

# News on Nyumbani



The first facility for HIV positive orphans in Kenya.

[www.nyumbani.org](http://www.nyumbani.org)

Volume VII, Issue 2

Second Quarter 2006

## U.S. Annual Benefit to Feature Steve Ross

This year's Nyumbani Annual Benefit attendees will be treated to the sounds of Steve Ross, "The Crown Prince of New York Cabaret." Ross, who has known Father D'Ag since 1956, is a world renowned cabaret singer and piano player. Turn to page 3 for details on Ross' talents.

Kathleen Matthews, ABC News Anchor for Channel 7 in Washington, DC will once again serve as mistress of ceremonies and COGRF President Benjamin Palumbo and Father D'Ag will bring attendees up to date on what is happening with Nyumbani and its programs.

Items from Nyumbani and Lea Toto will be on sale during the reception and a special silent auction will be held for some valuable Nyumbani collectibles.

Please join us:

### Nyumbani Annual Benefit Tuesday, Sept. 26

Renaissance Washington  
Hotel  
999 9th St., NW  
Washington, D.C.

6 p.m. Reception  
7 p.m. Dinner  
8 p.m. Program

## Dear Friends of Nyumbani:

Nyumbani has been very busy since I last wrote. The staff and volunteers have been working with great success in three areas of Nyumbani in Nairobi, including:

- ❖ The Nyumbani Children's Home, which is bustling with its 95 young inhabitants,
- ❖ The Lea Toto Community Outreach Program, which helps 2,000 in the slums of Nairobi, and
- ❖ The Diagnostic Lab, which is based on our property and handles the sophisticated testing of both our children and those from the community.

All three of these miracles are not only thriving, but growing.

### The Village



Village entrance

Recently, much of my time has been spent in the Nyumbani Village at Kitui, which is a hard, three-hour drive away from Nairobi. So far, we have completed 40 buildings to house children and "grandparents"

(the elderly) that have been forced into homelessness because of family deaths caused by HIV/AIDS. Here are some of the improvements that have occurred recently:

*We've brought in much needed water.* Kitui is in an arid area that suffers immensely from lack of water. Last year, a deep bore hole

of about 100 meters brought in a good supply of water to this parched area and was very much welcomed by local natives. A huge pump was put into service to fill two tanks that hold 350,000 liters and that were built by the local people. Two smaller wells were dug to prepare for the rainy season.

*We learned to use a dry river bed* that carries water only during the rainy season. Research indicated that building sand dams at several places along this bed would provide a good way to trap and hold more water. The dams are built below the ground and extend laterally on both sides for a few feet. The theory is that water caught in the sand behind the dam is held in the soil, but when the soil becomes saturated, the dam allows the moisture to seep out to the land on each side of the gulch. Meanwhile, the underground location prevents evaporation.

*We got a little help from God and Mother Nature* for our immediate water problems. An unexpected period of rain came very early this year, the first time in many seasons. It raised the water level of the two wells by 15 meters and showed us that the dams are working according to design. Meanwhile, green is beginning to show its face in plants growing on each side of the formerly dry river bed.

*We solved the problem of distributing the water.* Pipes were laid in a very lengthy grid designed and constructed by Aldo Magazzene, a U.S. volunteer at Kitui. A water access center has been set up for each group of four houses and for the first time in the lives of most of the people who are villagers, they need not carry water up daily from the stream.

(Continued on page 2)



## Father D'Ag's Column

(Continued from page 1)

### An Award and a Visit Home

On another note, Protus Lumiti and I received an honorary award at a ceremony in Nairobi from one of our great supporters—the International Rotary Club. That organization has contributed many wonderful gifts and grants to the Nyumbani effort as well as made many visits. The most recent award came from a group of British Rotarians who conferred upon us the Paul Harris Award, which is the highest award presented by the organization. It was a grand day. Finally, as I write this, I am in the USA to receive a second honor, an Honorary Doctorate degree from Holy Cross (see page 3). It is fortunate I came a few weeks early, however, since the day after I arrived I found myself in Georgetown University Hospital. An acute arthritic condition has caused me to have great difficulty standing or walking.

