

News on Nyumbani



The first facility for HIV positive orphans in Kenya

www.nyumbani.org

Volume XIII, Issue 4

Winter 2011

Dear Friends of Nyumbani

Greetings to each of you from our 4,093 children and staff in Nyumbani.

I write in the aftermath glow of the four weeks I spent recently in the U.S. What a magnificent and varied schedule was prepared for me! The highlight, of course, was the U.S. Board's Annual Benefit & Auction September 30, which reached a new record in attendance of over 400 guests and featured an enhanced array of auction items. This being my fifth benefit since Father D'Agostino passed away, I now have the joy of recognizing more and more friends of Nyumbani and consequently relating more personally. As I witnessed the extraordinary dedication and the superb organizational capacity of the [U.S. Children of God Relief Fund \(COGRF\)](#) Board during the days building up to the event, my wonder and awe knew no bounds. All I could do was to thank God for such great love and commitment to our children.

A reception on Capitol Hill September 22 was another great occasion, this year affording me the opportunity to meet several members of Congress and many staffers. I was able both to express our gratitude for the U.S. government support we receive for our community-based program Lea Toto and for homecare and medical services in Nyumbani Village, and my hope for a renewal of agreements at the end of 2012. I am gradually learning how the U.S. government functions.

I was so grateful to be invited to speak in three Catholic parishes—St. Mary, Greenwich, Conn.; Christ the King Cathedral, Atlanta; and St. Matthew's Cathedral, Washington, D.C. Invitations to

make a presentation on Nyumbani are always a delight, and this year some key ones were made to Le Moyne College, Syracuse, N.Y.; to a Washington D.C. Rotary Club luncheon; and to the Johnson & Johnson Global Communications Conference in New Jersey. After that last one, participants packed 800 satchels with gifts for Nyumbani Village children. Visiting with members of Father D'Agostino's family always nurtures my memories of him and his charisma. I also attended receptions in the Faust and Novello homes for more personal meetings with both old and new friends of Nyumbani. Meetings with representatives from Walter Reed Hospital, Family Health International, Catholic Medical Mission Board and the National Institutes of Health afforded valuable opportunities for collaboration and learning.

Back in Kenya, the peak event recently was the official opening of our new laboratory facility. Having the Kenyan Minister of Medical Services, the Honorable (Professor) Peter Anyang' Nyong'o as chief guest ensured countrywide publicity. The presence of Archbishop Alain-Paul Lebeau-pin, Apostolic Nuncio to

Kenya, affirmed our faith-based identity while having the Honorary Consul from Ireland Joseph O'Brien offered the opportunity to thank the people of Ireland, who together with Barbara Albert from the U.S., largely funded the building. But while the high-powered speeches from our Kenyan Board Chair Prof. Dominic Makawiti, distinguished guests and our chief guest were vital, one of the highlights was entertainment by our youngest children from Paul Miki Nursery school.

On another front, to our joy, Lea Toto was featured recently in a [publication from The Center for Health Market Innovations](#), which is a global network of partners that seeks to improve the functioning of health markets in developing countries with large numbers of private health care providers. The article noted Lea Toto's data management system and diagnostic laboratory testing as enhancing processes. Another recent enhancing process is our adolescent mentorship program, which seeks to help our youth to further embrace their HIV status as they prepare to exit from Lea Toto pediatric care.

In Nyumbani Village, the significant event was the launch of a new sports field for Lawson High School (LHS) on August 21. LHS donor Andrew Law accompanied by the Nyumbani UK Chair Simon Philips and UK Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt were introduced, speeches were made in our Community Hall, then two LHS football teams carrying a plaque and a ball led us to the field. The plaque was officially erected, then Andrew threw the ball to the teams and play began.

I was delighted to show our new laboratory to Gary Cohen, executive vice-

(Continued on back page)



Sister Mary (left) and one of the very first Nyumbani volunteers—Jesse Marmon Haines—reunited at the 2011 Annual Benefit.



