually provide medicine we of charge to the this that what's called ethnic clinic but we work with good sammets goods and Sams um, far of nonprofit and other nonprofits in Georgia as well as other. In other states and southeast of you United States so really is helping to provide not only the health care part. But then now walk out their clinic with a what 1 bottle of the medicine that they need to keep them healthy.

02:23.50

lovelightstories

Yes, I love how you're not only serving around the world internationally but you are taking a look at what is needed here in the United States and in particular in this case, Georgia. Um, and recognizing that there is a need for these medicines here too. So that's really incredible and now when you're responding to disasters around the world. Why are you able to respond to disasters.

02:50.70

Steven Stirling

Well, we that's great question because we have partners on the ground and we can respond fairly quickly and we do wait to hear from our partners that says we need these type of medicines or supplies and so we work with um, over 40 partners. That then they are underground already in countries ah like in Ukraine and you know in turkey Syria and then in the us obviously for different types of disasters. So be it a natural disaster or manmade disaster at the Ukraine war we get involved relatively quickly. And providing whatever they they need sent to them. We do have the disaster health kit these are personal hygiene kids that are packed by volunteers and that's another way for people to get involved and it has things like wash clothth so shampoo first aid kid toothbrush toothpaste and it gives them some humanity back. And a disaster response situation. So we provide that free of charge by the way to people that need it to our partners. We do raise money to buy the components. Ah but the the astra unit itself is provided free of charge and and that plus other medicine supplies. Ah that. People need around the world. We are able to quickly respond because our partners ah on the ground are already there and so we're very fortunate to be able to partner with with the different types of nonprofits and while we map as a Christian organization we help all people regardless regardless of ethnicities gender.

04:09.92

lovelightstories

Right.

04:24.76

Steven Stirling

Religious belief so we are driven by Matthew 25 36 when Jesus said when I was sick you looked after me and we helped all people everywhere around the world.

04:36.39

lovelightstories

Yes I love that too because um, as a person who believes in god and ascribes to faith. Um, it is so important and it's what drives your work right? and we're called to love and serve all people and I love that you don't discriminate. Um, in any way and are just able to provide the medicines and supplies to the people that need it when they need it most whether it's a disaster or something as in like a clinic or something like that. So. It's just a really beautiful story I think of map and. Who you exist to serve and how you go about doing it I think it's a very efficient model I love how you partner so well with um partners on the ground but also with pharmaceutical companies and with donors I think you do a great job there as well. So um, it's just It's so incredible to like hear your personal story and I'm sure those listening today are just really wowed I think they got a lot of insight in hearing your own experience and background and how you just like push the boundaries and continue to move forward and how successful. You have been in following god's call on your life and um it it would be a shame not to mention the person that's right by your side. Um through all of this I really want to highlight suie I've met her a few times. Um and she is just such a gracious kind.

05:59.19

lovelightstories

God-fearing woman and I admire her so much and I think the 2 of you together are such a power couple. Um, and I know that she goes about um and really is by your side and helps you do what you do best and um so I just really wanted to mention that too.

06:15.57

Steven Stirling

Well thank you it and I cannot do what I do without Soki She is my biggest supporter and literally she and enables me to do what we do together and so while I might be the lime night. She makes possible what we do and I'm so thankful because she literally.

06:26.67

lovelightstories

Yeah.

06:35.23

Steven Stirling

Gave up her life her career her dreams so she could support me in doing this to work together. So thank you for mentioning so Pcs Ah um, an answer to my prayer and that they could read that in my book because of how all that happened is another way God truly answered her.

06:40.46

lovelightstories

And.

06:52.63

Steven Stirling

My prayer.

00:00.00

lovelightstories

So Steve for those listening today that really love what you're doing at Map and want to know more about the organization or want to find ways that they can support and get involved. What would you direct them to.

00:12.85

Steven Stirling

Thank you Stephanie for inviting your list listeners to come get involved number 1 is to come visit our website map.org and there's different ways you can love to have dear listeners pray for us. But also if feel feel lead and make a donation you get \$10 provides up to about \$400 with medicines they want to volunteer they can volunteer in Brunswick or in Atlanta and actually the dhkdisaster health kit hyjink. Its could be the components could be sent to. Ah group and they can pack it and ship it back to map if you're going on a mission trip. Um, please come visit our website to order medicine before you go and take it at your personal luggage and so we invite people to get involved because a little better input helps so many people around the world. So. I really want to thank you for what you're doing through your love love life stories and it's just a great way to connect with people and I really thank you for what you're doing.

01:18.21

lovelightstories

Thank you so much Steve that really means a lot to me and um, there's a lot of ways that people can get involved and I love that. Um, you have tangible ways where people can. Go pack those health kits and they can even take them with them on mission trips or you can donate \$10 provides \$400 worth of medicines. That's an incredible ah Roi I mean that's huge. It's really exciting I think I'm going to go make a donation myself again. um yes um so

01:37.11

Steven Stirling

Um, that's right.

01:45.45

Steven Stirling

Um, thank you so much. Um.

01:48.25

lovelightstories

Yes, let's wrap this up I just want to say? Thank you again? Steve and it's really been wonderful to reconnect with you today.

01:53.52

Steven Stirling

Know thank you Stephanie for what you're doing with Lovelight Stories and what you're doing is amazing and you have listened to some of your other podcasts and people are doing some amazing work to help those in need and if we all do a little part of what we can do. We'll change the world. So thank you very much.