

# Mercy Center News

Spring 2005

The Mercy Center Foundation, USA

www.mercyproject.org

## Letter From The President

Dear Friends of the Mercy Center:

Thanks to the generosity of many, The Mercy Center Foundation has achieved many of our goals to help the community of Lare, Kenya in our first 18 months as a

501 c3. I am pleased to tell you about these achievements, to report on the status of the building project

and to share our goals with you for the next year.

The Mercy Center Foundation USA incorporated on August 1, 2003; shortly thereafter, a Board of Directors was established. The goals for our first year included providing clean water for the village by drilling a well and providing basic healthcare service by building and staffing a medical clinic. The Loyola Foundation provided a matching grant of \$8,500 for the medical clinic building project.

Tremendous progress was made in our first year. By July 31, 2004, The Mercy Center Foundation USA funded and completed the following building projects:

§ A 272-meter well that includes a powerful generator to pump water and provide electricity. The well serves more than 500 families daily during the dry season.

§ A ten room medical clinic described by a USAID representative as having the highest quality construction found anywhere in Kenya.

In addition to construction, the Board completed the following initiatives in the first year:

§ Produced a 50-page grant application to USAID-ASHA requesting \$1.5 million to build and equip a

secondary school for 300 students, to equip and staff the medical clinic and to provide electrical power to Mercy Center Lare.

§ Hired a Kenyan energy consultant, Bernard Osawa, who devised a three year strategic plan for the electrification of Mercy Center Lare. This proposal for bringing electrical power to Lare was included in the grant request to the USAID.

§ Developed a critical relationship with Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg, Virginia. Working with the College's Missions Director, Dr. Joseph Cacioppo, we have arranged to have Edward Via medical students conduct a health



*Lare women at Forte's Well.*

survey of the Lare population and begin to provide basic medical care, three times per year for 4-6 weeks at a time. In 2008, a full-time doctor will come to Mercy Center Lare from Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine's first graduating class.

Over the last six months the Board of Directors has been engaged in fundraising, building a residential staff house for the Mercy Center Lare, adding new talent to the

*(Continued on page 3)*

*The Mercy Center Foundation, USA is a 501(c)(3) organization; gifts to The Mercy Center Foundation are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.*



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# Foundation Board Member Jocelyn Bell Visits Kenya

**By Jocelyn Bell**

Sister Rose's village of Lare is a very special place. The Mercy Center truly stands out as the central structure in the village. Compared with other facilities I visited on my trip, The Mercy Center construction is excellent. John Njoroge's dedication to detail and fine workmanship was evident throughout the Mercy Center Medical Clinic.

My itinerary for the Kenya trip moved at a hectic pace. I traveled to Kenya with Dr. Joe Cacioppo and his team of

missionaries, Louise Lee Roche and Reese Hurley. Dr. Cacioppo had arranged many meetings during our week in Kenya.

Unfortunately, I only had one afternoon to spend in Lare but during this time, Sister Rose was eager to introduce me to the many good people who provide support in building the Mercy Center including the devoted members of the Mercy Center Lare Advisory Committee; Father Evans, John Njoroge, Mary Githae, and Chief Lucy; I also had the privilege of meeting John's daughter Margaret Njoroge and Sister's Father, Uncle, Sister-in-law; and the head of security - Mina.

Sister Rose's family members made us a sumptuous lunch, gave us a tour of the Mercy Center site before saying farewell in the late afternoon. We departed for Nakuru, where Father Evans, Sister Rose and Dr. Cacioppo met with a representative of the Rift Valley Provincial Hospital. The meeting concluded successfully with an arrangement to have students and doctors from Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Rift Valley hospital collaborate in the medical care of the Mercy Center

Clinic in Lare. Dr. Cacioppo's medical school will provide the Rift Valley Hospital with teaching and technical support when the clinic opens. From Nakuru, we rushed to check into the Lion's Hill Safari Lodge, before sundown when the animals begin to prowl.

## **Traveling Through Kenya – A Bleak Lifescape**

The following morning at 6:30 AM, my fellow travelers and I took a safari to discover the animals of Lake Nakuru's National Wildlife Park. We then traveled three hours to the city of Eldoret, crossing the equator on poorly patched asphalted roads – a challenge to the kidneys.

I now understand why during the rainy season the roads become impassable. Few roads are paved with asphalt and most village roads are deeply rutted, requiring all-terrain vehicles for travel. At best, the well-to-do neighborhoods have roads that are red packed dirt, scraped and edged with machinery.

During my travels through The Rift Valley, I was overwhelmed with the intense poverty evident everywhere. The poorest of the poor live in mud huts with thatched roofs. The majority, however, reside in huts made of corrugated aluminum walls and ceilings held together with mud and sticks. Acres and acres of hundreds of these structures lined the roadway to Eldoret.

