

FROM THE CHAIR

Collaboration...

Gift of Life programs throughout the world define this word. Our 52 programs work with one another on a daily basis to identify and treat children from every corner of the globe. This past month Gift of Life International submitted a proposal to Rotary International President D.K. Lee that would, for the first time, focus the entire Gift of Life network on one country, all at once.

We call our proposal, "Our Hearts Are In ..."

Each year the Board of Directors of Gift of Life International will be selecting one country for us to help. We will conduct a diagnostic screening mission to identify children in need of open-heart surgery. Once the children are identified, we will coordinate having them sent to hospitals, one child to each of our participating districts. We plan on treating 25+ children, all on the same day. From Beijing to Memphis, from Monterrey to Amman, Gift of Life affiliated hospitals and medical professionals will work simultaneously to give these children a second chance at life.

By making this proposal to President Lee, we hope to introduce an effective program that will help Rotary International attract new members throughout the world. We all would agree that the most pressing problem in any country is not simply the incidence of congenital heart defects. But through the 'Our Hearts Are In' program, we will be able to draw attention to the needs of one country.

As Rotary Clubs and Districts from all over the world begin to answer the call to help this country clean up its water, immunize its children and feed the hungry, people will begin to see the greatness of Rotary. They will finally be exposed to the power of our 'army of volunteers.' They will see first hand how Rotarians from all walks of life respond to the calls for help from all over the world on a daily basis.

Through collaboration we become one ... one awesome group of devoted people sharing the same cause ... making this world a better place for all that inhabit it. We will continue to do our part by aggressively pursuing our mission of:

Saving Children's Lives ... One Little Heart At A Time

Yours in Rotary,



Robbie Donno
Chairman



NEWS BRIEFS ...

A Very Special Gift

"The most wonderful thing is to see the face of the child's mother. The mother goes from crying tears of sadness, to tears of joy. It's a beautiful feeling to be able to help in this way."

Host Parent and GOLNE Director Burt Janz, quoted in the Hometown Weekly Newspapers (Medford, MA), 17.JUL.08]. Read the full article:

<http://www.hometownweekly.net/default.asp?sourceid=&smenu=1&twindow=&mad=&sd>

Honoring Mr. Weishaupt

Every now and then truly unique individuals enter our lives. One of them is Kurt Weishaupt. Mr. Weishaupt touched all who knew him with his inspiring actions of generosity. Now, a movie in honor of him is in development by Gift of Life donors Paolo, Carlo and Pina De Rosa whose vision is to shine an even brighter light on the power of making a difference and helping others.

The video, "The Promise," will bring great exposure to Gift of Life! Kindly watch it and leave a positive comment as the De Rosa family creates meetings with Hollywood producers. The video promo is available at www.YouTube.com/pinaderosa. To receive a free copy of the DVD and more information, contact Pina@GratitudeInternational.com.

Belize Infant Energetic After Surgery In Boston

"It's the happy ending to a story that began thousands of miles away. Manlee Moody was brought here from Belize, Central America, for the operation June 30."

As seen on NEWSCENTER 5, WCVBTV/DT ABC 10.July.08]. See full article and broadcast:

<http://www.thebostonchannel.com/asseenon5/16842691/detail.html>

The Miracle of Dayana



Just as some little children need more hugs and kisses than others, some kids need more friends than others. Well, our adorable Dayana Pupiales from Ecuador is in the second category. When she needed them, they all stood up to be counted: Dr. Sam Weinstein and his caring professional staff at The Children's Hospital at Montefiore, members of the Locust Valley and Jackson Heights Rotary Clubs, Margaret & Eamon Lavin (sponsors of Dayana's surgery), Randy Carr, Alex Bout (who donated so many flyer miles to make Dayana's wish come true), and prior hosts Rony Kessler & Ana Diaz, and many, many others and you have a pretty crowded hospital room. A very special thanks to all those people who held Dayana so close to their hearts and mentioned her in their prayers. We know now that real miracles still happen – we just witnessed one of them.

