



# GLOBAL HEALTH

Newsletter of Global Health Ministries

Vol. 21 No. 6

November - December 2008

## Health Promoters in Guatemala

*Accompaniment* is the word which describes the relationship between La Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (ILAG) and the Saint Paul Area Synod (SPAS) of the ELCA. This companion synod relationship exists for the purpose of strengthening one another for life and mission within the body of Christ. Founded in 1991 by Padre Horacio Castillo, ILAG is the youngest of the Lutheran Church bodies in Central America. ILAG ministers to people from the margins of Guatemalan society, particularly the indigenous poor.

The church has about 2000 members in 17 faith communities. In addition to the word and sacrament ministry and two schools in the Guatemala City, ILAG is beginning a focus on health. SPAS-ILAG has begun a Health Care Task Force, and recently sought GHM support for its primary focus of capacity-building and support of health care promoters within the ILAG communities.

Last summer, my husband and I had the privilege and opportunity to travel to Guatemala City to advance this new commitment. With grant support from Global Health Ministries, eight health promoters from rural villages were able to travel long distances by bus to attend a two day training on health promotion. Six men and two women representing six ILAG faith communities in rural Guatemala attended the sessions. These rural villages are isolated resettled refugee communities with formal health resources many hours away.

Based on an assessment earlier in the year, basic curriculum was developed by health care task force members at SPAS for this first course. The classes focused on public health concepts and primary prevention. In addition to class materials, the health promoters were given health care supplies, much of which came from GHM. The experience was meaningful and challenging as we learned about the health risks living in remote rural areas with no plumbing, electricity or clean water. Multiple teaching methods were used including discussion, pictures, role play and demonstration. Some of the students had prior health training, but most did not. As the main instructor, I found the health promoters to be eager, bright

"Health Promoters," continued page 3



Katherine Baumgartner with health promoters Azucena (L) and Catarina (R)

## Eunice Olson Commissioned for CAR

A joyful commissioning service was held for Eunice Olson on Sunday, October 12th, at the Hawley High School Auditorium in Hawley, MN. Eunice



has accepted a call from Global Health Ministries to serve the Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic. She will assist Teresa Obwaya, Gallo Project Manager, in her work to build a new Church health center near the village of Gallo. Teresa has excellent experience in developing and administering hospitals in East Africa, but does not speak French or the other local Central African languages. Eunice, who grew up in CAR in the Lutheran Church and later married Rev. Tom Olson, who served in CAR as an ELCA missionary, will help Teresa with translation and logistics as she meets with local officials and contractors. The health center is being built in Eunice's home area, and she is well-acquainted with local religious, governmental and health program leaders. Eunice will be invaluable for this mission, and a supportive friend for Teresa, with whom she will live through next July, when the new center is scheduled for dedication.

Olson's fortuitous involvement in the Gallo project came about from her need to fulfill U.S. Immigration adoption requirements. Eunice must have 24 months of physical custody of four children in CAR before the Olsons can adopt them and attain visas to come to the United States. Eunice is glad to be able to meet these requirements while giving something back to her country. Attending the commissioning service were many members of Hawley area congregations, Rev. Tim Iverson of GHM, Gordon and Betty Olson of Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry, as well as Bishop Bill Rindy and other representatives from Eastern North Dakota, ELCA Synod and supporting congregations. Your continued prayers for Eunice and Teresa are invited, as well as for Rev. Tom Olson, who remains in Hawley with the family's other five children adopted from CAR. **GHM Project #10GA-G0001, Gallo Health Center.**

## Direct Lines from the Director

Wow! Here comes the cold weather, and as usual, I'm just not ready or willing to embrace the change. That was made clear enough recently when I realized once again that I had forgotten to put the storm windows on my house; I envisioned climbing up a ladder through flying snow with windows on my back! No, it's better to prepare for what's coming, to adapt, and then to make your home in the new situation.

I find a parallel in matters of mission. The unrelenting news of economic crisis, for example, carries with it the warning to prepare for challenges ahead. That was certainly part of the inspiration for our recent annual conference "*Health Ministry in Changing Times*." We were blessed with record-breaking attendance and an excellent keynote speaker, Dr. Mark Jacobson. Mark reviewed the ways in which he, as medical director of Selian Lutheran Hospital, has faithfully and creatively adapted to threats and opportunities he has encountered. Under his leadership, Selian began as a small clinic to become a model for primary, preventative and surgical care in East Africa. Soon, one of Mark's dreams will become reality with the dedication of the new Selian Arusha Lutheran Medical Center, a multi-specialty facility that promises to significantly advance the quality and treatment options in medical care for the poor of Northern Tanzania.

