

News on Nyumbani



The first facility for HIV positive orphans in Kenya.

www.nyumbani.org

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See you in September!

The 14th Annual Nyumbani Benefit

Honoring the Memory of
Father D'Ag

Saturday, September 29

Georgetown Prep, Bethesda,
Maryland

The Guest of Honor will be Sister Mary Owens, IBVM, Nyumbani's Executive Director, who will speak on the continuing care of the children and families of Nyumbani.

The featured entertainment is Mark Shields, prize-winning columnist and political commen-



tator, who is a frequent guest on television shows and writes a

political column for the *Washington Post*.

Once again, a Silent Auction will enliven the evening with many donated items up for bid by guests.

To learn more about the Benefit and Auction, go to www.nyumbani.org.

Dear Friends of Nyumbani:

Greetings of friendship to each of you in the U.S. Here in Nairobi, we have just completed a Strategic Planning Workshop to develop a Master Plan for Nyumbani. It was the first time we came together with representatives of all four programs—the Home, the Village at Kitui, Lea Toto and the Diagnostic Laboratory; and we rejoiced in the new sense of unity created by this historic event. Father D'Ag's vision and mission have evolved over the years as the nature of the Nyumbani Home underwent a change from hospice to a family residence. When antiretroviral medications became available, Lea Toto took on a new, much broader face. Now that we are eight months into the life of the Nyumbani Village, we have further expanded our vision and mission while seeking to faithfully reflect Father D'Ag's spirit. We now see our vision as supporting sustainable communities for HIV-infected and HIV-affected children. Our core inspiration, however, remains the same: Christian compassion. We see ourselves implementing this through quality comprehensive care and support to our children and their families in a manner that can be sustained going forward. At our planning workshop, we developed core values, objectives, strategies, activities, time frames and budgets that will provide a framework to implement our vision.

With COGRI-Nyumbani now approaching its 15th Anniversary, one new objective taking on prominence quickly is re-integration of our young adults into the community. A new message we need to get across is "HIV/AIDS is only a medical challenge." We

must show our youth how they can prosper in the face of stigma and discrimination. At the Nyumbani Home, our social services professionals have been working on re-integration for the past two years by tracking the extended families of children. During the past two Christmases, a considerable number of our children were able to spend time with family members. This strikes hard at children with no known family roots, but we endeavor to respond through friends of Nyumbani, who invite them to their homes, or through special trips and treats.

For Lea Toto, we see our vision as empowering caregivers to become self-reliant. This is truly a massive challenge, since the majority are living either at the poverty line or below it. However, we are dauntless in accomplishing this task and are in the process of developing a comprehensive micro-credit program. We need to hold the world's leaders accountable for implementing the First Millennium Goal the G8 nations set to be accomplished by 2015: "The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger." Side by side these countries must also seek implementation of Millennium Goal 6: "Combat HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and other diseases."

Even in Nyumbani Village, we are planning how relocation of the families back to their homes of origin will finally happen. This is because we see the Village as a temporary home to assist grandparents in the parenting of grandchildren into self-reliance. With our first young woman starting University this August, we can dream into the future when such a young adult, having trained and

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More Honors for Father D'Ag

Father Angelo D'Agostino was honored post-humously with the Silver Star of Kenya, a national honor presented by the President of Kenya. Father D'Ag received the country's highest civilian honor for his work with Nyumbani and the example he set for others to follow in Kenya.

"When Mary Ellen and I attended the funeral of Father D'Ag last November, it was clear how much he was loved and revered by a vast number of Kenyans as someone who was saving their children. It was also evident that this admiration was headed by the President and First Lady of Kenya, The Honorable Mwai Kibaki and the revered Mrs. Lucy Kibaki," Nyumbani President Joe D'Agostino said.

"The Silver Star is official recognition of my brother's work and a stamp of approval on the efforts of every person working for the children: the Board Members, the Nyumbani staff and Administrators, and the people around the world who support the work of Nyumbani."

Memorial Fund Update

Following the passing of Father D'Ag in November 2006, a huge outpouring of letters and emails came from all over the world. People sent in messages of deep love, admiration and respect for Nyumbani's founder. These letters frequently came with gifts and offerings of support for Nyumbani.

As of late August, the following gifts were given to the Father D'Ag Memorial: 254 donors made known their affection and sent in \$117,950.25—The gifts ranged from \$25,000 to \$12, which was sent from a youngster who emptied his piggybank.

The name of all donors will be placed in a Scroll of Honor at a suitable memorial at each of the Nyumbani sites in Kenya. The USA Board expressed gratitude for the gifts received and were pleased to report that donations are still coming.

Who Are We Caring For?