From Mike Beyers, RD7500, New Jersey, USA



7-Year old Nicole Ruado and her Mom returned home to the Philippines this past June 8th. Nicole had a 11mm hole in her heart that was closed during a catheterization procedure. Dr. Igor Mesia, the pediatric cardiologist at St. Christopher's Hospital (NJ) consulted with another physician at the Cleveland Clinic (OH), and as a result they successfully closed hole without having to resort to open-heart surgery.

Nicole and Mom were hosted by Brian & Ching House of Willingboro NJ. Ching is Filipino, which helped Mom cope with the shock of being out of her home country for the first time. Brian is an RN at St. Christopher's and has pledged to help us as much as possible with future GOL children.

MAY WE INTRODUCE YOU TO ...

GIFT OF LIFE is honored to affiliate with extraordinary medical professionals, facilities, and organizations, dedicated volunteers, and generous contributors that give of their time, talent and treasure to help critically ill children from medically underserved areas of the world. They are the unseen heroes behind every Gift of Life story, and there are almost 10,000 such stories.



LEONARD L. BAILEY, MD

**Distinguished Professor of Surgery & Surgeon in Chief,
Loma Linda University Children's Hospital,
Loma Linda University Medical Center (LLUMC),
Loma Linda International Heart Institute
Loma Linda, California, USA.**

A world-renowned surgeon, Dr. Bailey pioneered infant heart transplantation surgery more than 20 years ago. Over the course of his career he has performed more than 250 infant heart transplants and numerous corrective heart procedures.

The following two headlines appeared in the December 1999 issue of the LLUMC news. The full articles can be read at: <http://www.llu.edu/news/today/dec299/mc.htm#tophospital>

Leonard Bailey, world-renowned heart surgeon, remembers with fondness a tiny baby named Fae

It has been 15 years since an infant known as Baby Fae made medical history at Loma Linda University Medical Center as the first newborn recipient of a cross-species heart transplant.



Her new heart pumping within her, Baby Fae, pictured at left, sleeps peacefully. Aside from the stitches on her chest, she looks as pink and healthy as any other baby.

Eddie Anguiano, pictured at right, first known to the world as Baby Moses, gained notoriety as the first baby to survive an infant-to-infant heart transplant. Many people believe that without Baby Fae's experience, Eddie would not be here today.



LLUMC selected as one of the top hospitals in the nation for heart care



Loma Linda University Medical Center president and chief executive officer B. Lyn Behrens, MBBS (center), congratulates Kenneth R. Jutzy, MD, associate professor of medicine, and head of the division of cardiology (left), and Leonard L. Bailey, MD, professor of surgery, and Chair, Department of Surgery, for helping to make Loma Linda University Medical Center one of the nation's top hospitals for heart-care services.

Thank You Dr. Bailey for making Gift of Life part of your life.

ONE LIFE SAVED ... ONE LIFE TRANSFORMED

Rachael Glassman is now 17 years old. When she was 13 years old, Rachael attended the installation ceremony for officers of the Gift of Life Program in District 7250 (NY, USA). She had hoped to present a contribution to fully sponsor surgery for a needy child. Although Rachel worked hard, she came up short. As Rachael Tells It:

I had been trying to raise money for over a year, and I had done a pretty good job. I had \$2,500 and I was going to a dinner for the Gift of Life Program to present them with my donation. Gift of Life is a charitable organization that sponsors children from Third World countries who are in need of life saving surgery, which usually costs \$5,000 when done through the Gift of Life Program. My donation of \$2,500 could help only half a child. Herein lay the problem: I wanted to sponsor a whole child.

It was time to go and I had come to terms with my gift. Certainly \$2,500 is a good amount of money, I thought. I had worked long and hard to raise it. There were many garage sales, bake sales and numerous other activities organized to raise money. Endless hours were spent making bracelets that I sold for charity. But once it came time to walk up to the podium to present my gift, I felt incomplete. I felt as if I hadn't done a good enough job and I wished I had been able to give more. The speaker announced my name and I approached the podium. I was nervous and excited at the same time; here I was, only 13, and speaking publicly to about 100 people. As proud as I was at that moment, all I could think about was my goal, which sadly, I did not meet. My success was just out of reach.