Everywhere, people walk or ride bikes along narrow dirt roads and main highways. Children are always in clusters walking miles to public primary schools, wearing crisp

uniforms of a sweater, skirt or pants. A uniform is a costly and precious expense for a family but also a symbol of pride in the education their children are receiving.

We arrived in Eldoret and had excellent Chinese food for lunch. By Kenyan standards, Eldoret is a prosperous town with banks, retail, manufacturing and an international airport. From my perspective the city was a hodgepodge of old and new architecture. It was run down and filled with homeless street children selling tourist bobbles or begging for money—a very different cityscape than that of America.

## **Preacher Serves the Poor with the generosity of US donations**

After a brief stop in Eldoret, we continued to Kitale for an overnight stay with the family of Pastor Moses Wynones of The House of Hope Deliverance Church of Kitale. Dr. Cacioppo, and his missionary team, Louiselee Roche and Reese Hurley were meeting with the Pastor about future medical mission work at their church center. On Sunday, it was a pleasure to worship with hundreds of Pastor Winones' members and tour the school and orphanage. While in Kitale, Dr. Cacioppo and I visited a public hospital. The physical plant and healthcare facilities were nothing short of destitute. A nurse and an HIV counselor gave us a tour of the men and women's surgical recovery and obstetrics wings. On average, three patients were assigned to each hospital bed with vinyl mattresses, no sheets, no clean cups, pitchers or clean amenities of any kind. Filth was evident everywhere. The surgery theatre was ill equipped with rusted surgical chairs, no sheets and broken sterilizers... The list of horrors goes on and on and the needs are so great.

## **One Woman Making a Difference**

We returned to Eldoret and flew to Nairobi to meet an American woman, by the name of "Becky" who has a



**Chief Lucy, Jocelyn Bell and Sister Rose At the Mercy Center Clinic.**

home for 28 orphans, ranging in age from infants to twenty one years. Two American interns were volunteering at the home to help with home schooling. The children were well loved and quite accomplished academically and artistically. The children came to Becky from all kinds of tragic circumstances - crack mothers, incest, and victims of abuse. Through Becky's abundant faith, love, patience and fortitude, her children experience the joy of a caring and closely knit family. She gave me good advice on arranging for the importation of containers from the US into Kenya.

Dr. Cacioppo and I spent our last day in Kenya making contacts and meeting with people who can support our work with The Mercy Center Lare. We met with a company that specializes in setting up trade schools

throughout Africa and the Middle East and networked with a few US based firms.

The trip was a whirlwind adventure of discovery. Seeing Sister Rose's vision becoming a reality in Lare filled my heart with joy. Witnessing the abject poverty throughout this country of truly beautiful people filled my heart with sadness. Knowing that the work of



The Mercy Center Foundation will greatly improve the quality of life for the people of Lare - fills me with hope and more determination than ever to make the vision a reality.



**Above: Building Rose House - A mason prepares hand hewn stones. Left photo: Rose House construction under way.**

## Letter from the President...

*(Continued from page 1)*

Board of Directors while reorganizing to support our growth, and visiting Kenya to establish relationships to support the delivery of health services at Mercy Center Lare.

§ The Mercy Center Project 2004 fundraising campaign featured a cocktail reception at the home of Gary and Susan Hess. Chefs Jeff and Barbara Black of The Black Restaurant Group donated a spectacular array of hors d'oeuvres. Thanks to the generosity of our hosts, chefs and guests we raised more than \$30,000.

§ The reception and subsequent appeals including funds raised at a Christmas Boutique held at the home of Board Members, Enrique and Alejandra Segura produced a total of \$43,400 in the first 6-months of our 2004-2005 fiscal year.

§ This funding is going directly to the building of a residential staff house for visiting doctors and teachers. The building project is underway. We need to raise an additional \$47,000 to complete this facility named The Rose House by

our co-founder Al Forte in honor of Sister Rose.

§ Negotiations continue with the Knights of Malta and A.B. Short of Medshare to arrange for "gently used" equipment, furniture, and basic medical supplies to be sent to Mercy Center Lare.

Immediate plans and projects include:

§ Initiating fundraising projects including social gatherings such as cocktail parties and coffees to raise \$67,400 before September. \$47,400 is needed to complete The Rose House!

§ Shipping a container of medical supplies from the USA to Kenya with the support of the Knights of Malta and MedShare, a non-profit medical shipping organization.

§ Applying for grants for specific needs such as the purchase of vehicles including an ambulance for Mercy Center Lare.

