

HUGH'S NEWS

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news from and about Africa

Published every once-in-a-while

Introducing . . . *Lalmba Letters*

And as we near our 50th year of service to the good people of Africa, we will now hear from others who make the news by their dedication and hard work (and often times, humor). We introduce *Lalmba Letters*. Here's the very first one.

What a girl wants (or needs)

by Carrole Johnson, executive director

Last Christmas my church here in the U.S. helped families who had been hit particularly hard by the recession. We provided food, clothes and gifts for the children. I was buying for a 10 year old girl. I had her list of toys she especially wanted. The Barbie doll and clothes were no problem, but I had to figure out what a Zhu-zhu Pet® was.

Another 10 year old girl has new clothes and toys. Kochehe joined our Chiri Children's Home in Ethiopia in December. She had been cared for by an aunt and uncle after her parents died, but they were planning to marry her to an older man. Her teachers brought her to us for help. Marrying very young is not unusual in this family's tribe, but was not acceptable to the local leaders. They believed this 5th grader was too young to be a wife. Once the well-meaning aunt and uncle understood that Lalmba would care for her and send her to school, they gladly let her join us.

This story doesn't end there. Our co-Project Director, Faith Hoskins, and Children's Director, Aseflich, went to bring Kebabush

from her village. Faith tells what happened:

"Aselevich and I went outside to find a group of five other children, some with a small packed bag in their hands. I asked who these children were, and they told me they were other orphans who needed a home. My mouth dropped. There was no way we could take all these children, and I watched as their faces went from hope to despair as they were turned away. I was overwhelmed by the great need.

Another girl was brought to us. They told us of how her parents had died and she had lived in the wild until a well off family had taken her in."

Kebabush, about 7 years old, worked for the family instead of going to school. The community



Kebabush and Kochehe

demanded that she go with Lalmba.

Kebabush also now lives in our Children's Home, and will start first grade. I pray that someday Lalmba will have funds to care for the other orphans from that village, and the many others we hear about.

I'll be going to Ethiopia soon to see these girls. Maybe I'll take them a Zhu-zhu Pet.

More *Lalmba Letters*

4:30 p.m.

By Jackie McSparron, medical director in Kenya



Jackie relaxes with one of our orphans

I was leaving my office Wednesday afternoon. It was 4:30 and everyone was going home for the day. As I walked across the courtyard Julian, one of our nurses, waved me over. “Jackie, they are delivering a baby in the ER.” Now, we don’t generally do deliveries at our clinic. We are in the middle of nowhere and we prefer to have them in a facility that can do an emergency C-section or resuscitation if necessary. However, if a woman comes in and we determine that they will likely deliver before we can get them to the hospital, we let them deliver here. This particular woman had been seen at another clinic in the morning and referred to the district hospital. She came to us instead.

I walked back to the ER to find two of our nurses surrounding the woman. It was clear that her water had broken fairly recently (ewwww). Moline looked up from the patient and said, “The cord is prolapsed and the contractions are very weak, but she is fully dilated.” Great. Why does this stuff always happen at 4:30? You see, if a loop of the umbilical cord is coming out in front of the baby, it means that the baby is going to press on it as it is being born. If the delivery goes quickly, it is not a problem, but if the baby gets stuck it compresses the cord and cuts off its circulation (which is not good). Since the contractions weren’t doing much of anything and the labor wasn’t proceeding very quickly we decided we needed to transport her. “You coming, Jackie?” “Sure, why not.”

So, Moline and I hopped into the back of the Land Cruiser/ambulance and helped the woman and her mother in. The mother’s job was to hold the IV bag. Moline and I were to monitor the patient and keep her from falling over. You see, the road to St. Camillus Hospital in Karungu is very similar to the Migori road. It winds through the hills with craters and rocks littered at short intervals. Since we didn’t want the woman to deliver on the way, we put her in the best position to slow labor. We put a mat on the floor of the vehicle and had her sit with her knees and elbows on the mat, bottom up. Think of it as a modified “downward dog” in yoga. While fairly effective at slowing labor, it is neither stable nor comfortable in a wildly bouncing vehicle.

We began the 45 minute journey with Daniel driving faster than I’ve ever seen him drive. It was clear he did not want to have anything to do with a baby being born in the back of his ambulance. Each time the woman began contracting Moline and I checked to make sure there was not a baby imminently arriving. As the trip went on the amount of blood in the back of the car started to get concerning. “I really hope this baby is patient,” Moline whispered to me just before the IV came loose. Now, we not only had a woman in labor in the back of the car, but there was blood spattered all over the inside of the vehicle as well as running over the floor and we had to change IV bags while bouncing along at 50 kilometers per hour.

About 15 minutes from our destination the mother yelled and a gush of blood emerged. “Daniell!!!” Moline and I cried in unison. Dan pulled the car off the road, much to the confusion of the cows standing there. We opened the back of the car, got the woman on her back, and checked again. We were still okay; no baby yet. Daniel got us back onto the road, threw on the siren, and raced to the hospital. When we arrived, Moline jumped out to grab a stretcher and I helped the mom down on to it. We got her into the room and explained the situation to the nurses there who promptly did an exam and called for an operating room. “The cord is still pulsing, but the labor seems to be obstructed. We’ll get her in right away.”