I am undergoing many tests, and I pray that the good doctors and staff here find a way to help with this malady so that I may keep all of the appointments I had lined up for my stay.

As with many events, however, something good has come of this hospital stay. I was visited by a 1998 Nyumbani volunteer, Pat Ryscavage, who is now in his second year residency in internal medicine and stopped by during his rounds to visit and reminisce.

While I convalesce, I am thinking of all of you and wishing you a wonderful summer with your family and friends. I look forward to seeing you at our Nyumbani Annual Benefit Dinner in DC on September 26. God bless each of you for all you do. We could not accomplish any of this without you.

Fr. Angelo D'Agostino,  
SJ, MD

**Update:** At press time, Father D'Ag had been moved to the Jesuit Community Residence, where he is recuperating.

# An Enterprise Born of Good Deeds

By Genilee Swope Parente, editor of News on Nyumbani

Those who have volunteered their time and resources to Nyumbani have witnessed first hand that when you have the power of God behind you, sometimes good deeds take on a life of their own. Just ask Tomi Browne, who came up with an idea of how to use the suitcase full of beads she brought back from a December visit to Kenya.



She decided to make necklaces and give them to friends and family in exchange for donations for the children's home and its programs. Using a card table in her kitchen and arming herself with books and other resources to

teach herself a brand new skill—jewelry making—she put together a few pieces and displayed them on her kitchen counter.

In just four months time, her little enterprise has raised between four and five thousand dollars, and she can no longer keep up with demand.

"I sit back and I just shake my head because I do NOT consider myself artistic," Tomi says. "But somehow I am doing something creative—something I never thought was in me," she explains.

But she quickly adds that she has not come to this place on her own. The initial suitcase of beads was donated by a bead factory in Kenya. She has had help from friends Kathy Henry and Marj North in making the necklaces, earrings and key rings, and from neighbors and friends in raising the donation money. She and her helpers have also had help in the learning process as they graduated from fishing line and cheap attachments to jewelry wire and fancy clasps.

At first, most of the donations came from people passing through the Browne kitchen, such as the workman who asked Tomi to make a necklace for his mother and the woman who came to sell the Browns a mortgage and walked away with four necklaces.

However, as word has spread, so has demand, which has resulted in events such as a jewelry party hosted by Tomi's friend Kathy. The party started as a ladies' weekend for high school buddies, but blossomed into a feast of creation.

"Kathy called me from an hour and a half away and said the ladies were going wild over these things—could I meet her husband halfway and bring more beads and pieces. Then she called me that evening and asked

me to send even more," Tomi says with a laugh.

"The beauty of it was that these ladies not only ended up being my labor in this effort, they made donations in exchange for the jewelry afterwards," she adds.

Browne walked out of that party with \$2,500, which like the rest of the money she's raised, goes right into the Nyumbani till.

(She donates much of the wire and clasps, and all the proceeds go to the children's home and its programs.)

She's used people she knows are traveling to Kenya as "mules" to bring back more suitcases of beads, and she's planning a trip herself in July to get more supplies. In the mean time, she can't keep a piece around long enough to use it as a model for other pieces.

But she says she understands why the jewelry is so popular, and that the beauty of its popularity is not just in the money raised.

"We are creating unique presents made by hand with love. But we are also spreading the word about Nyumbani every time a sale is made," she explains.

(For information on the jewelry, email Tomi at [ttbe@msn.com](mailto:ttbe@msn.com).)



### Child Succumbs to Illness

The Nyumbani family lost one its members in April; 13-year-old Christabel Wanja, who despite the appearance of good health, succumbed to pneumococcal meningitis.

Christabel had been with Nyumbani since 1997, when she came to us from a children's home in Nyambene-Eastern Province. She was born on Christmas Eve 1992 to a family of four, but her parents died of AIDS when she was three years old. She lived for several years with her grandparents, who also passed away. In 1997, she tested HIV positive and was referred to Nyumbani. Christabel was an excellent student in class six of primary school, active in school and well-liked by fellow students. She had rarely been sick, but was admitted to a hospital after complaining of a severe headache. She passed away April 5.