§ Establishing relationships with US corporations supporting economic development in Kenya, such as Land O'Lakes Corporation, to initiate discussions for trade school training for the Mercy Center School.

In the two years I have been working with Sister Rose to support development in her village of Lare, I have witnessed the rallying of people of good will to help Sister Rose's vision become a reality. Albert Forte, co-founder of The Mercy Center Foundation USA, Inc. provides tremendous support with his business acumen and his ability to identify challenges and offer solutions. Each member of the Board of Directors generously donates time and talent working toward our goals. In Kenya the Mercy Center Lare Advisory Committee consists of dedicated professionals who show by their courage and determination that all things are possible when you work as if everything depends on you, and pray as if everything depends on God.

As a young organization we are poised to bring much needed help to the "forgotten village" of Lare. We hope that many more donors and directors will join in this effort to make Sister's vision a reality. Please consider whether you are being called to help.

Sincerely,

Mary Suarez Hamm  
President

# Bringing Health Service to Lare: Mercy Center Medical Clinic

In the summer of 2004 construction was completed on the Mercy Center Medical Clinic. A USAID representative in Kenya who inspected the site in September in conjunction with the Foundation's grant application commented; "this facility is of the highest quality work found anywhere in Kenya".

The medical clinic will house two basic laboratories, a pharmacy, an X-ray/dark room, two patient rooms, a reception area, and storage rooms. Bathroom facilities for men and women are located adjacent to the building with a clean water source for hand washing.



## *Mercy Center Clinic*

locations. He is very excited about partnering with Mercy Center Foundation to bring health services to the people of Lare.

In January, Dr. Cacioppo, accompanied by Jocelyn Bell, completed a site visit to Lare, to see the Mercy Center Medical Clinic. Dr. Cacioppo and Jocelyn were both "blown away" by the beauty and workmanship of the two completed Mercy Center structures.

While in Kenya, Dr. Cacioppo was able to meet with Sister Rose who came to Kenya to welcome him and introduce him to Lare villagers. Connections were made between Dr. Cacioppo and the Rift Valley Medical Authority in Kenya. This is the medical body responsible for health care in the Lare region. The meeting went well and

a "Memorandum of Understanding" is now being drafted between the Rift Valley Medical Authority and the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine to have healthcare providers staff the Mercy Center Medical Clinic for several weeks each quarter. In the future an annual residency will be established by the Edward Via Virginia College to provide medical coverage year round.

## **The Rose House Residential Facility**

Because there is no infrastructure in the village, accommodations for healthcare providers and guests must be built from scratch. In the last six months we have turned our attention to the fundraising for "Rose House" the residential guest house that will accommodate our doctors and teachers and other visitors to Mercy Center, Lare.

Construction of the Rose House is underway. The house is a concrete and hand cut stone, modern, facility that will comfortably accommodate up to sixteen or more people. Our goal is to complete the Rose House construction and have it ready for occupancy by January 2006. However, we need to raise \$47,000 to complete the construction and furnish this facility.

## **The Healthcare Providers**

One of the biggest achievements for the Mercy Center in 2004 was establishing relations with the Edward Via Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine. This brand new medical school in the Virginia system of public medical schools is launching a Medical Missions program seeking to place fourth year medical students in rural clinics in underserved regions on a rotating basis.

Dr. Joe Cacioppo, Director of the Medical Missions for Edward Via College has worked extensively in Kenya, Honduras and other third world

## **Albert Forte Recipient of Mercy Center Benefactor's Award**

Albert Forte was the first person to respond to Sister Rose's vision to serve the poor and forgotten people of Lare, Kenya. For several years, he has generously given Sister and the Mercy Center his time, his savvy guidance and generous donations to support the Mercy Center Building Project.

When the Mercy Center Foundation USA was incorporated in August 2003, Mr. Forte agreed to contribute his business expertise and wise counsel by serving as the Vice President of the

Board of Directors. The first project of drilling a well proved to be a challenge to the foundation because the depth of the well exceeded the engineer's original estimate. Costs increased dramatically and Albert Forte came to the rescue and the well was completed on schedule. Today, the well in Lare is named "Forte's Well" in honor of Albert Forte.

In appreciation of his outstanding contribution of time, talent and treasure, the Mercy Center Board of Directors wished to honor Mr. Forte and express

their great gratitude to him. The Board of Directors created the Mercy Center Benefactor's Award and presented it to Albert Forte in October.

He is truly a friend of the people of Lare. His munificence has already made a profound impact on the life of the village. As Sister Rose noted during the award presentation, "God will bless you. You have changed the world with your generosity. Thank you."

# Forte's Well Presents Management Opportunity

A 272-meter well that includes a powerful generator to pump water and provide electricity, serves more than 500 families daily during the dry season in Lare. The well, named after the benefactor, Albert Forte has to be managed by village committees to ensure that distribution is smooth and fair.

