

News on Nyumbani



The first facility for HIV positive orphans in Kenya.

www.nyumbani.org

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Fourth Quarter 2008

Annual Event Raises Record Funds

By Gail Dalferes Condrey,
Auction Chair

On behalf of the children and families who are the recipients of the Nyumbani programs, the COGRF USA Board sincerely thanks you, our supporters. In this most difficult of economic times, we knew we had to be creative with our annual fundraising event this year. We took a chance by shaking up the format—you responded with resounding support. A total of 374 guests joined us on September 26, 47 more attendees than last year's event. By all accounts, the Embassy of Italy was a beautiful backdrop in which to pay homage to the people who make things happen all year for Nyumbani. The heavy rains and

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This collage canvas portrait is one of two created and donated by Chris Clark. Both were presented to the Nyumbani Home.

Dear Friends of Nyumbani:

I write to you with a heart full of gratitude following my recent visit to the United States. It was great meeting so many of you at the magnificent Annual Benefit on September 26 at the beautiful Embassy of Italy. As I said to Protus Lumiti, Chief Manager of the Nyumbani Home, who was also present: "How can we help our children understand how much our American friends support us!" It was special that our first graduate, Dennis, was invited to come to the USA for the event. Dennis symbolizes the realized vision that Father D'Agostino had for our children and is a great model for all who come after him. (See story on page 3) The presence of Bernard Komu Hess with his adoptive mother, Donna, symbolized another great landmark.

I was delighted, too, to meet many other American friends of Nyumbani on different occasions who facilitated fundraising opportunities for me—from speaking at St. Mary's Church, Greenwich, Connecticut and Holy Trinity, Georgetown, to interviews with Voice of America (VOA) and the *Washington Diplomat*, to meeting with the COGRF Board and significant persons on Capitol Hill (Rep. Donald Payne; John Lawrence, Chief of Staff for the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi; as well as other congressional staffers). Attending the Mia Sutphin Memorial Benefit with Protus and Joe D'Agostino, preceded by a live interview with Dan Rodericks of the *Baltimore Sun*, were especially moving. Mia was a volunteer with us in early 2002 who died as a result of a drug reaction from a treatment for malaria just before she was to return home. Mia remains as a special

memory in the hearts of all of us at Nyumbani.

Last, but not least by any means, were the many generous luncheons and dinners I enjoyed with Nyumbani friends. Words are inadequate to express the depth of my gratitude to the current COGRF President, Dr. Marilyn Jerome, who hosted us and facilitated my journeying. Having the opportunity to spend some time with Father D'Agostino's



Sister Mary at the 2008 Benefit Dinner

brother Joe and his wife Mary Ellen as well as his sister, Sister Savina FMM, was also special. One of the goals I set for this visit was to acquire more knowledge about how resistance to ARVs is handled in the U.S. and to learn of drugs not yet available in Kenya. This took me to Milwaukee to visit with Dr. Peter Havens. Dr. Havens had visited Nyumbani, and I hope he will return early next year. Being in Milwaukee also gave me the opportunity to connect with Mark Anderson of The Centre for International Health, who provides us with nutritious dehydrated food. I also met with our University of Wisconsin Global Environmental Management Education Center friends, Victor and Mai Phillips. (We have a collaborative agreement with this group that we'll share in more detail as we go along.)

As VOA reported, resistance to ARVs is

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Trees Planted to Sustain Village



In June of 2008, the Make a Mark Foundation, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point and Nyumbani Village, launched a tree planting initiative that will cover hundreds of acres in Nyumbani Village in Kitui. John and Patty Noel, founders of the foundation, initiated this sustainability effort.

Over the next several months, Make a Mark will plant over 32,000 seedlings of an indigenous tree called *Melia Volkensii* on 50 acres of land. Going forward, 50 additional acres will be planted every year.

What this means is that, in 10 years, the trees can be harvested and sold as processed timber, which will result in significant revenue for the Village. The revenues will be reinvested to plant more trees and to sustain the families at Nyumbani Village by providing basic necessities (shelter, clothing, education, medical care). But just as importantly, the trees will provide a livelihood for the Village, which means they will bring hope, as well as a sense of belonging to those who have come to live in or care for the Village. In this way, the tree project ensures the continued success of the Village for years to come, and in turn sustains the hope of hundreds of orphans who have lost parents to HIV/AIDS, as well as the grandparents taking care of them.

Make a Mark invites individuals, non-governmental organizations and corporations to partner in this initiative to help the orphans. For more information, please contact Geoffrey Mburu: Geoffrey.Mburu@travelguard.com

2008 Annual Benefit

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long valet parking lines aside, attendees reported overwhelming praise for the evening with Mistress of Ceremonies Kathleen Matthews, entertainment by Mark Russell and L'illon Millonig, as well as dinner and auction activities. Event Chair Mary Lynn Qurnell and the entire dinner committee once again did a fantastic job coordinating the festivities. I am pleased to report the financial results for the evening are our best to date. The net income at press time was close to \$170,000, over \$57,000 more or a 50% increase over what was raised from the 2007 benefit. Donations continue to come in; and your generosity is awe inspiring.

