

MERCY CENTER NEWS

Summer 2007

MERCY CENTER FOUNDATION, USA

Volume 4, Issue 2

SAVE THE DATE!! SAVE THE DATE!! SAVE THE DATE!! SAVE THE DATE!!

⇒ **WHAT:**

Mercy Center 5th Annual Gala

⇒ **WHEN:**

Thursday October 4, 2007 / 6:30 to 10:00 PM

⇒ **WHERE:**

Women's Club of Chevy Chase
7931 Connecticut Ave.
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Our Annual Gala is one our most significant sources of funding for providing development in Lare, Kenya. Your support is so appreciated and needed to help us serve 40,000 people. Please visit our website for updates throughout the summer and highlights of live auction items: www.mercyproject.com

EXCITING NEWS!

The Mercy Center Foundation's first shipment of a medical container arrived in Nairobi on March 26, 2007. We wish to thank CrossLink International, of Falls Church, Virginia, for their donation of gently used and new medical supplies, totaling well over \$40,000, and to their volunteers who spent hours packing the container before shipping. On December 12, 2006, Mercy Center Foundation, in partnership with CrossLink International, loaded a 20 foot long shipping container to be sent to the Little Sisters of St. Francis Hospital, in Nairobi, St. Anthony Health Center, in Nakuru, and our Mercy Center Lare Clinic. The container arrived in Kenya's port of Mombassa, on February 14, 2007. It was held in port for over a month while the Kenyan railroad system nationalized its service. Providentially, the container arrived in Nairobi the same week that Laura Hunt, Mercy Center's Vice President, visited with our Kenyan team. Laura was able to review the container and check that all items were in order.



Laura Hunt, Mercy Center's Vice President and Sr. Claire, standing inside the container next to some of much needed supplies delivered in March.

Founders:

Sister Rose Wangui Kuria
Albert J. Forte, Sr. (Deceased)

Board of Directors 2006:

Jocelyn Bell, President
Laura Hunt RN, Vice-President
Fred J. Rice III, Treasurer
Eileen Rice, Secretary

At Large:

Carol Blee, RN, MSN
Kieran Carter, Esq.
Mary Suarez Hamm
Patrick Kelley, Md. PhD.
Guy Motha, PhD.



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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Eighth grade students and staff from Little Flower Elementary School in Bethesda, Maryland, raised almost \$3000 for Mercy Center, almost \$1300 of it in pennies!

PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

In January, 2007 Mercy Center Foundation was selected to be the recipient of the *Pennies from Heaven* outreach program at Little Flower Elementary School in Bethesda, Maryland. Little Flower works hard to instill in their students an attitude of giving back as appreciation for the abundance they enjoy. All students from pre-kindergarten through grade eight are asked to participate in a variety of hands on service projects to benefit worthy causes through their individual classrooms on a monthly basis. But twice a year, the entire school community, teachers, students and their parents are asked to participate in the *Pennies from Heaven* program.

Pennies from Heaven simply asks staff and families to open their wallets and piggy banks and donate loose change i.e., pennies, nickels and dimes and small bills. These seemingly insignificant handfuls of loose change or pennies might just add up to a considerable amount when a community works as a team and opens their hearts. Previous *Pennies from Heaven* campaigns have benefited such diverse causes as tsunami victims in Indonesia and Native Americans living on the Red Cloud Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

To launch the program for spring, members of the Mercy Center Foundation's Board of Directors, many of whom reside in the Little Flower Parish, presented a slide show to the entire student body. The slide show highlighted the needs of the villagers and demonstrated how *Pennies from Heaven* will help all those in Lare. Many of the students from Little Flower identified with the pictures of children from Kenya and their desperate environment. At the end of the presentation, the atmosphere was full of anticipation and commitment to helping the children of Lare.