The Connection Between Spurwing and Nyumbani

Introduction (by Lloydie Zaiser):

When I met Susan and Raphael Maina, it was 2006, and Father D'Ag had recommended their tour company for a safari. I had just wrapped up three weeks of volunteering at Nyumbani Children's Home, and I really did not want to leave the children to go off on safari. But I am so glad I did! Spurwing Travel and Tours, Susan and Raphael's co-owned company, took very good care of me probably partly because I was a friend of Father D'Ag and Nyumbani. But also, I got the feeling Spurwing was in the business of treating their travelers in a special way. It was after two more visits to Kenya and volunteering at various Nyumbani programs that I decided to quit my day job and start [Kenya Educational Service Trips \(KEST\)](#). Through KEST, I have partnered with the Mainas and Spurwing Travel and Tours since the Fall of 2007, and I can honestly say, if Spurwing went out of business, so would KEST. Their company provides a high level of professionalism and customer satisfaction that makes experiencing Africa very special. Here is how the Spurwing/Maina/Nyumbani connection started...

Good Neighbors over the Fence

As told by Raphael Maina, co-owner, with his wife, Susan, of Spurwing Travel and Tours

It was 1996 on a Sunday morning when the Maina family, owners of [Spurwing Travel and Tours](#), woke up and decided it was time to visit the Nyumbani Children's Home.

How did we find out about the home? We saw an article at our local dairy highlighting Father D'Agostino's tireless fights to get through government red tape so that he could create Nyumbani.

I had already decided I wanted to be a volunteer in my free time. Our children, Jacqueline and Michael, heard Susan, my wife, and I discussing the home and a possible visit, and they decided to join us. They were so inspired by what they had learned about the home that they asked us to cancel their birthday parties and holiday for that year and boost our donation kitty to Nyumbani. But we had not yet gone for our visit, a visit that would be the first time our family came face to face with what children living with HIV/AIDS have to endure.

So came that Sunday morning! At the home, we were welcomed by a handful of cheerful little children as well as Father D'Agostino and the Manager Mr. Gathaiya. Michael and Jacqueline had brought clothing, toys and assorted goodies and our family was touched by the humbleness of the children as well as by the love Father D'Agostino had for those children.

After several such visits to Nyumbani, our family developed the desire to get

active with the ongoing activities of the children. We were blessed to meet a good neighbor and friend of Nyumbani that the children called "shosho" (grandma) Njoki Githenya. She eventually sold part of her property to us. Buying her property, which was right next to Nyumbani, brought our family closer to the Nyumbani family, and we got to know other members of the managing team including Sister Mary, General Manager Protus and Sister Julie to name a few.

We began constructing a home on our property in 2000, and Father D'Ag would walk over to the fence by the Nyumbani laundry area that bordered our land to chat with Susan and me. He was interested in the progress of our construction, which he thought was a hotel, and he always told us that he wanted his guests to come and stay at our establishment. We would explain that it was not a hotel, yet our home eventually became something similar—a place for visitors—and soon we ended up converting the home to a home stay with a guesthouse. After we completed the first wing, we were blessed to host Father D'Ag and the Nyumbani family for dinner several times.

Our relationship with Nyumbani under the leadership of Sister Mary has blossomed even further. Nyumbani recommends guests stay with us or travel on safari with our company, Spurwing Travel and Tours. At the same time, we have introduced most of our safari clients to the Nyumbani home, and whenever there is an opportunity, we visit with our clients, who make donations. For example, our clients Gonzaga University in the



From left: Raphael Maina, Lloydie Zaiser and Susan Maina

U.S. and Firenze in Italy have made several donations during visits.

Nyumbani guests now enjoy stays at the Spurwing Guest House. We make safari arrangements and coordinate various visits to Nyumbani projects in both Nairobi environs, where the eight Lea Toto sites can be found, and Kitui, where Nyumbani Village is located.

Through our good relationship with the Nyumbani Home, a passage was built between our two properties. (We call it our "Lloydie Gate" in honor of KEST's founder). This passage is another dream of Father D'Ag's, who wanted an inter-connecting passage between Nyumbani and Spurwing. When he left us, Sister Mary very kindly allowed its opening. Meanwhile, Lloydie's friendship and the visitors she brings have been a blessing.

The Spurwing family has also organized and sponsored safari trips for the children of Nyumbani to Kenyan national parks and is sponsoring the school education program for student Paul Munyao, now in Form Three. It is our hope and joy to see Munyao complete his secondary school and proceed higher to achieve his dream career. Spurwing and the Maina family also supported Angela, a young Nyumbani student who completed her tourism training with us. We are happy that she is performing well at one of the local universities. With time, we look forward to sponsoring other students and hopefully offering jobs to Nyumbani 'graduates' based on their training.