As I had hoped, Mark encouraged our own hopefulness and faithfulness in mission. His address and the morning workshops trumpeted the need to keep ourselves open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, while keeping our feet firmly on the ground. We can and must be uncompromising in our dedication to serve the Lord and his people, but also flexibly adaptive to the times we live in. I appreciated Mark's emphasis on the utilization of short-term mission personnel, for example, to enhance and extend the service and support functions of mission hospitals. He echoed GHM's own growing role in facilitating such service, which can help alleviate the budgetary constraints of our overseas partners while responding to the growing desire for such meaningful service by Lutherans in America.

As the cold winds of economic troubles threaten, we are pleased to point to our top rating for the unprecedented seventh year in a row by Charity Navigator (<http://www.charitynavigator.org/>) for our low administrative costs below 7% and our excellence in financial management and accountability. Our

board's strategic plans direct priority in the coming years to maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of our core services, like shipping of medical supplies and equipment. For the sake of the poor whom we are called to serve after our Lord's example, we know that the need is as great as ever, but so too is our obligation to excellence in stewardship. Your continued support will be needed as much or more than ever, but I know the sacrifice represented by your gifts may also become increasingly dear. As always, we will strive to serve faithfully under our Lord's calling, as we entrust our futures into his loving hands. Rev. Tim Iverson

## The Importance of Packaging

Have you ever watched a young child tear through the wrapping on a birthday or Christmas present, take out the gift, and then spend hours playing with the box that held the gift? Perhaps you remember doing something like that yourself. Packaging is important. Though we often place the emphasis on "what's in the container," the container itself is an integral part of the gift.

When GHM sends medical supplies and equipment to hospitals and clinics around the world, those gifts are greatly appreciated. But are you aware of the marvelous uses made of the containers themselves? Containers are turned into store rooms lined with shelves, they become bookstores, house internet cafes, or serve as new office space. In some places in Africa, for instance, these shipping containers are worth as much as \$1,000 USD in re-sale value.

How will the gifts sent around the world through GHM to "help the hands that heal" reach their intended recipients if there are no containers? ("We have these gifts in earthen vessels." 2 Cor. 4: 7) How can the containers themselves be a blessing to the people who receive them if there are no funds to send them?

GHM shipping costs for 2007 totaled approximately \$126,000 for 17 containers; an average cost of \$7,412 per container. In 2008, shipping plans are for 29 containers, which at \$7,412 / container equals \$214,948. With a 30% increase in fuel costs over 2007, total 2008 shipping costs will be \$252,748.

We invite your prayers and financial support to help us continue to fulfill our mission to "help the hands that heal" around the world. Remember, the package itself is just as important as the gifts it may contain. Support for shipping containers is support for the vital core of our mission together as Global Health Ministries. Rev. Lamont M. Koerner

## The B-line

by Bea Haagenson



## From the B-line Mailbox

Q: It is very difficult to find white sheets. Why can't we use colored sheets for bandages?

A: 1. Our overseas partners have requested white bandages only. At Global Health Ministries it is our mission to support healthcare overseas and therefore provide our partners with the best possible product.

2. In a recent presentation, Dr. John Lund, Liberia explained that white bandages are needed in a hospital or clinic. Dr. Lund pointed out two important reasons: To assure that the bandage is clean and to be able to detect body fluids seeping through the bandage.

In addition to the *white bandages*, there continues to be a need for bed sheets, white as well colored.

Q: Do you still need help with the "*Bandages to Blankets*" project?

A: Yes, there are many knitted and crocheted bandages in the warehouse that need to be sorted into 10 of equal length and then sewn or crocheted together. So - if you live in the Twin Cities area and have an interest in this project, please stop by GHM and pick some up. We appreciate all the help we can get.

## A new project at GHM: First Aid



This has proven to be an exciting and beneficial project. Imagine working at a clinic in any of the countries we ship to and not having the very basic supplies, such as bandages, sutures, disinfectant, ointment, basic instruments, etc. In response to this need, volunteers are packing tool boxes with needed supplies and including the boxes in shipments or sending them with travelers. The boxes are even decorated with a colorful design. The feedback from the recipients has been very positive - just what the volunteers like to hear.

