



# GLOBAL HEALTH

Newsletter of Global Health Ministries

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

This month's newsletter celebrates shipping of medical supplies and equipment; the founding and most enduring of Global Health Ministries' services in helping the hands that heal. We began some 15 years ago out of a rented garage, sweating and laughing our way to pack the first container. Today, we stage shipments from our Fridley, MN, warehouse under the expert and energetic leadership of Scott Lien. Three tiers of supplies rise above the warehouse floor, sorted and packed by more than 200 volunteers. Specialists test and renovate electronic equipment, sort surgical instruments, repair and crate furnishings, procure needed items, and maintain a computerized inventory.

In 2003, we project a near doubling of our shipments from 8 to 14 at a cost of \$95,000. We're testing the limits of our capacity, but God continues to present compelling opportunities that call us to stretch in faith. What makes this possible is the growing collaboration of people around the country who share our passion for mission in support of a medical missionary, health care program or their companion church.

Just in the last few weeks I have heard from leaders associated with eight ELCA Synods about shipments to Lutheran hospitals in Africa. They form medical subcommittees of their Synod's Companion Church initiative, raise funds and gather supplies and equipment from local health care institutions. They recruit medical professionals for exchange visits to build relationships with overseas health care providers and administrators, and obtain first hand assessments of medical needs. Their enthusiastic spirit is a source of joy and inspiration; we welcome and encourage their invitations to partnership.

Fifteen years have brought changes and challenges, but one thing remains the same. As the doors are sealed on each container before shipment, volunteers and staff form a circle of prayer, some shedding tears of joy, lifting up for blessing those who will be enabled to carry on the healing ministry of our

## 14 shipments planned for 2003

Global Health Ministries shipped nine containers of medical supplies overseas in 2002. The shipments went to Bangladesh, Cameroon (2), Liberia, Malawi (for the first time), Papua New Guinea, and Tanzania (3). Four of the containers were 40 feet long, the others 20 feet. This year plans are to ship 14 containers. Since each shipment takes two or three weeks to prepare and get underway, the warehouse crews will get quite a workout. This schedule also calls for an increase in the amount of donated supplies and equipment. Always in short supply are gloves (exam and surgical), dressings (all), syringes (3cc, 5cc and 10cc), sutures and blood bags. The cost of shipping averages about \$6000 to \$8000 per container. Additional supplies are often hand carried by persons traveling to a country where there is a need. These supplies are taken from items in the warehouse that have not been designated for a specific area.

## Don't give up on Phebe!

Please do not give up on Phebe Hospital! is the appeal of Dr. Ruth Goehle as she steps down from her position as medical director of the Liberian institution. After years of civil war and unrest the hospital's financial resources are severely limited. The government is no longer able to provide support. As a result the staff has been reduced by a third. At the same time thousands of displaced persons in the area are in need of medical services. Refugees continue to come from long distances to the hospital. Dr. Emmanuel Sandoe has taken over as medical director. He is a graduate of the University of Liberia's medical college and has been serving as the head of the eye clinic. Dr. Goehle will continue on the staff as a surgeon.

Lord Jesus, and those whose prayers for health will be answered. Thank you for all you do to make this ministry possible!

Rev. Tim Iverson

## AIDS workers needed

The ELCA Division for Global Mission is appealing for two persons with public health experience to develop HIV/AIDS programs in South Africa and Zimbabwe. These persons will work with churches, hospitals and community health programs. The term of service, with stipend, is for two years beginning June, 2003.

Volunteer opportunities are open for doctors, technicians, nursing instructors, therapists and pharmacists in several countries. Contact Steve Nelson at: [snelson@elca.org/dgm/mission](mailto:snelson@elca.org/dgm/mission). or 1-800-638-3522 ext. 2631



Donated goods become towers of healing as they are stacked in the warehouse according to their destination.



**M**onday through Friday, and sometimes on Saturdays, cars, trucks, and semis arrive at the GHM warehouse (above) to unload donated medical supplies and equipment. The items come from individuals, hospitals, clinics, medical distributors, and nursing homes in nearly every state in the Union. The range of items is immense, not only in terms of category (anesthesia, orthopedic, respiratory, surgery, nursing care) but in quality as well. Everything is inspected, sorted, inventoried, palletized and made ready for shipment by volunteers. Our guiding principle in the warehouse is junk for Jesus is still junk!

To give you an idea of how donated medical supplies and equipment are processed in the GHM warehouse, let's review the steps involved. The first step is receiving and inspecting. Upon receipt, the items are placed into two categories: supplies or equipment. For supplies, the items are placed in front of the sorting bench to be inspected by the regular Tuesday and Thursday warehouse volunteers.

For equipment, the items are stacked in front of the "equipment received" shelf to be inspected by the biomedical and repair volunteers. Both inspection processes involve a volunteer looking at the items and deciding whether it's

appropriate for use overseas. If the answer is no, those items are recycled, tossed, or offered to another organization that can use them in a more "developed" country.