With typical generosity, Little Flower students and staff raised almost \$3,000.00 for Mercy Center Lare – no small feat. All students took the word 'Pennies' quite literally as a back-breaking \$1,300 was donated in coins – mainly pennies! Little Flower proved what can be accomplished by working together as a team with a contribution from everyone no matter how small that contribution may be. By opening their hearts as well as their piggy banks, Little Flower will touch the lives of many children at Mercy Center Lare.

Eileen M. Rice, Reading Specialist

The Mercy Center Foundation USA, Inc. is a non-sectarian organization that provides clean water, education and health care to 40,000 villagers of Lare, Kenya. We are pleased to launch our educational "African Awareness Campaign" specifically designed for public and private schools, from Kindergarten through University levels.

Please e-mail our office at bell.joss@comcast.net to obtain further information.



LENTEN SERVICE AT GEORGETOWN VISITATION

By: Jeff Yusof

Mercy Center Foundation is spending Lent going back to high school! For the first time, the foundation having its roots in the Georgetown Visitation Monastery will work with the entire student body of the Preparatory School to raise money for medicine and home first aid kits for the needy in the village of Lare, Kenya. Lare was the home and birth place of Sr. Rose Wangui, who is a Kenyan nun of the Visitation of the Holy Mary Order in residence at the Monastery.

Using daily events already in the school's service calendar, the drive will highlight the foundation's work in an area of the world too often ignored by the mainstream media. The Ash Wednesday Mass and the SGA Assembly at the end of February will both expose the student body to the great need for support that the villagers in Lare have, and over the coming weeks, time will be allotted in the daily home-rooms for prayer, reflection, and education.

During Lent, each home-room - a group of fifteen to twenty girls - will raise money for medicines, such as antibiotics and asthma inhalers to be sent to Lare. The home rooms will also look to donate supplies for household first aid kits for the villagers. These kits will be made up of small items, everyday items here, but potential life-savers in the village - Band-aids, gauze and Neosporin.

As part of the educational process, students will learn each week about the different factors that are daily hurdles in Kenya - malnutrition, respiratory illness, and vitamin deficiency.

Georgetown Visitation has traditionally used the Lenten period to involve the student body in a variety of community support projects. Under the leadership of the Christian Service Department, the girls in the 450-strong high school have participated in food and clothing drives such as "Suited for Change" which involved providing clothing for inner-city women looking to enter the professional world, as well as helping them prepare their resumes and practice for interviews.

The deep-seated catholic traditions of the school mean the student body are also involved year-round in giving back to those in need - the Fall Food Drive and a monthly commitment to Martha's Table (which offers day care, food, and clothing to the homeless) being two examples of the extensive service that the girls participate in.

Mercy Center Foundation is excited about this partnership with Georgetown Visitation and its proud and humble long history of community involvement in the best Catholic Tradition.

(If you would like to learn more about Mercy Center Foundation and how you can get involved, please contact Jocelyn Bell, President, at bell.joss@comcast.net. Donations can be sent directly to our office at 6124 MacArthur Blvd., Bethesda, MD 20816. Mercy Center Foundation is a 501c3 organization.)

EXCITING NEWS!!! *Continued from Page 1*

The Little Sisters of St. Francis, in Nairobi, have been essential partners to the success of the Mercy Center Lare Clinic by lending us their clinic specialist, Sister Victorina Winjiru. She has joined the Board of Directors of the Mercy Center Lare, spearheading the staffing and equipping of our rural clinic, in Kenya. As a thank you to the Little Sisters of St. Francis, we shipped examination tables, lamps and a myriad of supplies for their 100 bed hospital, in Nairobi, and to their St. Anthony Health Center, in Nakuru. Our Kenyan team of volunteers drove to Nairobi and off-loaded their needed supplies as well.