*Questions for the B-line can be addressed to GHM, attention Bea Haagenson*

## Toso Reports Positive AVIA Progress

AVIA (Anosy Villages Integrated Actions) program coordinator, Dr. John Toso, returned recently from a visit with the project's staff in their Southeastern Madagascar location around Fort Dauphin. It is familiar ground for Toso, who spent much of his childhood years there with his missionary parents, and later returned with his wife Joann to serve as a missionary physician at Manambaro Hospital in the same region. Employed now in Minnesota as a physician in emergency medicine, Dr. Toso serves weekly as a volunteer AVIA coordinator for GHM to continue mission with a country and people close to his heart.

Long-distance, cross-cultural communication via internet and telephone present special challenges to this oversight role with AVIA, but if Toso had any anxieties about how well the program was going, they disappeared after his first day of meetings with Project Coordinator, Lalaina Ramarolahy and National Supervisor, Agnes Rasamimampianina during his August visit. Lalaina had met or exceeded all agreed-upon objectives on the project time-line, and AVIA was well on its way to becoming the innovative and holistic agent for community health it is designed to be.



Synod President Mosa Celestin, Dr. John Toso, Dr. E. Randria, Manambaro

AVIA will operate on a ten-year time frame with a definition of "health" that goes far beyond its traditional preventative and curative dimensions to also include education, evangelism, sanitation and clean water, improved agricultural practices, and small business development. A primary health outreach team will provide education, clinical services, referrals and immunizations, but will also conduct assessments of village "health" in the other areas mentioned. The team will then engage the involvement of other Church branches dealing with development and agriculture, as well as established local NGO's in health, nutrition, economic development and sanitation to address identified needs.

Two important Church partners in the initiative will be the healing center, "Toby Nenilava" and the Manantantely Bible School. Training programs and targeted infrastructure improvements in both institutions will strengthen their roles as AVIA collaborators in health and development promotion and needs assessment. Toso found student and staff housing in need of major renovation at Manantantely, and recommended a monthly school-based maternal/child clinic with priorities to provide bednets to each campus house, assure malaria prophylaxis for pregnant moms, provide family planning services, and de-worm the children every 6 months. At Toby Nenilava, latrine construction was identified as a primary concern and public health hazard. Needed materials and expansion of the on-site primary school for resident children of patients were also cited for attention.



Lalaina with Manantantely Bible School Director, Pastor Florent

Of special interest to Toso was the potential assistance that World Bank funding could provide to help underwrite some of the capital improvement projects, including sanitation and water projects at the Toby and the bible school, as well as a major renovation project at Manambaro Lutheran Hospital, where AVIA will establish its outreach operations center. QMM/Rio Tinto, the large-scale mining operation in the region, has also offered support to the project. **GHM Project #48IV-G0001.**

## Ilula Hospital Eye Surgery Project

For two weeks this summer, a Vision Outreach Team was hosted at Ilula Lutheran Hospital of the Iringa Diocese in Tanzania. They worked in partnership with a team from the Government Hospital in Iringa. Cataract screenings in Nyanzwa, Mgowelo, Mtandika, Pomeran, Katenga, Kidabaga and Ilula identified patients as candidates for surgery who were blind from cataracts.

The team performed 62 cataract surgeries in the operating theater at Ilula Lutheran Hospital, partner with the Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA, medical mission team. They also conducted a daily screening clinic at the hospital. Over 700 patients were screened and hundreds of prescription and reading glasses were distributed. The project leader, Dr. David Johnson, whose GHM board term recently ended, is member of Easter Lutheran, Eagan and an ophthalmologist at Health Partners Medical Group. The project was made possible through donations from his congregation, support from Vision Outreach International, and Surgical Eye Expeditions.



The smile says it all

"We were each blessed to be a blessing," Johnson said. "To give the gift of sight is a wonderful expression of the gospel. A smile of appreciation needs no translation." To read letters and more descriptions of this project, see postings at [www.ilulahealth.org](http://www.ilulahealth.org) The medical team of 9 included Dr. Johnson, his wife Sheryl, children Lars (15) and Britta (14), Shelley Kilgore, all from Eagan, and 4 volunteers from V.O.I. in Michigan.

"Health Promoters, continued

and very engaged in their learning. We ended the two day event with a commissioning ceremony and a plan to continue educational opportunities 3-4 times a year, drawing upon local resources as well as resources from the United States.

Rosendo, one of the community elders in the Lutheran Church, said quietly, "you did not forget us" and thanked us for coming to build relationships, share information, support the health within their communities, and learn from one another. *Accompaniment, a word of connection, respect and faith.* Thanks be to God and thanks to GHM for their support in this ministry.

Katherine Baumgartner, RN, BSN, MA