The second step involves sorting and inventorying. If a box is received with a variety of items inside, the box is brought into our sorting room and the individual items are sorted into baskets according to type of category (anesthesia, orthopedic, respiratory, surgery, nursing care, etc.). When enough of one type of



For 11 years Carol Koosmann has come regularly to work in the warehouse. Her job is sorting: identifying, counting, packing and labeling boxes and entering all the information on a computer.

item fills the basket, the volunteer grabs an empty box and fills it tight and neat, keeping track of the name of the item and quantity (e.g. surgical gloves, size

## How your gifts

7.5, quantity of 50). The box is taped shut and placed on the sorting bench. Using a donated computer from the ELCA Board of Pensions, inventory software created by GHM, and a refurbished label printer, the volunteer selects a proper description from the

Among the regular warehouse volunteers is Philip Baysah Tellewoyan. He knows better than anyone else how valuable this work is as he comes from Liberia.



inventory list, enters the quantity, size of box, weight, and location within the warehouse, and prints a label with a barcode. The label is attached to the box and the box is placed on a pallet assigned to that category.

The third step is advertising what we have in the warehouse by way of our "spring" catalog. The catalog describes supplies and equipment we typically receive and stock throughout the year, and is sent to our overseas partners via email, postal mail, hand courier, and any other method necessary.

The overseas partner is then requested to mark those items needed, including quantity and priority, add anything else needed not listed, and return the catalog to GHM as soon as possible. The amount and type of items requested, along with the road conditions in the receiving country, determine the size of the container (either 20' or 40'), and when the container is to be packed.



First, all donated materials are sorted, boxed and labeled.



All equipment is tested and repaired so it is ready for use.

# are prepared for shipment overseas



Packing is a 3-dimensional jigsaw puzzle with no empty spaces.

If all goes well and we have nearly everything in stock that the hospital needs, then we're ready to stage and ship. However, most of the time the returned catalogs include items that we normally do not stock, including tractors, whirlpool baths, electrical wiring, paint, solar panels, etc. These items are placed in the hands of our procurement volunteer, Elwood Mell, and phone calls go out searching for donors or vendors willing to sell at a reduced price. Volunteers call the next step "shopping" because it involves walking up and down the aisles with the catalog, pulling requested items and placing a hospital assign sticker on them (if there are several hospitals receiving items), and crossing the item off. When finished, the items are stacked on pallets in the shipping aisle ready to be packed into the container.



The final step is packing the container and this is probably the most rewarding. A group of volunteers is contacted, hopefully younger ones with strong backs, and the packing party is underway. Every box (barcode) is scanned by the computer and loaded by

hand into the container to form a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle with hardly a square-inch left unused. You can usually hear a cry of "more small boxes needed" by a muffled voice deep in the container.

Equipment ranges in size from a huge X-ray machine to a finely honed scalpel for ophthalmologic surgery. Beds to bedpans and clamps to computers come in these containers. Sometimes it is the "rare" gift like a lawn mower which would cost \$1,000 to buy locally.

Materials in the container would easily cost \$50,000 if purchased. Thus hospitals can set charges at a level that the people can afford. This is a critically important ministry of GHM.

When finished, the volunteers form a prayer circle and pray over the container and the contents.

*After the container arrives overseas there is still work to be done. James Noss writes from Cameroon:*

The process for this container was slowed considerably when documents from the shipper were not found for a month. The problem was compounded by a work slow down due to the month long fasting of the Muslim community. A lot of the inventory lists had not been translated correctly which would have meant problems with customs.

Strict regulations by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund mean we can't avoid customs fees. The final customs charge was \$6,200 - a very small fee considering the actual value of the shipment. Then we had to negotiate a reduced port storage fee. Because of a huge pipeline project transport costs and good trucks are hard to find. Two semis finally brought the containers to Ngaoundere.

Lights were set up so we could work into the night. We designated areas for each hospital, but with several of our helpers being illiterate, it was not always easy to get items in the right spots. As we delivered the supplies to the Ngaoundéré Hospital there was much excitement and happiness as the medical people checked the labels and realized what they were getting. Supplies for the Ngaoubela Hospital will be delivered next week once we get our truck road worthy.

The equipment in these containers will practically give a new birth to our hospital. On behalf of the hospital staff and the patients, thank you so much. Please convey our gratitude to your faithful co-workers and generous donors.



Tears of joy greeted the arrival of a container in Papua New Guinea. Many of the supplies will have to be carried on foot to clinics in remote areas.

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*What is Global Health Ministries? GHM provides a gift of life -- physical and spiritual -- through Lutheran health care work across the world by providing project financial support, locating and shipping urgently needed medical supplies, recruiting health care personnel, and funding the training of national health care givers.*

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## It takes hundreds of volunteers (see inside)



Many groups travel miles to help in preparing shipments. Above are women from Mankato, MN, and Boy Scouts from Prior Lake. Volunteers have been coming from South Dakota

for seven years to help pack containers going to Cameroon, their companion synod. "It's exciting to have this hands-on connection with our brothers and sisters far away," they say.