# Dausman Family Visits Nyumbani

*Editor's Note: News on Nyumbani asked the Dausman family to give us their reactions on spending time in Kenya. Here is what they said:*

Over the last Christmas holiday, my family spent ten days at Nyumbani. Because Father Angelo is my wife's uncle, I have known of Nyumbani before the first brick was placed. In our family, as we have raised our children, Nyumbani has always been our real-world example of being faithful and doing right. A struggle for justice, caring for the sick, attending to infants, fighting the AIDS pandemic—these are themes that need little rationalization.

If you are a parent, then you must have had some of the same discussions over skepticism and religious values (or even, why bother going to church?). Because our own children are now 16 and 18, the window for a family visit was closing fast.

to happen to mine? I can't predict what paths my own children will take, but I know that I will stay committed to them.

Angelo's words have stayed with me, partly because of their frankness, and also because I understand that the vision of Nyumbani expands with the needs of the children. I think, maybe, in going to Nyumbani, in playing, working, and eating with the staff and children, that they have become a little closer to being *my* family. Now, the question of what will "happen to yours" has become "what will happen to mine" . . . all one hundred or so of them.

**Jack Dausman**

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www.friendsofnyumbani.org



## The Talent of Steve Ross

Steve Ross, who was labeled the "Crown Prince of New York Cabaret" by *The New York Times*, no longer limits his performances to that city. He has been featured in hundreds of U.S. cities as well as in South America and Europe in every kind of venue including cabarets, theaters, Carnegie Hall, festivals, concert halls and on the radio.

He sings old favorites from Gershwin, Berlin, Cole Porter, Noel Howard and others, then adds his own wit and historical knowledge to his musical performances.

Ross will entertain Nyumbani supporters at this year's Annual Benefit on Sept. 26.

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## Father D'Ag Receives Honorary Degree

The College of Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, honored Father D'Ag during college graduation ceremonies in May by presenting him with a honorary doctorate degree.

Holy Cross is a top-ranked Jesuit liberal arts education college with 2,700 undergraduate students.



*The Dausman's teenage children, Anna (left) and Will (far right) made the trip to Kenya with their parents Jack and Michele.*

During those ten days, we cooked together, celebrated Christmas and my daughter's sixteenth birthday, visited the slums of Kibera, toured Masai Mara, went to the Village in Kitui, and just spent time with the children. I was even recruited into assisting with the development of the computer lab. I am left with a profound impression of the dedicated staff, the sisters, Protus, and, of course, the pride of the children. Everyone at Nyumbani knows they are special, and this attitude infuses each activity.

After meeting with several of the young men of Nyumbani, I realized there is a challenge to Nyumbani's success—some of their teenagers are nearly ready to begin an independent life. I asked Father Angelo, "what's going to happen to these teenagers? They are just about ready to live on their own." Angelo looked at me and retorted, "I don't know. What's going to happen to yours?" Well, I had to laugh. What *is* going

When I think back on our 10-day visit to Nyumbani, it is easy to visualize so many aspects of the experience: the grounds, the staff, and, of course, the children.

*The grounds:* functional, but simply embellished in the way that gives quality of life to those who reside—from the large vegetable garden to feed those who dwell at Nyumbani to the cottages that provide a family setting for meals, sleeping, studying, and playing. There is the playground which lets children climb, swing, stretch, grow. A small cemetery rests towards the back of the property which gives respect to children long after they are no longer part of the lively day-to-day affairs.

*The staff:* dedicated in making healthy food for all at Nyumbani, providing clean clothes, administering medications to keep the Nyumbani children as healthy as possible, and nursing them along when they are not, mothering and fathering these children—teaching life skills, and giving education, leading and overseeing to make Nyumbani the well-run, comforting home that it is.

*The children:* Friendly, engaging, trusting, energetic, lovable. Having spent a short time with a few different children on our first day at Nyumbani, I found myself with new fast friends who remembered my name much quicker than I remembered theirs! However, a few months after returning, their faces are etched in my mind clearly—their smiles and their amazingly resilient spirits. We will be forever fortunate to have been a part of this place—even for a short time—which is so filled with grace.

**Michele Dausman**

# Our Readers' Generosity

Every year I briefly draw a picture for you of how we have been blessed by our readers in the past fiscal year. These are a few of the statistics the Year 2005\* revealed.