In addition to ticket sales, we raised funds through our traditional silent auction, which brought in \$8,682 from sales of art work, wine, restaurant gift certificates, vacation packages, jewelry and fine fashions. This year we added a live auction component, including a 'Fund a Dream' element, to augment the silent auction offerings.

The live auction items included a jersey signed by Lance Armstrong; a football signed by Redskins Coach Jim Zorn; amethyst & diamond earrings donated by Shah Shah Fine Jewelers; and a diamond cross pendant donated to Nyumbani by supporter Steve Fox of Greenwich, CT. We were blessed to be able to again offer stays in both a villa and a cottage in Jamaica donated by Aldo Magazzeni, a friend of Father D'Agostino and Nyumbani. Aldo surprised us on auction night by generously offering an additional week in each place, effectively doubling the donation to COGRF. The live auction pulled in \$18,250, of which \$11,600 was from the four trips to Jamaica. Our heartfelt thanks go to Aldo for his support and to the four bidders who won these trips. Another supporter, Suzanne Bingham, donated a baby grand piano, which Mark Russell used for the event (saving on rental fees) and we auctioned off to COGRF board member Jim Desmond.

The 'Fund a Dream' element focused on the dream of Sister Mary. Her dream relates to both budgeting for rising food costs and subsidizing the Nyumbani children's education fund. She has taken this on because good nutrition is critical in fighting HIV but food supplies are suffering from the current economic crises, and because education empowers people to rise into a healthier, more productive life. The opportunity to fund Sister Mary's dream was the last item in the live auction in a "reverse bid" process run by our new friend, volunteer auctioneer John Murray, who facilitated the live auction and to whom we owe great thanks and recognition. The process brought in \$12,000 for the Nyumbani programs.

In total, the silent and live auction raised close to \$44,000, \$34,300 (or 353%) more than last year's auction. And of course, none of this would have been possible without the support and active participation of both those who attended and those who donated to the event. We wish you a holiday season filled with dreams come true and a fruitful and happy 2009.

*Photos courtesy of Richard Latoff
Photography; www.latoff.com*



Silent auction shoppers consider bidding on fine jewelry, vacation packages, art work and many other bargains.



Kathleen Matthews served as Mistress of Ceremonies.



Stefano Beltrame, First Counselor, welcomes attendees to the Embassy of Italy.



Mark Russell entertains the audience with his usual flair.



From left: Bailey Condrey, Aldo Magazzeni (who donated the auction's biggest draw—four weeks in Jamaica) and Auction Chair Gail Dalferes Condrey, who is wearing the Presidents Medallion awarded post-humously to her father George Dalferes.

Dennis Visits the U.S.

Nyumbani Home's first resident to graduate and live on his own, Dennis, recently came to the U.S. to attend the U.S. Benefit and meet some of the Nyumbani supporters.

A highlight of his trip was a meeting between Dennis and the family he spent a good portion of his childhood with in Kenya before coming to live at Nyumbani. The family members have since moved to the U.S., and it had been years since Dennis had seen them.

As he describes it: "Being able to visit my relatives in North Carolina was the most memorable and enjoyable thing. They promised to visit Kenya whenever they get a chance. They really gave me a nice reception and wished I could stay on longer. One of them quoted that 'I bring lots of good memories.'"

Dennis further describes his visit in this excerpted letter:

Sister Mary's Letter

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the great challenge we are now facing. Many of our children in the Nyumbani Home and Lea Toto have failed first-line ARV treatment and a small number have failed second-line. So that we do not have another situation like Sammy's (see last page), we need access to ARVs available in the developed world but not yet in Kenya. For more effective monitoring of treatment, we need to be able to conduct resistance testing. Pray with us that we will be able to put these needs in place as soon as possible.

For our children in our three educational programs facing exams, this is a time of build-up to a significant moment in their education—63 will sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education and four for the High School exam. This is also a time when our social worker Helen plans Christmas vacations with extended families for as many of our children in the Nyumbani Home as possible. We rejoice that each year more contacts are made, all of which will help us with the reintegration of our children back into the community. Just these past weeks, three more contacts with extended family occurred, a reunion that brings untold joy to the fortunate children.

The Summit meeting of Nyumbani Boards that had to be postponed last January because of the election crisis is taking place as this newsletter goes to press. We are delighted to welcome a new member, our Spanish Board, Amigos de Nyumbani. We are also in the midst of officially dedicating the Fr. Angelo D'Agostino Multi-Purpose Hall. The presence of our international Board members at this event will add special significance.