After I finished my short speech, people applauded long and hard. I was happy to hear it, though I still felt as if I had failed. The presenter then did something extraordinary: He told me he would like to donate \$500 to my cause. I was astounded, but it didn't stop there. He then asked if anyone else was interested in helping the cause. Within five minutes, I had accrued the additional \$2,500 I needed to sponsor a child...my own child...a whole child! That was the pivotal moment.

Something that had just been a project for me suddenly became a catalyst to my understanding of true giving. It wasn't just about the money, the community service hours, or any goal I had made for myself, it was all about the goodness of people. It wasn't simply about my own effort and sense of accomplishment in helping a destitute family, but rather about the ultimate impact on their lives. I have never felt my heart as full of love as I did when the prospect of actually sponsoring a child came to fruition. I had truly never known that such a simple act could feel so entirely wonderful.

Finally meeting Miss Kazandra Chavez Lopez made everything complete. She came to New York from Ecuador in 2005 for her cardiac surgery. My mom and I spent a good amount of time with Kazandra and her mom. We even celebrated her fifth birthday with her ... a birthday which probably would have been her last had she not had her surgery. This was the second event in the process that changed me forever. I was able, at the age of 15, to understand what most children growing up in this day do not, I was able to finally comprehend just how much I have and should be grateful for.

Kazandra and her mother thought they had nothing to give in return for what they had received, but it was truly the other way around. I will never receive a better gift than the one they gave me: The gift of pure love and the ability to experience true empathy.

It's a bit confusing, this idea of giving. You give to help others, but in reality it is the best thing you can do to transform yourself.

Sincerely,
Rachael

JOINING FORCES ... SAVING AHMED

Richard Crawford is a retired DEA agent and a former Marine Corps officer. Now employed by a civilian company under contract with the Department of Defense, Mr. Crawford deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, with the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force in January 2007, for a 12-month tour. The following story is excerpted from Mr. Crawford's recent letter to our New York office.

... While stationed there I learned of a young Iraqi boy, Ahmed, who had been diagnosed with a life threatening congenital heart defect.

In October 2007, the corpsmen (photo) introduced me to Ahmed, and to his father and uncle, both of whom are Iraqi policemen. They told me that there was an organization called the National Iraqi Assistance Center (NIAC) and they were trying to find sponsors (approximately \$50,000) to send Ahmed to Syria or Jordan for the surgery he needed. My thoughts immediately were that there had to be a better way to help him through some organization in the US.



I was enamored with this beautiful child, and I promised that I would do whatever I could to find a way to help him once I returned to the US. His family was dedicated to improving the security situation in Iraq. His father was a policeman, and his mother's three brothers were policemen, one of who was murdered by insurgents in April 2007.

Shortly after returning to the US in January of this year, I contacted the local newspaper that had run a story on my deployment before I left for Iraq. I explained what I was trying to accomplish and they put me in touch with the Rotary Club and the Rotary Gift of Life Program.

I contacted Steve Agius, the President of Rotary Gift of Life Florida, and furnished him with the details about Ahmed. After confirming that Ahmed had a condition that was treatable under the Gift of Life Program, the Florida club agreed to sponsor his surgery.

They have since sent the funds to Rotary Gift of Life- Amman to cover his surgical expenses.

I have also forwarded personal funds to people in Jordan to cover the hotel and living expenses for Ahmed and his guardian when they are not at the hospital.

Thank you and your organization for all the wonderful things that you do.

Sincerely,
Richard K. Crawford



And thank you, Mr. Crawford, for keeping your promise.

MISSION TO PANAMA

J. Thomas Ford, Fundacion Obsequio de Vida (The Gift of Life Foundation). Email: jtfordpty@aol.com

A medical mission is scheduled for August 6th –15th with the arrival of Dr Michael Womack, Pediatric Cardiologist, Assistant Clinical Professor, Oregon Health and Science University, who will be working with pediatric cardiologists from the public children’s hospital, Hospital del Niño, and the Caja del Seguro Social.



