For doctor and wife, volunteering is a family affair

Dr. Steven J. Vanderby and his wife, Kathy Vanderby, are known as a generous and giving couple. This is especially true in their work for Space Coast Volunteers in Medicine.

"We are truly blessed to have Dr. Vanderby serving as our chief medical officer," said executive director Paul Ringenberger. "His experience and insight into family practice has made our organization more efficient and effective in serving those in need. And Kathy serves on our board of directors, and her energy and dedication has made a strong board an even stronger and more compassionate board."

The reason the couple decided to give their time and expertise to Space Coast Volunteers in Medicine shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone. Dr. Vanderby has been interested in medicine since his days in junior high school. His uncle, Larry, was a family physician, and Dr. Steve enjoyed the challenge and broad spectrum of family medicine. The American Association of Family Physicians recently recognized him for 25 years of service in family medicine. Mrs. Vanderby works as office manager at his practice in Melbourne.

Avid motorcycle enthusiasts, one evening Dr. and Mrs. Vanderby were attending a biker's night at Longdoggers. Volunteers in Medicine had set up a booth and was distributing information. After reading the brochure, the couple decided that this was an opportunity to volunteer together. Mrs. Vanderby was already volunteering at the Women's Center and for Hang Up & Drive and was the head volunteer for "Extreme Make Over Home Edition," she said she couldn't pass up the chance to work with Volunteers in Medicine.

"Imagine a volunteer program whose mission is to provide free medical and dental care to the uninsured," she said. "I knew I could serve in some capacity and Steve could assist as a volunteer health provider." Dr. Vanderby was just as eager to help.

"There is a great need for the services (Volunteers in Medicine) provides, and with the economy the way it is and layoffs happening, we felt that this was the perfect way to give something back to the community," he said. The couple said it has been a rewarding experience.

"I love being on the board and strategizing as to how we are going to grow the program and help those in our community," Mrs. Vanderby said. "Our neighbors who don't have health insurance but are in need of care." Dr. Vanderby encourages other medical professionals to help.

"I hope more providers come forward and volunteer - whether active practitioner or retired," he said. "Because someday it is my hope that all people get the medical and dental care they need - and when that day comes and the doors to the clinic are closed, then we know we have completed our job. Until then, come join us for a rewarding experience - especially the hugs you'll get from helping your neighbor." For more information, Paul Ringenberger at (321) 914-0915.