

The Celtic Knot

If you look at the top left hand corner of the newsletter, you will see a Celtic design that has been with us since our founding as a charity in 2003. I think you will see more than you realized was there. This design is representative of our motto.

Many of you may be familiar with Celtic symbolism, whether it be in the form of Claddagh rings, pendants, scarves, or even tattoos. Celtic art and symbolism are known worldwide. The art is ubiquitous. Much, though not all of it, is associated with Ireland. People are attracted to its intricate and often puzzling design. It's probably rare that someone who visits Ireland does not buy a piece of Celtic jewelry.

Many wonder about the meaning behind Celtic designs. They feel that the intricacy and detail must have a meaning. It's disappointing to some to find that the meaning is lost in antiquity. After all, the designs can date back 5,000 years. And the designs probably have meant different things at different times. The main reason for the conflict and lack of consensus is because for a lot of the designs, there is no hidden meaning. If it means something to you, then that should be enough.

However, one persistent theme, central to the designs, has existed throughout the 5,000 years. It is the idea of commitment. Eternal commitment. All designs are in some way or other "Knots."

You might question what all this has to do with Michael's House. Well it's significant.

This symbol is based on the Maya Celtic Knot. This knot resembles balanced hearts that point towards each other in an eternal chain. Our hearts are there. The never-ending chain represents the permanence and continuum of love, of connectedness and charity. We are all bound together even though time and space separate as represented by the white cross and space in the middle.

All of us at Michael's House are responsible and committed to each other and especially to the wounded, to the sick, to the poor, and to the aged who are represented by the red heart. They are our brothers and sisters. We are inextricably related.

We do not serve our aged as superiors to inferiors. We hold that charity is a relationship between equals. Empathy and charity become authentic when we recognize our shared humanity. We do not give out of pity, we give out of justice and humanity. We make a choice.

Michael Craig, Founder, Michael's House

Recognizing Your Gracious Donations

We hope you realize YOU are the hope that so many destitute elderly depend on every day. Without your donations, many would not have food, shelter, medicines or surgery they so desperately need. At the beginning of last year Michaels's House tried a new approach to show how grateful we are for your donations. We began by sending thank you notes after each of your donations. Although none of your donations were spent on mailing the thank you notes, we heard from several donors they did not want resources used to acknowledge every donation. Consequently our policy going forward, rather than acknowledging each individual donation, will be to send an end-of-year appreciation letter with tax donation information. We hope this meets with your approval. *We will continue to acknowledge new donors.*

Many donors are regular monthly or annual donors and every dollar is valuable. If you are able, please consider making a monthly contribution. We are committed to feed and provide medical care for many elderly people. They depend upon us and we can't let them go hungry or without basic care. Regular contributions can be sent by check or PayPal or Network for Good. See our home page for details: Michaels-House.org.

Operating in the developing world presents many challenges, and with your support, we at Michael's House have developed an assistance model based on our experience since beginning as an organization in 2003.

Why do we exist?

The elderly are the most marginalized people in developing countries. Many large organizations support youth and implement sustainable programs. But the destitute elderly are not an investment in the future and are usually the last to receive assistance.

For the most part, there are no pensions or free health care for the destitute elderly. Many children of the elderly have died of AIDs or left their parents for work in the cities or other countries. The elderly are often left with grandchildren to care for. Michael's House is one of the very few organizations in the developing world solely dedicated to helping the destitute elderly.

How do we deliver our services?

Since we are a world away, we work with carefully vetted care partners. In developing countries, non-profit organizations or governments are largely untrustworthy. We have found that established organizations of faith are usually our best care partners; however, Michael's House is not a religious organization and we choose partners who focus on the needs of the destitute elderly, not proselytizing. We assist all destitute elderly regardless of religion, race, national origin, or other discriminating factors.

Who are our Care Partners?

Among the organizations with whom we partner with are the Medical Missionaries of Mary and Little Sisters of the Poor. They have proven to be trustworthy. We have long-standing relationships with most of our care partners. Some individuals in these organizations have toiled anonymously for years, while others are internationally known for their work in repairing fistulas and performing eye surgeries. We work directly with the caregivers at the local level; we know each intimately and have board members as liaisons who maintain regular contact with them.

Additionally, we have written agreements in place with our care partners, and we require documentation of expenditures and identification of the beneficiaries. We receive periodic photos and videos of the care being provided to the indigent. For large projects, we require detailed receipts and photos of the completed work or operating equipment.

How do we determine destitute elderly needs?

At Michael's House we reach out to each care partner to encourage development of programs to benefit the elderly. Without our advocacy and funding, most programs dedicated to the elderly would not exist. We receive written grant requests for funding for projects both from those we reach out to as well as those who have heard of our work. Each request is thoroughly discussed and voted on by board members - Is it affordable? Does it meet our criteria of benefiting the destitute elderly? And, is it possible to implement effectively? We have both one-time project requests and ongoing support such as our pension program which provides regular food and medical care.

Why not send our funds directly to our Care Partners?

We do not send funds or enter into relationships with the headquarters of large organizations or deal with their bureaucracies. One of our tenets is that we empower each other to help the destitute elderly. Working directly with individual care partners at the site of assistance eliminates bureaucratic expenses and allows us to monitor each dollar and know the destitute being cared for.