Shipping a container around the world is not without its hazards and it is essential that consigners of the container be experienced in processing the Bills of Lading. We knew that medical equipment and supplies could be shipped to Kenya, without import taxes, but it was essential to have a hospital sign for the container. The Little Sisters of St. Francis Hospital stepped in to help us by processing what we would consider a bureaucratic nightmare of paperwork. All items in the container must be properly labeled to prevent import taxes and delays that incur port penalties. In our fall newsletter, Laura Hunt will provide you with interesting details about shipping containers to Africa- the pitfalls and the successes.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT – *What's New in Lare?*

As I write this letter, our Mercy Center Vice President, Laura Hunt, and her family are winging their way to Kenya to visit and work at our site in Lare, for two weeks. Here are some of the anticipated projects for this June's visit:

- ⇒ Collection of patient Health Assessment Data from the Mercy Center Lare Clinic
- ⇒ Review of financials with Kenyan Auditor
- ⇒ Provide Quick Books instruction to our New Mercy Center Lare Bookkeeper
- ⇒ Meet with Living Water International Engineer John Gichane to review well water durability, chemical and bacterial composition of Forte's Well drinking water
- ⇒ Negotiate the hiring of a full-time Clinic Administrator

These are just a few of the activities that we do on a quarterly basis in Kenya. We are a "Hands-On" organization with volunteers who donate their time and treasure to help raise funds, here in the US, and provide mentorship to our partners in Kenya. Our organization tries to commit to a quarterly visit to Kenya, with our volunteers funding most of their own travel expenses. We anticipate a trip in October, of 2007, and one in January of 2008.

As our fiscal year draws to a close on July 31, 2007, I wanted to apprise you of this past year's accomplishments—we have been busy:

- ⇒ Mercy Center Lare Clinic opened August 1, 2006. *(See staff photo at right)*
- ⇒ Over 1,000 patients per month come to our clinic for health care.
- ⇒ Our US team traveled to Kenya in October 2006 to purchase a 4-Wheel Drive Nissan Pick-up with retrofit cabin to serve as a 10 seat Ambulance. *(See photo, below right)*
- ⇒ Mercy Center Lare has become Lare's center for voter registration and tribal conflict resolution.
- ⇒ Our Lab Technician attended an African Medical Research and Emergency Foundation refresher course, in Nairobi.
- ⇒ Lab Equipment suited for a rural generator and solar power has been installed at the MCL Clinic.
- ⇒ One year of patient data based on observable diagnosis will be collected as a baseline metric for improved health of the community.
- ⇒ Mercy Center Foundation USA, Inc. opened its office in Bethesda in October of 2006, 6124 MacArthur Blvd., above Bell Builders, Inc.
- ⇒ US and Kenya weekly SKYPE communications enhance management systems.
- ⇒ Bookkeepers for Mercy Center Foundation USA, Inc., and Mercy Center Lare have been hired on contract basis.
- ⇒ School Presentations for "African Awareness" have been designed for public and private schools, Kindergarten through University levels.
- ⇒ Partnerships between US and Kenyan organizations continue to develop.



Above The staff of Mercy Center, Lare

Below Patients in need of emergency care can now be transported to the MCL Clinic in our new ambulance



In the year ahead, we look forward to launching our three pronged program that reflects three of the UN Millennium Village goals that focus on Child Health, Maternal Care, and Public Health. As we launched the opening of our clinic, we found that we were already too small to meet the urgent needs of pregnant women. We reduced our laboratory space to accommodate a labor and delivery room. It has become clear that within the next eighteen months, we will have to begin construction on a six bed maternity wing. Child immunizations, nutrition, pre & postnatal care, preventive HIV/AIDS education, water purification, rain water harvesting, are just a few of the programs for the near future.