It is amazing that this relationship, which has grown so rich and broad, was nurtured by conversations over a fence.

Young Ambassadors Club Reunites in 2011

By Jennifer Geiling Bayles, KEST Assistant Director for Program Development

In 2009, I spent three weeks at Nyumbani Village with KEST. While there, my colleague Megan Zaiser Mullally and I began an after-school program called Young Ambassadors Club for 30 students in grades six through eight at Hotcourses Primary School. The purpose of the club was to facilitate a cross-cultural exchange between American and Kenyan students so that both sets of students would serve as “ambassadors” for their countries. It was such a rewarding, successful program that people on KEST trips have worked on projects with this group of Nyumbani students ever since.

This summer, I had the honor and opportunity to return and begin a second installment of this program with a new group of bright, enthusiastic youths. The four American young adults that helped with the new installment—Elizabeth Bryan, Royce Harrison, Morgan St. Maxens and Natalie Vicas—and I benefited from a rich cultural and educational experience as we worked closely with the club during our three-week stay. Twenty-five of the Kenyan students were new members while five were returning standard eight students, who acted as teacher’s assistants. Together, the students and volunteers learned the values of leadership, community service and peaceful conflict resolution through the teachings of Wangari Maathai and Martin Luther King, Jr. In true Nyumbani spirit, we learned that “if you want to walk fast, walk alone; if you want to walk far, walk with others” (African proverb).

The students worked diligently and found ways to advertise Kenya, to recognize community leaders for their service by writing them thank you notes, and to participate in service activities such as collecting trash and planting trees. At the end of our visit, the club made a presentation in the multi-purpose hall to educate the community and proudly display their accomplishments.

The intention we had in creating this club is to be able to leave behind a tangible positive influence. We hope our students will think twice before throwing a wrapper on the ground or that they will readily share the story of Wangari

Maathai with peers. Yet the American visitors came away with as much as we left behind. Without hesitation, our new Kenyan friends opened up and shared their creativity and dreams. They invited us to become part of their community. The bonds formed between the students and the lead-

ers of this program were the true basis of its success. Those of us in America truly thank them for their participation.



The Ambassadors Club members and volunteers

In the Words of the Children ...

Nyumbani Home General Manager Protus Lumiti is helping us gather the thoughts of the children by inviting them to write about issues important to them.

An Angel I call Father by Lucy, age 16

Father D’Agostino landed on earth in 1926, and I believe he came not from this world or heaven. I believe he was just magically formed. He grew up just like any other child with a different imagination and dreams, but he had a special gift given by God. The gift was to help little children whose parents had left them—children living with HIV/AIDS.

Those days, HIV/AIDS was a deadly monster in the world. But for him it was just like any other disease. He decided to start a home in Kenya for orphans with



Lucy

the HIV/AIDS virus, a move that opened the doors to other homes in East Africa. In 1992, our Nyumbani home was born, a home for all homeless children who are living with HIV/AIDS. This is where I have grown up. He continued to advocate for availability of ARVs, and he

As Wangari Maathai said: “YOU are a gift to your communities and indeed the world. YOU are our hope and our future.”

was successful. The children continue to receive the medication.

I thank God for giving us such a wonderful father who did not only help children but helped many other people in the world. Through him, people have learned to care for other people, and now we have sponsors who help us and other institutions helping the children. We shall continue to fulfill his dreams since his short time in this world did not allow him to finish it. I love you Father D’Agostino.

A Trip to Ireland by Alma, age 10

In August this year, I went to Ireland. We went in two planes. When we reached Ireland, I was very happy that we had reached safety. Then we ate dinner, and after dinner, we slept because we were very tired. In the morning, we woke up and ate breakfast. Then we packed our lunch and went to a horse show where we saw many horses. We went to play on the swings and jumping castles. We rode the horses, saw magicians and a man juggling. It was fun, but I felt hungry, then I decided to eat my lunch. It started to rain and we ran back to the tent. An hour later we went to a museum where we saw many things such as lions, elephants, a hippo, and rhinos before going back to where we were staying. I enjoyed three weeks in Ireland and came back home (to Kenya) safely. Thank you to all our friends.