How are we different?

Michals House Is unique. We are an all-volunteer organization and our expenses are extremely low - more than 98% of our donations directly support the destitute elderly. There are no salaries, and most of the time even our routine expenses, like mailing of this newsletter, are paid by our generous volunteers. Because our programs are administered through established organizations, we have minimal expenses to implement our programs. We currently provide food and medical care in Rwanda, Uganda, Nigeria, Togo, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Honduras, and Zimbabwe. In addition to regular support, we support special projects, most recently an eye surgery project in Uganda and with your help, we will reach our goal to support the Sorghum for South Sudan grinding machine project.

Who makes this all possible?

You and your generous spirit.

Our Support in the Slums of Nairobi, Kenya

With your support, Michael's House helps support the destitute elderly in the Kariobangi slums in Nairobi, Kenya. Each week, over 100 destitute elderly come to the Cheshire Home to receive a cooked meal and food to take home. The needy include elderly who suffer from the effects of leprosy and polio from years ago. While the food provided sustains the body, the gathering together in the airy compound of the home is respite from the bleak conditions they live in every day.



Although their possessions are few, the elderly arrive each week proudly wearing their best clothes to eat and obtain food for home.



Worker at Cheshire Home cooks ugali, a mush-like maize staple of Kenya. It is made by constantly adding hot water and stirring over a hot fire.



In addition to maize flour and beans, the destitute usually get vegetables to take home.



Left: Agnes lives with her 3 granddaughters and 3 grandsons. She receives food funded by Michael's House and works as a mid-wife assistant. They cook on a charcoal stove in the room where they live. Agnes sleeps on a mat with the younger children. The rest sleep on the floors made of scraps of linoleum recovered from the trash covering the slums.



Right: Alleyway leading to Agnes' home.



Left: Josephine holds one of her six grandchildren on her couch beside a staffer from the Cheshire Home. The couch is her only furniture besides a small table. The children's mothers are both deceased, one following childbirth, the other to AIDS. They live primarily on food provided by Michael's House. She pays rent by washing and selling bones discarded by a butcher and by sorting through garbage with her children to salvage anything of value, including plastic bottles.



Left: Entrance to Josephine's home where she lives with six grandchildren in a single room approximately 13' x 15'. Like most all of the homes in the slums, there is no electricity, running water or bathrooms.

The 34 elderly who live at the home and the more than 100 others who get a weekly hot meal and food for home are extremely fortunate. There are so many others who are homeless and hungry. The home carefully documents each person approved for support on their computer. Many hungry will come to the home compound gate begging for food. The home will often give them food, but many times they will be turned away. There simply is not enough money for more food.



Cemetery of the destitute. Those who die on the streets are placed in bags and brought to the cemetery where they are placed in pre-dug graves. Residents of Cheshire home who die are provided simple coffins. Permanent grave markers are not allowed. The depressions in the ground are where people were recently interred. After a period of time, other bodies will be buried on top of the older graves. It is sad to have burial without permanent makers. But much sadder is imagining how many lived their last days, hungry, perhaps in pain, and wondering if anyone cares about them. With your help, Michael's House can provide care and restore dignity to many more elderly living in the Nairobi slums.

Sorghum for South Sudan Fundraising Update

Our Sorghum for South Sudan fundraising project will provide a commercial grinding machine and supporting buildings in Wau, South Sudan. This sustainable project will save precious money for food and medical care for the destitute elderly which is now being spent to have sorghum commercially grinded. Thank you for all who have contributed towards the \$20K needed – we now have raised \$8,200. Can you help so that we can feed elderly people for years in the future?

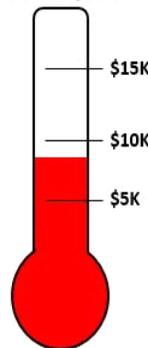
Unfortunately, violence has erupted in Wau. The United Nations (UN) Security Council is working to restore peace through the newly re-formed government. The UN, International Red Cross, and other large relief organizations are providing food, water, medical care and trying to maintain sanitation.

Michael's House has been in communication with our care partners in Wau. While the construction of the building to house the machine cannot begin until peace is restored, ground sorghum will be needed more than ever as what little agriculture which was taking place has again been disrupted by the fighting between government factions.



Some of the people taking refuge inside camps in Wau to escape fighting.

GOAL - \$20K



Please help us reach our goal to provide a sorghum grinding machine and its supporting buildings to feed the destitute elderly and dependent grandchildren in Wau.

Seventh Annual Michael's House Golf Tournament Held

On Tuesday, May 10, Hawkins Electric Service and Hawkins Electrical Construction sponsored the Seventh Annual Michael's House Golf Tournament at the Whiskey Creek Golf Course in Ijamsville, MD. An immense thank you to them and their sponsors. Their continued support enables us to feed, provide medical care, and save the lives of many elderly.



Become a Michael's House Volunteer

Want to be part of our team to help the destitute elderly around the world? If you are passionate about helping the world's most needy people and willing to commit a few hours each month, consider joining our team.

We have a wide range of needs including administrative support, communicating with our care partners overseas, and fundraising. It's also a great way to learn about the developing world and cultivating leadership skills.

Just send us an email at info@michaels-house.org – we look forward to talking with you!