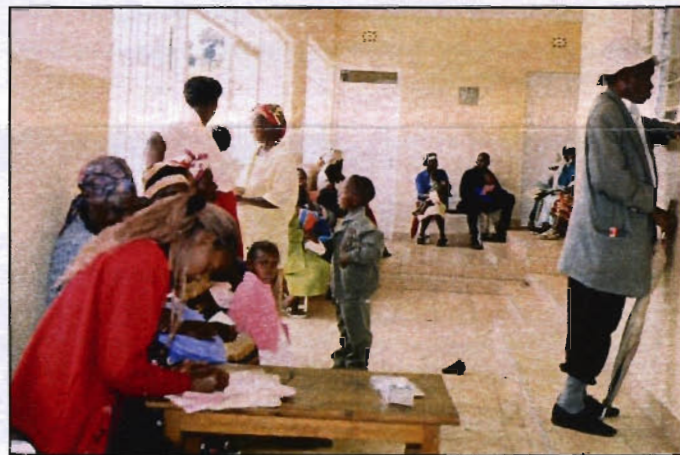
And, last but not least, we keep our eyes focused on the future plans and construction for a girls secondary school in Lare. Public education is not available for children beyond the eighth grade in Kenya. It has been Sr. Rose's vision to provide accessible and affordable education to the children of her village – we are working in that direction.



Above The Mercy Center's modern facility is contrasted against images, like the picture above, of the poverty stricken and primitive lifestyle of Lare's villagers.



Left Over 1000 villagers per month wait in line for medical care at the Mercy Center Lare Clinic.



Right Families await medical care in Mercy Center's reception area



Above Mercy Center's new office in Lare' where we share office space with the Gaithersburg, MD based organization Victim's Rights Foundation.

WEST POINT CADETS DONATE TO MERCY CENTER

West Point Cadet, Aaron Palmer, organized the fall 2006 Combined Federal Campaign for his Company's fund drive, highlighting the Mercy Center Foundation USA, Inc. as its designated recipient. The busy young men made donations of pocket change and larger amounts of bills that amounted to well over \$743.00 for the season. Through the use of Mercy Center Flyers, Cadet Palmer was able to attract a great deal of interest in the mission and vision of the Mercy Center Foundation's work in Lare, Kenya. We want to give these young men a huge thank you for their service to our country and those in need around the world.

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Where compassion transforms life!

Mercy Center Foundation USA is an organization of volunteers dedicated to serving the needs of the people of Lare, an isolated community of 35,000 in the Great Rift Valley of Kenya. Our mission is to bring hope to the people of Lare by providing sustainable and affordable medical and educational assistance regardless of religion, politics, ethnicity or nationality.

RICK'S TESTIMONIAL

In this day and age, much of my information comes from what I see in the media – events come and go with such ease that I hardly feel them. As I experience life from afar, I have become somewhat detached and desensitized. It is truly exceptional to experience first-hand, up close and personal, an event that will live in my memory for the rest of my life. My trip to Kenya in March 2006 was such an event. It rocked my world. It shook me. It excited me. And, it pained me. It touched my heart and nurtured my soul. It was real and it was unforgettable.

For 10 days, I was part of a medical mission to a little village halfway around the world. As treasurer of the Mercy Center Foundation, my goal was to discern how I might be of aid. Instead, I was the beneficiary as the villagers of Lare showed me what life, in its most essential nature, is all about.

It is a hard life, a life of abject poverty. Their thatched-mud homes have no windows, no electricity, no kitchen, a minimum of furniture and few material possessions. Water is carried from a ditch or from the well funded by the founder of the Mercy Center Foundation, Albert Forte. Their five-acre farms are worked with simple hand tools and yield a meager harvest. There is nothing to share with a friend or neighbor but a kind word or a smile. One might say they were dealt a bad hand, or that circumstances had conspired against them.

But it was here, in a place that time has seemingly forgotten, that I was reminded what really mattered in life. Here were people who had nothing but each other. The absence of the most basic comforts revealed what really mattered. Although their days were spent scratching a meager existence from a plot of rocky land, their nights were spent cooking or talking with family and friends. The villagers of Lare don't see their primitive circumstances; they are unaware of their destitute plight. They are filled with hope, faith and optimism.

A year has elapsed since my return from Kenya. I often think of the people I met. I don't want this experience to be crowded into the recesses of my memory by the challenges I face on a day-to-day basis. My work with the Mercy Center Foundation keeps me grounded and focused on relationships, family and a commitment to share my abundance with others.