Did you know that last year there were 1,276 contributions to the Children of God Relief Fund? That means our office sends out, on average, 100 thank you notes each month—a task we gladly fulfill. The total of all gifts to the Children of God Relief Fund last year was \$492,599! Of that amount:

- ♥ 1,185 gifts were undesignated and accounted for \$418,157.
- ♥ 91 gifts were designated to specific causes for a total of \$74,442.
- ♥ 16 donors sent monthly checks for an annual total of \$23,549.
- ♥ 170 donors gave more than once.

You may wonder how the gifts are generated. Here's a general breakdown:

- ♥ 159 gifts were made for the Annual Benefit for \$128,530
- ♥ 316 gifts were made in reply to the quarterly Newsletter for \$50,777
- ♥ 86 gifts arrived through our Website for \$56,496.

*\*(As of this writing, these figures are unaudited.)*

- ♥ 40 gifts arrived through the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area for \$17,888
- How do our gifts separate geographically?
- ♥ 489 of our gifts come from the DC/MD/VA area for \$215, 229. This is 44% of the total contributions.
  - ♥ 787 gifts come from the rest of the country for \$277,370.
- What levels of monetary gifts do we receive?
- ♥ 1,142 (\$139,926) were gifts of \$5 to \$500
  - ♥ 101 (\$25,371) were gifts of \$501 to \$2,500
  - ♥ 27 (\$127,634) were gifts of \$2,501 to \$10,000
  - ♥ 6 (\$99,668) were gifts of \$10,001 to \$25,000
- Finally, we report that we disbursed the funds in the following way:
- ♥ \$282,956 was sent to Nyumbani,
  - ♥ \$100,000 was placed into the Nyumbani Reserve Fund in the US.
  - ♥ The remainder goes into an account to cover administrative costs for the year. *For a complete explanation, please refer to a copy of the Form 990, which may be found on our website.*

Joseph S. D'Agostino, PhD  
COGRFTreasurer

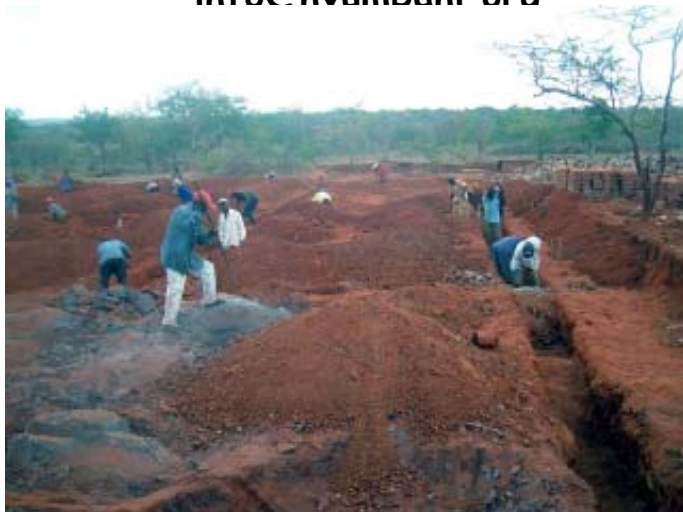
## A First Daughter Visits Lea Toto

Through the U.S. Agency for International Development office in Nairobi, presidential first daughter Barbra Bush, USAID Director Stephen Haykin and David Austin of the World Food Program, visited Kenya in May to learn about the Lea Toto program. The group received information about Nyumbani and its programs, then heard testimony from Lea Toto program beneficiaries—both caregivers and children. Under tight security, they also visited a family in the Kangemi slums.

A copy of the latest U.S. financial report and official registration filed by the Children of God Relief Fund, Inc. can be obtained by contacting COGRF, Inc. at 3050 K St. NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20007-5108, or by calling (202) 342-8488. Residents of the following states may also obtain this information by contacting: NEW YORK - New York State Attorney General's Charities Bureau, Attn: FOIL Officer, 120 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10271; VIRGINIA - Division of Consumer Affairs, P.O. Box 526, Richmond, Va. 22304. Registration with these governmental agencies does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the state.



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*Workers are pouring their hearts, as well as their sweat, into the Village in Kitui.*

