

***A Tribute: Dr. Maura Lynch***  
*by Dennis Tarnar, President, Michael's House*

It is with much sadness to inform you that Dr. Maura Lynch (Dr. Maura), our care partner in Uganda, suddenly died on December 9. December 9 was to be the day of her Golden Jubilee—a celebration of her 50 years serving the people of Africa. While we struggle to accept her passing, she lived an amazing and exemplary life of caring and was beloved by the people of Uganda.

Dr. Maura was one of Michael's House's first care partners. We began by supporting Dr. Maura's fistula surgical repairs, and then she oversaw the management of our pensions for a group of destitute elderly who became fondly known as the "grannies."

Obstetric fistulas are debilitating complications of obstructed labor, which result in uncontrollable leaking of urine and/or feces. It is a widespread condition which mostly affects primarily poor and marginalized women. Many women who develop obstetric fistulas are completely abandoned by their husbands and forced to live out the rest of their lives in poverty and isolation. Dr. Maura observed that many of the women were elderly and had suffered from this condition for years.

After years of providing fistula care, Dr. Maura recognized the need for larger surgical facilities and after planning and fundraising, in 2004 Dr. Maura supervised the building of a Fistula Unit in Kitovu with 28 beds. Over the years, the facility expanded and physicians from around the world came to Kitovu to volunteer their time and learn surgery techniques. She was known world-wide for establishment of her innovative fistula program and she lectured and taught surgical techniques to physicians. She also developed childbirth educational programs for doctors and midwives that helped minimize trauma and reduced fistulas. Dr. Maura was recognized for her work internationally and in 2015 was awarded the prestigious Council of Europe's North-South Prize.

Over the year, Dr. Maura managed our "grannies" program with help of a social worker to provide food, medical care, and necessities to the impoverished elderly in and around Kitovu and Masaka. During my 2015 self-funded trip to Africa to visit our care partners, I had the opportunity to spend most of a week with Dr. Maura. It was an inspirational visit that I will always remember. She was joyous, quick to laugh, and had a manner that made people relax in her presence. But she was a fierce advocate for the elderly and more than once, I saw her step in to correct staff and family members who were not properly caring for patients. While she was direct and strong in her advocacy, she did it with an educational approach that did not embarrass the caregivers.

Dr. Maura led by example and no task was below her. While I was in my room one day, to my amazement, Dr. Maura appeared outside my window and proceeded to repair the torn screen so I could open the window without mosquitoes getting inside.

Although from Ireland, in accordance with her wishes, Dr. Maura is buried near the hospital she helped build in Kitovu. Michael's House plan to continue our programs in Kitovu so Dr. Maura will continue to live on in caring and spirit.



*Dr. Maura readying for surgery.*



*Helen Delaney (left), manager of Michael's House's Ugandan eye surgery camps, and Dennis Tarnar (center), President, Michael's House, with Dr. Maura (right) in 2016.*

## *Sorghum for South Sudan Grinding Mill Success*

We are happy to report that the commercial mill for grinding sorghum in Wau, South Sudan, is now operating to feed the destitute elderly and their dependents. The civil war and poor roads during the rainy season led to numerous delays, but we are thankful at last for success. The mill will grind sorghum for the elderly who are unable to hand grind this staple. The mill will also grind sorghum for others to earn income for more food purchases.

Plans are underway to build a rakuba—an open structure with no walls. The rakuba will be used to shelter people from the hot sun who are waiting for food distribution. It will also be used as a small market area to generate food income.



*Some of the tents holding approximately 7,000 people including the elderly at a single location in Wau.*

Unfortunately, as the civil war enters its fifth year in South Sudan, there are no signs of peace. In the area next to the offices of our care partners, more than 7,000 people live in tents. They are part of more than 50,000 people in camps in Wau who fled to escape the violence. Due to funding limitations, people in the camps now only receive half rations of food. Thankfully, an exception is for the elderly who still receive full rations. Many more people hide outside Wau in the bush. There are efforts to try to reach these people but safety for aid workers is a major concern. This huge humanitarian response is led by the U.N. World Food Program with support by many major international aid agencies. Michael's House will continue its focus on helping the destitute elderly who "fall through the cracks" with the resources provided by your generous donations

## *Join us at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Michael's House Golf Tournament*

Have fun and support Michael's House by participating in the 9th Annual Michael's House Golf Tournament on Tuesday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at Whiskey Creek Golf Course in Ijamsville, MD.

Our un-ending gratitude to the Hawkins Electric Group and other organizations for sponsoring this fabulous event. Please join us!

For more information about participating or sponsorship, please contact Patti Troy at Hawkins at [patti@hawkinselectric.com](mailto:patti@hawkinselectric.com) or 301-210-0900.



# SUPPORT

## *There is No Us Without You*

Your support makes all that we do for the destitute elderly possible. They have come to depend on the love and generosity from those of us more fortunate on the other side of the world. We cannot let them down!

Donate on the web ([www.michaels-house.org](http://www.michaels-house.org)) or make checks payable to: Michael's House Inc., Post Office Box 856, Burtonsville, MD 20866.

Michael's House is a U.S. based 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Contributions to Michael's House in the United States are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.



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