On stage to receive awards are honorees Gary Cohen, executive vice president of Becton-Dickinson (BD) and Company; Ryan Burnette, director of Alliance Biosciences; and Conrad Person, director of Corporate Contributions, Johnson & Johnson. Cohen and Burnette, together with honoree Krista Thompson, vice president/general manager Global Health for BD, were recognized for their help in getting Nyumbani's new lab running and certified. Person and Johnson & Johnson have supported Nyumbani in many of its efforts, including obtaining the medicine the children need to stay healthy.



Speaking of a recent trip to Nyumbani with his son, Congressman Chris Van Hollen told benefit guests: "In a world where abandoned children live on a razor-thin margin between life and death, Nyumbani provides a much needed safety net. It provides medical care, nutrition, a family and most importantly, love, to these helpless and forsaken kids."



Mistress of Ceremonies Kathleen Matthews shared her experiences with attendees.



Auctioneer John Paul Womble asks for bids on a David Yurman necklace donated by Liljenquist & Beckstead jewelers and modeled by COGRF Auction Co-chair Katie Stuart.



British A. Robinson, director of Private Sector Engagement, The Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, U.S. Department of State, talks with Sister Mary.



African masks are offered in the Silent Auction. Many items sold were made by African artists.

Transforming Lives in Just One Night

Friends, supporters and volunteers gathered at the Ritz Carlton, Washington, D.C. on September 30 to share their thoughts and wishes for the Nyumbani programs at the 18th Annual Nyumbani Benefit & Auction. The event theme focused on those who help Nyumbani by "Transforming Lives." Mistress of Ceremonies Kathleen Matthews welcomed the record crowd of 400 people. Sister Mary then led off the evening by bringing attendees up to date on the Nyumbani Home, the Nyumbani Village and Lea Toto, as well as the newly opened Diagnostic Laboratory.

The animated auctioneer John Paul Womble took the stage to auction off some very special donations including an African luxury excursion with Micato Safaris and an original Sunflowers painting by Anna Demovidova. Attendees used electronic handheld bidding devices to bid on over 130 silent auction items, many being African artifacts or handmade crafts and jewelry by African artists offered exclusively at the Nyumbani event. By the event's conclusion, nearly every item offered in the live and silent auction had been sold, raising more than \$150,000 towards Nyumbani programs. In addition, an inaugural online auction raised over \$350. Benefit income together with auction proceeds raised more than \$250,000, more financial support for Nyumbani than has ever been raised in an evening.

A Place Called Home

Technical difficulties kept attendees from seeing a beautiful film by Shamus Fatzinger, who went to Kenya this summer to film the Home and Village programs. However, people can now see it online.

Shamus is a professional photo journalist who specializes in mixed media presentations when he's not working for a weekly newspaper group based in Northern Virginia.

He put together a powerful 15-minute video for the benefit that captured the images and voices of the Nyumbani experience. Sister Mary said the film: "beautifully captured the spirit of Nyumbani." See "A Place Called Home" at <http://randomvariation.wordpress.com/2011/09/28/3675/>



John Noel, Sister Mary, Barbara and Todd Albert, and Patty Noel share a moment of friendship. Barbara was awarded this year's John & Patty Noel Humanitarian Award, which is given to an individual who has made outstanding contributions in the war against HIV/AIDS.



Sister Mary shares her thoughts with Dr. Fred Sawe, deputy director, HIV Care and Research, Kenya Medical Research Institute.



From left are Dino DeConcini, Sister Mary and Keith Murfee DeConcini.



Father Jean Baptiste Mazarati, a Jesuit from Rwanda, who is now at Georgetown University, leads the invocation.



Longtime Nyumbani friends Lorna McLeod and Father George meet up.



Nyumbani President MaryLynn Qurnell introduced Nyumbani honorees.



COGRF Auction Co-chair Gail Dalferes Condrey discusses the evening's success with Sister Mary.

Dear Friends of Nyumbani,

As we celebrate this holiday season, we are truly grateful for our many blessings. The greatest blessing of all is our ability to offer help and hope to the children of Nyumbani, thanks to your generosity. The U.S. Children of God Relief Fund (COGRF) Board extends our heartfelt appreciation for your continued concern and support.

I have had the opportunity to visit Nyumbani numerous times where I witnessed first-hand the amazing work of Sister Mary Owens and her staff in offering love, support and guidance to children who are among the most vulnerable in the world. There are no words to describe the transformation that takes place when a child who has been neglected or abandoned comes to Nyumbani and begins to thrive in a loving and protective environment.