The procedures are curative in nature, utilizing the catheterization lab at Hospital Punta Pacifica, a private facility affiliated with the Johns Hopkins network and the social security facilities. There are over 16 children from Hospital del Niño who are scheduled to receive the curative procedures.

The children are brought over from Hospital del Niño in their ambulance, accompanied by their nurses, the anesthesiologist and cardiologists. 6-8 children from the Hospital Caja del Seguro also may have curative catheterization procedures, using their own facility.



The trip expenses, the use of the laboratory and all of the special supplies are sponsored by the Panama Fundacion Obsequio de Vida (Panama Gift of Life Foundation), a non-profit organization dedicated to provide medical and surgical solutions to indigent children with congenital heart disease, problems and defects.



The Foundation seeks and relies on financial support from many generous contributors. Please do not hesitate to contact Tom Ford at the email address shown above.

GIVING BACK ...

In the May and June 2008 issues of GOLINEWS, we told the story of Grace Agwaru, the first Gift of Life Child, from the perspective of both the child and of the remarkable woman she has become. This is the story from the perspective of the Regional Rotary International Membership Coordinator in Uganda, Sam Owori, who relates how the birth of the first Gift of Life child in that country led to the creation and naming of an organization that has since saved the lives of 10,000 children from around the world, and is working to save the lives of thousands more.

RRIMC Sam Owori Zone 10A, RD9200, Kampala, Uganda



I thought I owe all of you some special information about the new Soroti Rotary Club, some 250 kilometers from Kampala, Uganda. Two of the people who have been driving the formation of this new club are a now not so young lady, Grace Agwaru, and her father.

Grace was the first ever case in the late 1970s that was sent from Uganda by the Rotary Club of Kampala to the USA for Open Heart Surgery.

This was the precursor of what developed into the now world famous Gift of Life Programme.

Grace was followed sometime later by John Engole and Robinah Nakabuye, all from Uganda. All the three open-heart surgeries were successful, but it was after the third case of Robinah that the expression Gift of Life was used because the case was so complicated that it was a real "gift of life". The surgeons and the late Past District Governor Tony Zino (RD7250) did not hold any hope that she would survive. Years later they came to Kampala to cross check on Robinah only to find she had finished school and was not only working, but was a mother of a healthy bouncing son. She had not been expected to be able to do any of these things.

All these three people are alive, well and kicking. Robinah, appropriately, works at the Heart Institute in Mulago Hospital, Kampala. Grace is an articulate and well qualified professional. She lives and works in Soroti, and the point I want to stress is the desire of Grace and her father to give something back to and through Rotary. This is why they both have been so active in the formation of that club.

Grace adds her comment to RRIMC Sam's remarks:



Being part of Soroti Central Rotary club is 'a dream come true'. This club to which my dad, Silvester Agwaru, is part also has Faustine Engole and his wife Cecilia whose child was the third to benefit from this life saving surgery. It is not surprising that the initiators of this promising club include these families together with their close family friends. They have all expressed their desire to give something back to and through Rotary.

Dad and I have also been actively involved in linking heart patients to the Uganda Heart Institute in Uganda and to GOL. Already GOL has operated on over 10,000 children and we shall have a child from Uganda to mark this achievement. Through my Rotary club, I am looking to enhance the work of GOL in Uganda and in my Rotary district. This is my dream, and I am happy it's becoming a reality.



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Our staff would be pleased to receive your comments, questions and suggestions about our newsletter and our website. Tell us what would be relevant to your District and to your part of the world. Send your email to:

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Gift of Life International, Inc. and its global network of Gift of Life Programs are managed by the participating Districts, Clubs and Members of Rotary International, Inc., and depend heavily on the network of Rotarians throughout the world who help to identify, transport, house and lovingly care for all our critically ill children.

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