Once it was clear that the baby was still okay, Moline and I got ready to leave. The doctor stopped us as we were walking out into the hall. “What? You’re leaving?” He joked. “You don’t want to stay for the C-section?” “Tempting,” I replied. “But I think I’ll leave that to you.”

Moline and I walked out as Daniel pulled the car up. “Where did you go?” We asked him. “To hose out the back of the car.” Ah, yes. Good plan. That will make the trip home much more pleasant.

now . . . Hugh's News

I don't usually appreciate people bragging . . . but

PAPAL AWARD

Marty and I are both intensely devoted to this important work of His. We have always believed that Father God watches out for us and His work which is accomplished through Lalmba. For us, it has been both an incredible blessing and at times a painful hardship. We don't talk about those aspects of the work, but they certainly do exist.

Another thing which we try to avoid is bragging. It just doesn't seem to have much place in what we are about. But here's one which we have to share with you. It's a "once in a lifetime" honor.

On November 7, 2010 we were awarded the papal honor of the cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. This is the highest award the pope confers on a layperson (Marty) and a very great honor for a clergyman (Hugh...is an ordained Deacon in the Catholic Church). The award was presented by Archbishop Charles Chaput on behalf of the Holy Father. The award consists of a gold medal with the yellow and white papal ribbon together with a certificate from Pope Benedict XVI.

We had not expected such an honor and it touches our hearts that even the Pope himself has taken notice of this important work in Africa.

We've received some comments from our associates which we'd like to share with you.

"I congratulate you for the award which our Holy Father has honored you with. What brought the attention of the Holy Father to both of you is your dedicated service to the poor."

Abune Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, Archbishop of Addis Ababa

"What good news. Congratulations for that special award from the Pope himself. Surely you deserve it. I accompany you with my prayers and the prayers of the many thousands whom you help."

Abune (bishop) Kidane Yebio, Eparch of Keren

"You are certainly worthy of the honor the Holy Father is giving you. Thank you for the good example you have given to the people of the Archdiocese of Denver."

Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap. Archbishop of Denver

"I say congratulations. That is something from God. This kind of honor is the fruit of the work you have done for God's people. God bless you more, and us too."

Marico Osiyo Awino, Lalmba project director in Kenya

"Your commitment and humble service towards the needy ones in Kaffa Ethiopia proves your attachment. For sure you deserve such honor."

Abune Markos Ghebremedhin, CM. Vicar Apostolic of Jimma-Bonga



Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, Marty and Hugh (photo by James Baca, Denver Catholic Register)

Questions???

You wouldn't believe the questions we get. One of the most common is . . .

Q. "What's the most difficult part of your work in Africa?"

A. "Just getting there – usually three days by plane and truck (on terrible roads). Not to mention some crummy hotels and mystery food."

And last week I got a letter from Rose Doll in Arvada, Colorado. She asks these questions. . .

Q. Where do you get food for the children? Can you grow anything there? What about duties around the compound? Who washes clothes – who cleans? Do they work hard at their studies?

A. Thanks Rose . . . I'll answer all your questions in a summary.

We get as much food for the children on the local markets (beans, rice, vegetables, etc.). But we purchase many food items in bulk in the nearest town (corn, sugar, flour etc.). The kids seldom have meat, but at our program in Kenya (on the shores of Lake Victoria) they get a lot of fish.

At each of our children's homes, the kids have little garden plots where they learn to grow local varieties of vegetables and fruits. The children also are taught to care for animals, especially goats and sheep.

You bet, the children have chores, both daily and weekly chores at the home. Daily they clean their rooms and wash dishes. The older girls help in the kitchen, the older boys collect firewood. Weekend chores include doing laundry and getting water. Every day the children have a routine which includes studies and homework.

Hey, these are African children who do African chores. One day I was walking along the lakefront and passed two girls from the Ongoro Children's Home carrying geese (alive) which they bought at a nearby market and were taking home for lunch.

PASSING OF A LALMBA FRIEND

I don't often write of the death of one of our Lalmba members, but this is a sad loss for us. Last August, Bob Miller died in Kansas City. He was our chairman of the board for over 20 years and his father was one of our founders. They are all deceased now except for myself. If I could list just the ten most influential people in the Lalmba history, Bob was one of those. God rest his soul.



The older girls from Ongoro Children's Home on their way to do laundry in Lake Victoria

Off To Africa (Again)

Marty and I will be off to Africa before you receive this newsletter. Carrole will be following in a month or so.

The three of us are not usually over there at the same time, but it just works out that way this year. Though we are away, we petition you not to forget us. We need your prayers and financial support. These are tough economic times and sometimes it's too easy to forget to pray for us and the good people we serve. I promise we won't forget you. How could we? We depend on you and appreciate our relationship.

Lalmba Tech News

Want to see this newsletter with color photos? Or share it with friends and family? Lalmba's newsletters are now on our website homepage: www.lalmba.org.

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