One way to envision the broadness of Nyumbani's reach is to look at the numbers of exactly who is being served. Here are some of the statistics from Sister Mary's last quarterly report, as well as some updated figures from a more recent message:

For Lea Toto:

From April to June, 324 clients were enrolled into the program, bringing the cumulative number of children served by the program to 3,388. Deaths in that period were 32, out of which 17 had been in the program less than 6 months and six were on antiretroviral (ARV) medication. Our ability to help steadily increases. For example, visits to the clinic have increased from 5,341 during the last quarter of 2006 to 6,558 during the second quarter of this year.



The streets of Kibera, one area where Lea Toto ministers. Sister Little is pictured in the center.

At the Home:

Total number of visitors from the outside was 350 from April to June. Sister Mary reports that local visitors and donations are steadily increasing. Visitors also came from Britain; Dallas; Philadelphia; Boston; Syracuse, NY; Chicago; Washington, DC.

The number of children living at the home increased to 102, ranging from six months in age to Dennis, the oldest boy, who recently got a job and enrolled in the Kenya School of Aviation.

At the end of June, 89 children at the home were on ARVs.

At the Village:

The Village now has 25 grandparents and 166 children. Of the children, 79 are enrolled in the Village's primary school; 71 in a local primary school, 15 in high school and one preparing for University.

The clinic at the Village treated 570 patients in the first quarter of the year; 80% were residents, the rest came from surrounding areas.

Close to 25 acres of land have been planted with crops, and 25,000 trees have been planted.

Caroline Matthews Honored

The Matthews name continues to make news for Nyumbani. Caroline Matthews, daughter of Washington, D.C. media celebrities Chris and Kathleen Matthews, recently was selected from a group of more than 800 high school students to receive a NetAid Global Action Award.

The award is given by NetAid, an organization formed eight years ago to educate the world on AIDS issues and involve youth in doing something to help. Caroline was honored for her involvement with Nyumbani and for raising awareness within her school and community on AIDS and other health issues.

She and her parents have traveled to Kenya several times, and she has secured funding (\$5,000 last year alone) and attention for Nyumbani through articles she's written, by bringing in experts to talk to students, and

by planning activities for students. Caroline started an AIDS Awareness Club during her sophomore year at Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School.

Her eventual plans are to study global public health at the University of Pennsylvania while continuing her quest of combating the AIDS pandemic.

As Eve Grimaldi, Dean of Students at Georgetown Visitation, Caroline's advisor, and the person who nominated Caroline said: "I have never experienced a student who, in the short span of three years, has accomplished so much. Not only has she shown the academic skills necessary for raising awareness about global issues, she also demonstrates remarkable tenacity and strength of character."

To read more about Caroline's efforts and the award, go to www.netaid.org/global_action_awards/.

Volunteer Transforms His Life to Serve the Village

It's a long journey from Catholic school principal to worker bee for the Village at Kitui, but the path is not measured in time or miles: it's measured by degree of fulfillment.

In early September, the Village will welcome Ed Colina, an educator whose last job was as head of the Immaculate Heart of Mary elementary through junior high school in Burlington, Kentucky. He won't return to school next fall. Instead, he plans to devote the next six months to helping out at the Village.

The story of his journey illustrates what some people go through when they take a look past their own safety net into the needs of the people of Kenya. But it is also a story of the happiness that comes from following your own heart.

About a year ago, Colina decided it was time for a new career—one that involved serving the world's people. He has a theology degree from Xavier and 25 years of teaching experience including working with physically and mentally challenged children and inner city children.

He first found Nyumbani by searching the web under "AIDS" and "children."

"I am not sure why working with children with HIV/AIDS was important to me, but I remember reading the words of Mother Teresa that we all need to 'find our Calcutta.' [The city where she first started ministering to the world's poor.] I put together kids (my love for education) and Jesuits (my high school and college education) and stumbled upon Nyumbani," he explains.

He contacted Sister Mary and Joe D'Agostino and with encouragement from them, quickly put together a six-day trip to Nyumbani. While there, he visited Nyumbani and another orphanage, went to the Village and went with Sister Little to Kibera, the slums of Nairobi where the Lea Toto program is helping thousands of children.

"My visit to Kibera was my greatest challenge but was also a great gift to me. It was life-changing in that I know I cannot live the same way I did before I visited those homes. I had read about the area, the feel, the smell, the sadness, the disease, but I could never have prepared myself. I listened to story after story about the lives of these people. Who could not be changed by such encounters?" Colina explains.

The time spent with the children of the orphanage, however, was joyous, and his

trip was "so well planned [by administrators] I saw all the things I needed to see to make a decision to come back for a longer stay."

