

## FROM THE CHAIR

### The Screening Mission

One of the most important elements of any Gift of Life program is the diagnostic screening mission.

During these missions health care professionals identify the children who will ultimately receive the Gift of Life and decide the best course of medical action, and Rotarians and other volunteers devise the logistics for transporting each selected child and a parent from one country to another.

Customarily, a mission consists of a pediatric cardiologist, an echo technician and a member(s) of a Gift of Life program. A typical mission lasts three to five days and screenings usually take place at a local hospital or clinic selected by Rotarians or other caring individuals "in country".

About 100 children are examined, almost all of whom have already been diagnosed with some form of congenital heart defect by a local or visiting cardiologist.

After children who are considered candidates for heart surgery are identified, our network of Gift of Life Programs is notified and given the specifics of each child's circumstances. The volunteers in these programs provide the transportation, housing, and loving care for these children, and the comforting reassurance to each parent that they will not be taking this journey alone.

From time to time you will read articles in our newsletters that describe these missions. They are missions of hope on the one hand, and urgency and despair on the other. Parents are desperate to find help for their children, and the presence of our mission team gives them hope.

The Rotarians and other volunteers who take part in these missions become advocates for the children. Although they are thankful that another group of children will receive a second chance at life, the reality is that there will always be yet another child, "the next one," who awaits his or her own miracle.

So even while the selfless volunteers that form our Gift of Life Programs are delivering the loving care that each of our children so desperately needs, they look forward to "the next one" and "the next one" and "the next....." many of whom have already begun a Journey To Life, and will soon be here.

We have looked into this child's eyes. We have seen the potential.

We have felt the love. Indeed, this child has become **our** child.

We welcome them all, and we love them, always!

Yours in Rotary,



Robbie Donno  
Chairman



## NEWS BRIEFS ...

### Gift of Life Doc Recognized

On June 25, 2008 Rotarian Humberto Rodriguez-Saldaña, MD was named "Rotarian Of The Year" and recognized with a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Monterrey, Mexico, of which he is a member. He was recognized for his incredible humanitarian commitment to the children of the world by giving them the Gift of Life.



Dr. Rodriguez is Chairman of Pediatric Cardiovascular Surgery at the Hospital Enfermedades Cardiovasculares IMSS in Monterrey, Mexico. He is a member of the heart transplant team in Monterrey, which is chaired by his father who is also a renowned cardiac surgeon.

Humberto was an International Fellow in Congenital Cardiovascular Surgery at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, where he learned from another Gift of Life hero, Dr. William (Bill) Novick, founder of International Children's Heart Foundation. Together they are saving and changing the lives of the world's children every day.

### Music For Heart Saves Its 75th Child

The Music for Heart Foundation volunteer team traveled to El Salvador in May 2008, where they teamed up with Heart Care International and Sana Mi Corazon to participate in a cardio-thoracic medical mission.

The three organizations worked together with the medical professionals at the Benjamin Bloom Hospital in El Salvador, which is the only children's hospital in the entire country. More than 80 children were screened in just three days, ranging in age from newborn to 18 years old.

Miraculously, with a 100% success rate, 54 children who were nearly out of time were given the Gift of Life through corrective heart surgery. While saving these precious lives, the Heart Care International team also provided a continuation of their training program to the Salvadorean medical professionals.



Upon returning from an incredible trip to El Salvador, the Music for Heart Foundation is proud to report that, due to the continued support of donors, sponsors, the Gift of Life Program, and the Rotary International matching grant program, the organization has now had the privilege of playing a role in saving the lives of 74 children.

Then, on May 23rd, the Foundation's 75th child, 13-month old Kimberly Valencia Turcios from Honduras, received the gift of life at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital

## Ugandan Reunites With Docs Who Saved Her Life

*Condensed from a 25 June 2008 Newsday Article By DELTHIA RICKS*

Thirty-three years ago at the age of 5, little Grace Agwaru was flown out of Uganda for open-heart surgery at St. Francis Hospital in Long Island, New York. Now an agricultural engineer, she is helping to improve Ugandan farming - a vital pillar of the country's economy.



She returned to St. Francis yesterday to reunite with those who helped spare her life. "I feel like I'm living my second life ... I am so grateful," Agwaru said, following a showing of snapshots from her childhood. "Coming back here is a way to say thank you."