As President of the U.S. Board, I am excited about what has been accomplished. From a humble start with three abandoned HIV+ orphans taken in by Father D'Agostino nearly 20 years ago, Nyumbani now serves over 4,000 children affected by the AIDS pandemic, most of whom are HIV+. But much remains to be done:

♥ Some children at the Home and the Lea Toto Community Outreach Program are showing resistance to the second line of anti-retroviral (ARVs) drugs and will die without access to third-line ARV's. We have stop-gap measures in place to cover their needs, but more permanent solutions are desperately needed.

♥ In the Lea Toto program, the World Food Program (WFP) has changed its strategy and now only supports families who have a moderately malnourished HIV+ child, which accounts for only one-third of the food-insecure families served by Nyumbani. Nyumbani is committed to a holistic approach to the children under our care and good nutrition is a critical element of that care. We need to be able to continue to reach out to those on the brink of starvation no longer supported by WFP.

♥ Nyumbani Village will be completed in 2012 and will house 1,000 orphans and 100 grandparents who have been affected by the AIDS pandemic. But it will be seven years before the sustainability programs are fully in place to independently support the Village. Vital to sustainability is the melia tree program which requires a ten-year cycle of growth and continuous planting. It's essential that we continue the push towards sustainability.

With the support of you and like-minded people and organizations around the world, Nyumbani has overcome large problems in the past. We will do so again.

In the spirit of this special and holy holiday season, please consider making an end-of-year donation to enable Nyumbani to continue not only providing urgent medical care, but also bringing hope and joy to the neediest among us.

We pray for peace on earth and wish each of you and your families a joyous holiday and a wonderful New Year.

MaryLynn Qurnell
U.S. Board President

Dear Friends

(Continued from page 1)

president, Becton-Dickinson (BD), who visited with his family on the last day of the laboratory accreditation process by Alliance Biosciences' Marian Downing. BD had financed this stage of the project. Furthermore, it was fitting that Gary Cohen; along with Krista Thompson, vice president and general manager at BD; Ryan Burnette, director of Alliance Biosciences; and Barbara Albert were 2011 COGRF Nyumbani benefit honorees together with Conrad Person, director of Corporation Contributions for Johnson and Johnson and longtime friend of Nyumbani. I was happy also that officials from Global Health had the opportunity to visit Nyumbani and our new laboratory. I was sad to miss the visit to Nyumbani Home of Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, deputy secretary general of the Council for Europe, but delighted to hear she took the Nyumbani Home as a model to the 9th Council of Europe Conference of Health

Ministers in Lisbon days after her visit.

Ahead for our children in all programs are end-of-year school examinations, which are especially important for end-of-primary, high school and college students. These are significant milestones in our children's lives—milestones that will direct their future lives and which we never envisaged back in 1992 when Nyumbani was founded. We thank God, who guided Father D'Ag to reach out to HIV+ abandoned children. Nineteen years later, we celebrated Foundation Day (this past September) knowing that his efforts have blossomed into fullness of life for these children.

God bless each one.

Sister Mary

Tribute to the Women of Kenya

Oh women of Kenya,
do you know how beautiful you are?
With your dark eyes holding your
stories of such sorrow and despair
your shining faces still able to smile so lovely
despite hardship beyond imagination

Oh women of Kenya
do you know how strong you are?
To carry your sick children on your backs
for miles through the alleys of Kibera
to raise the children of a nation through
sickness and poverty with such love
Oh women of Kenya
do you know how powerful you are?
You are the true backbone of your country
the bricks and the mortar of your people,
the keepers of the culture and traditions
the past and the future
Oh women of Kenya
do you know how glorious you are?
You dance and sing with a lively spirit
that could fill the heavens
that suspends all time and lifts all hearts
with infectious joy
Oh women of Kenya
do you know how truly amazing you are?
You moved me in a way I could not have
imagined
found places in my heart I never knew existed
A piece of me is there in Kenya with you
I am but a deep breath away in my mind's eye
and I am remembering just how beautiful you
are!

Lynn Ouellette

Nyumbani-USA

(202) 422-5024

info@nyumbani.org

c/o Crowell & Moring, LLP
1001 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004

More Nyumbani friends at this year's benefit