With Sister Mary's encouragement, he has spent the months since then ruminating about where his talents could best be spent and planning his trip back, which he decided would be to the Village.

"I don't know what I'll be doing. But I am



Colina with Kevin and Paul.

a father (he has three grown children, two sons and a daughter), a teacher, an administrator, a musician, and I would not mind farming or working with livestock," Colina says.

The only thing he knows for sure is that he wants to simplify how he lives and he wants to help the children of Africa. To do so, he sold his condominium on the golf course, his car and either sold or gave away most of his possessions.

His family and his school were very supportive, and local parents and teachers raised money to help with the expenses of the trips. His journey also has garnered publicity for Nyumbani as local newspapers and media have featured the respected administrator's venture.

Overall, he says the transition has been an easy one and one that came naturally. "There is

this 'guy thing' we have about climbing the ladder, being a success in the first half of life. But I am 53 years old now and those things don't hold the same appeal. I am looking for more now in a little village in Kenya."

Ed Colina started a blog on his thoughts early this year. It contains much research he did on Nyumbani, Kibera and Kitui, as well as on AIDS in Africa. Find it at <http://emcjourney.blogspot.com/>

Another Resident Gets Needed Medical Help

One of Nyumbani's residents is about to get some help with his stride: 13-year-old Kabena, who came to Nyumbani six years ago, has walked with a limp for most of his life. He hurt his leg as a young child, but the family could not afford to get him medical care.

As a result, he has walked unevenly and worn a lift in his shoe. Sister Julie, who says he has always been self-conscious about his limp, brought X-rays back to the states on her trip with Mungai, the Nyumbani child who recently got an implant that restored his hearing.

An orthopedic surgeon reported that Kabena's leg had been broken in two places, but corrective surgery was possible. He is now scheduled to receive that surgery in November, thanks to an Italian surgeon and Nyumbani's donors.

Sister Julie reports that he's scared, but happy about the development, and that he has made her promise to stay by his side throughout the ordeal as she did with Mark when he had head surgery (see the Fall 06 newsletter).

Kabena "is a handsome, intelligent young man who is a little short, but when you meet him all you see is his huge friendly smile," she says.



Kabena (left) and a self-portrait of Kabena done for Ed Colina during his visit. Colina carries the likeness around in his wallet for inspiration.

Sister Mary's Letter

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obtained employment, would spearhead her return and the return of her siblings to the family's own inherited home. In this context, we are very mindful of agreements in place to hold land and property in trust for families.

We now have 25 Nyumbani Village families, and all 166 of the children are enrolled in school. We're currently facing a challenge of differences in standards between our primary and the local school (see the numbers in Who Are We Caring For) that is affecting our children considerably so we are looking at opening more classes in the onsite Village elementary school, which is called Hotcourses, in September. Pray with us that we will be guided to make the decisions needed to help these children get the education they need to prosper.

One familiar sight in the Village is a line of grandmothers sitting on the grass making baskets. It's a hopeful sight because they are part of our sustainability program. We are helping them by obtaining materials and getting a market for their products. This is a first step in promoting self-reliance. The second step will involve guiding them in effective organic farming in their half-acre

garden through technical assistance and utilization of grey-water.

At the Nyumbani Home, we now have 102 children. The increase is possible because more of our adolescents turned 15 years old, reaching the maturity they need for a more independent living style in the youth hostels.

Because it is summer in the West, we have received an abundance of visitors. Each group or individual made their own special mark on our children and programs. One group, the Kenya Children's Foundation from Denver, Colorado, has been supporting us in a unique way twice a year for the past 11 years by undertaking maintenance of our various centers. But all the Kenyan and international volunteers enrich our programs through their generosity, skills, creativity and energy. Exposure to people from so many different cultures also builds our children's self esteem as well as provides positive role models, especially for our teenagers who are dreaming about their own futures.

As far as general activities, I recently was asked to give the keynote address on the day dedicated to Orphans and Vulnerable children at the First National Catholic Conference on HIV/AIDS. Nyumbani played a prominent role in the conference. As part of the opening ceremony, participants were invited to write a message to our children and post it on a giant card.

When over 200 messages were attached, I was called up to receive the card. I announced that this card would be like the Olympic torch, moving from Nyumbani center to Nyumbani center, starting with the Home.

As always when I write to you, USA friends of Nyumbani, I am grateful for your support in spirit and kind. Over the past 15 years, I have marveled at your generosity, which Father D'Agostino relayed to me as he returned from his visits home. The support and donations continue. For this, all of us at Nyumbani are deeply appreciative and grateful. Above all, continue to keep us in your prayers. I pray, too, that each of you may experience the compassion you've shown. May God bless each of you.

Sister Mary Owens



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