Agwaru's operation led to the founding of Gift of Life International, which today is comprised of many participating Rotary districts around the world. Since Agwaru was treated in 1975, almost 10,000 children have been helped through Gift of Life.

Dr. Filippo Balboni, the cardiologist who diagnosed Agwaru at St. Francis and is now retired, was the chief of pediatric cardiology in 1975. "She was a good patient and always did what she was supposed to do," Balboni said yesterday. "We are very, very proud."

*Read Grace's story in the May 2008 issue at [www.golinews.org](http://www.golinews.org)*

## Healing the Hearts of Children Through Collaboration and Empowerment

*December 3-5, 2008 – Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic*



Join us at the upcoming 4th Global Forum on Humanitarian Medicine in Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery. The objective is to help coordinate public and private organizations that provide cardiac care with those who support the delivery of such care, both financially and logistically, to better serve those in need. The conference will focus on services being provided to Central & South America, the Caribbean and Mexico.

The Forum will be of interest to physicians, nurses and technicians specializing in humanitarian cardiac care, medical professionals, hospital administrators, non-profit NGO's involved with providing cardiac services, international organizations and various aid agencies.

The conference will be hosted by Gift of Life International, International Children's Heart Foundation and International Hospital for Children. Registration fee is \$175. The conference will be held at the Oasis Hamaca Hotel. Rooms are \$75-\$100 per person per night, all inclusive ([www.oasishamaca.com](http://www.oasishamaca.com)).

Save the date and join us in the Dominican Republic! Programs and registration packets will be available soon. For further information or if you would like a registration packet, please call (901) 869-4243.

## Florida Rotarians Help Belize Gift of Life

*Transcript of a television broadcast, May 29, 2008*

**Host Marion Ali:** *Please note: This is a verbatim transcript of our evening television newscast. Where speakers use Kriol, we attempt to faithfully reproduce the quotes using a standard spelling system.*

**Marion Ali:** Today was a big day for the Rotary Club of Belize and hundreds of children they have helped through their Gift of Life programme. That's because today Gift of Life International Director Lou Auricchio and Belize Rotary Club President Sandra Bedran signed an agreement that ensures the continued support of the lifesaving service.

**Yvette Burkes, Director, Belize Gift of Life Program:** The money that's the matching grant, which will turn out to be a total of seventy-five thousand U.S. dollars, is money that we're putting in some, a thousand U.S. to be exact, the different clubs up in that district are going to put up some and then the district will give a lump sum and then the full amount is going to be matched by Rotary Foundation. The money will be received and managed in Florida and they are going to be giving approximately five thousand U.S. dollars to the hospital [for each child, Ed] ...



**Gary Israel, District Governor, RD6960, Southwest Florida:** We try to do this ... at each District Conference whether it relates to literacy or health or better understanding of people.

**Marion Ali:** With Belize or ...

**Gary:** We have a good exchange of Gift of Life children that need corrective heart surgeries and we've done probably twelve or fifteen from the Belize area in our district. We had the distribution of some wheel chairs today from the Wheelchair Foundation and we try to have a Christmas in May for the children, the Gift of Life children here with seven hundred toys and toothbrushes and a lot of things that maybe we take for granted back home.

**Marion Ali:** Rotary is hoping to assist at least fifteen children this year through the Gift of Life programme. For Muriel Gillett, whose nine year old daughter Renola underwent heart surgery in November of 2006, the organisation's work is a godsend.

**Muriel Gillett, Renola's mother:** She couldn't play, she couldn't talk good. Like ih never had the oxygen fi bring up di words. Ih get tired even if ih talk. Ih used to get blue and ih used to bleed through ih nose lot and thing. But now since ih geh ih surgery ih noh gah dehn problem and ih go da school, ih come home, ih no complain no way hurt ah. No pain, nothing, just aspirin.

**Marion Ali:** And she'll have a normal future the doctors say?

**Muriel Gillett:** Yeah, ih wah normal afterwards because I could see dat ih di get back. Ih hundred percent betta dan before because things weh ih do ih neva used to do.

**Marion Ali:** And you appreciate the programme?

**Muriel Gillett:** Yes, me thank Rotary and Lions and everybody who help me fi mek she gone da Florida gone get ih operation.

**Marion Ali:** During today's event, the Florida Rotary Clubs also presented a cheque for three thousand three hundred U.S. dollars to administrators at the Dorothy Menzies Child Care Centre to purchase school uniforms and shoes for the home's residents.



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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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