The well is the primary source of water for the villagers. During the rainy season from December to March, the diesel fueled generator pumps water into a 7,000 gallon holding tank. During the dry seasons more than 500 people a day come to the well for water.

Because of this high volume usage, the villagers formed fifteen cluster groups to develop rules and regulations for water usage. Each group



*Forte's Well towers over the landscape.*

selected a representative to serve on a committee created to ensure order and fairness in the use of the well. A small

stipend is charged to all well users to cover the cost of the diesel fuel.

Keeping the well supplied with diesel fuel presented another challenge for villagers. Every other day, the women of Lare were carrying four-gallon jugs of diesel from the nearest city of Nakuru to supply the fuel for the generator. It was not uncommon for the jugs to fall off the public buses while in transport to village. Sister Rose and Jocelyn Bell advised the Mercy Center Lare team to purchase a 55-gallon drum to store diesel fuel and eliminate the inefficiency of purchasing smaller quantities.

# Hess Family Provides Gracious Hospitality for Mercy Center Benefit

On September 23, Susan and Gary Hess hosted an elegant poolside reception in their beautiful Potomac home. Friends of the Mercy Center Foundation USA shared a lovely fall evening enjoying an array of delicious hors d'oeuvres prepared in the Hess kitchen by acclaimed chefs and restaurateurs, Barbara and Jeff Black.

Mercy Center Foundation President, Mary Hamm addressed the gathering with a brief presentation on the work of the Mercy Center. Mary introduced Sister Rose Wangui, Founder of the Mercy Center. Sister Rose told us about her village of Lare and the extreme suffering of her people due to lack of adequate healthcare.

Thanks to the Hess's and the Black's generosity and the outpouring of

support from guests, donations for the construction of the Mercy Center Lare residential guesthouse exceeded \$30,000. Everyone who attended the reception made a difference in the lives of the villagers of Lare, Kenya.

Sister Rose, The Board of Directors and the villagers of Lare are very grateful to Susan and Gary Hess, Barbara and Jeff Black and everyone who made this evening a beautiful gathering of friends of the Mercy Center.

## Board of Directors Restructures

At the February 2005 meeting of the Board of Directors several changes were made to support the work of the Mercy Center Foundation. The Board voted to have Jocelyn Bell become Vice President of Operations, moving from the position of Secretary. Eileen Rice was elected Secretary of the Board to replace Jocelyn Bell.

Albert Forte, stepped down from his role as Vice President. He will continue to participate in advising the Board in an honorary position he will share with Sister Rose as Co-Founder of the Mercy Center Foundation USA.

### The Mercy Center Foundation USA Board of Directors:

Mary S. Hamm, President  
Jocelyn K. Bell, Vice President  
Eileen M. Rice, Secretary  
Ellen H. Stuhlmann, Treasurer  
Frederick Rice, Member at Large  
Alejandra Segura, Member at Large  
Enrique Segura, Member at Large

### Co-Founders

Sister Rose Wangui Kuria  
Albert J. Forte, Sr.



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***Thank you for your support! Please visit us on the Web at [www.mercyproject.org](http://www.mercyproject.org)!***

***Dear Mercy Center Friends:***

The Mercy Center Building Project is well underway in my village of Lare, Kenya. It was such a joy to return home in January and to witness the extraordinary difference that Forte's Well has made by giving Lare villagers access to clean fresh water. We have accomplished so much and yet there is still so much to do.



Help us open the doors of the clinic this fall. Please call us and ask how you can help. God will bless you. By helping the villagers of Lare you will change the world..

Thank you, and God bless you,

Sister Rose Wangui, Sisters of the Visitation

To be ready for the medical team when they arrive this fall we must furnish and equip the clinic and complete the Rose House (staff/guest house). Many benefactors are needed to raise the \$67,400 necessary to finish the building and furnish the clinic and guesthouse.

I beg you to support the Mercy Center Building Project. My Mother died from a simple infection because she did not have access to medical care. Help us open the doors of the clinic to provide basic medical care for the poor and forgotten villagers of Lare so that such senseless death will come to an end.

**Become a Sponsor**

Become a Mercy Center Sponsor, open your heart to the people of Lare and your home to friends and neighbors. Host a gathering of friends in your home and tell them about The Mercy Center Foundation's mission to help the poor and forgotten in Lare, Kenya. The event you host will help us spread the word and build a circle of new friends for The Mercy Center. Learn more about this outreach opportunity call Jocelyn Bell at 301-320-4627 or by e-mail at [bell.joss@comcast.net](mailto:bell.joss@comcast.net).