Dear friends,
When I reached North Carolina (Raleigh) from Washington, D.C., my cousin Jill, who is the first-born daughter to my aunt picked me up at the bus terminal. My aunt, my sister's mum, raised me up. When my mum passed away in 1984, my aunt took care of seven of us, plus her own children. The burden was very heavy for her, though she didn't give up on us. Four of us are now deceased, only three of us remain. I am more of a brother than a cousin to them. The fact that we grew up in the same family strengthened our bond.

Jill was so overjoyed she ran towards me and hugged me for half a minute. It was all smiles. She didn't believe that I was there with her. It was like a dream. She drove to her home, introduced me around her house, showed me everywhere. We sat around the table talking and laughing. The door bell rang. . . Guess who came in: Nelson. Nelson

Nyumbani Village is about to welcome six more families of 60 children and 6 grandparents. This will bring us close to the one-third mark in the growth of the Village. It also means that Hotcourses Primary School will need to develop a second stream (a second tier of grade levels) for January 2009. At the Nyumbani Home, new resident Mwadime has just joined us, and we await a toddler displaced as a result of the post-election violence. Numbers in Lea Toto continue to escalate with our total active number of children at 2,706. We are planning to expand into three more centers in the coming year.

The rains have begun and, happily, Nyumbani Village has been blessed. This means a hive of activity in our sustainability program between capitalizing on rain for our farms and completing the planting of the Melia forest (see page 2), as well as intercropping of castor and sunflower. Next year, we hope to be able to harvest rainwater by guttering the family houses and large buildings and providing underground storage. However, it all costs money!

As you celebrate Thanksgiving Day and Christmas, we join with you in thanking God for the tremendous support of Nyumbani. Having been in the States recently, I experienced firsthand the effect the economic crisis is having on the resources of the ordinary citizen. Despite this, I received assurance from you, our donors, that you will continue to help us. Words fail me and the children you aid in expressing our gratitude for this continued support. May God do this for us.

Sister Mary Owens



Nyumbani U.S. supporter Jebet Kibogy (right) introduced Dennis (left) to attendees at the 2008 Benefit Dinner.

is the last-born son to my aunt. With him was his new wife Tiwada. Joy filled the air. I called him "Msaja," meaning man, a term we called each other during childhood. By now the house was full; I remember we talked until midnight.

[Dennis also wrote these words to USA newsletter readers:]

I would like to thank all those who planned for our trip to the United States of America. I enjoyed myself so much. I was deeply encouraged by the kindness of people willing to share the little they have. It was a trip of a lifetime.

While at the States, Dr. Marilyn Jerome hosted us. She was very kind. Everything we requested was granted. We had a chance to view different sceneries e.g. one day we toured the famous Georgetown University where the late Father D'Ag used to teach and reside.

The Annual Benefit was very fruitful and a lot of people attended. We had a chance to meet and talk to many people. Some of these people were former volunteers and donors.

In conclusion, I was very much inspired by the hardworking people in the USA. The roads network is very good, the buildings and the communication system. I was, however, surprised to learn that some of the people who live in the States did not know much about HIV.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to those who worked tirelessly to ensure that our trip and the Annual Benefit was successful. Thank you again.

Dennis

Sammy Arrives in Heaven

Sammy K, a loving son of Nyumbani, passed away in early September after a long and sometimes painful fight for his life. Unlike many of the children at the Home or in the Lea Toto project areas, Sammy's body developed a resistance to all the antiretroviral drugs available in Kenya, and before more advanced retrovirals could be obtained, he suffered a stroke. Still, the nurses and volunteers at the Home spent

countless hours over a long period of time giving him comfort and caring for him as best they could.

Fortunately, one of his main caregivers – Sister Julie – was at his side when

he left us. Her words to God express how many feel about his passing.

"I hope his room was ready in the Nyumbani mansion and Father D'Ag had sitting room on his shoulders for Sammy. So let us rejoice and be glad to God for now Sammy K is experiencing a pain-free life with you. My heart is crying, yet I am happy and grateful that you are sharing the gift of new life with our little man.

"Please tell Sammy that now it is his turn to be there for me and all of us at Nyumbani, especially all his brothers and sisters who are also HIV+. He needs to inspire the kids to keep fighting HIV, to keep taking their ARVs, and do whatever it is they need to do to stay healthy.

"They have to take charge of their lives and not let being HIV+ hinder them from living fully. Let them know the decision is theirs and their Nyumbani family will always be here to love and support them."



Sammy in happier times.



Mourners at Sammy's grave site.

To Our Supporters: Please note that the address for donations and for administration has changed to:

**Nyumbani USA
4910 Massachusetts Ave.,
N.W.
Suite 100
Washington, DC 20016**

Raising the Melia Volkensii Tree



Furniture made from the Melia



A makeshift green house for protecting young trees



Melia nut and seed



Cracking the nuts



A solar pump to help feed the trees

**Photos courtesy of
Make a Mark**

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