

March 2006



Mission of Love News



"You are not here to save the world, but to touch the hands that are within your reach."

A Tribute to Deb Crystal—"Live every day to the fullest" ...

By Marta

I am writing a belated thank you note from me and our dear friend Deb Crystal. It's still hard for me to believe she lost her valiant fight with the cancer which started in her breast and spread throughout her brain and bones. It seems like yesterday that Deb was telling me that the doctors who discovered the bone and brain damage told her to put her affairs in order. Science doubted she'd survive past March. But Deb, our brilliant, compassionate hospice nurse, healer, artist, writer, warrior, mother, wife, daughter, soul sister had other plans. She danced at my daughter's wedding in April. She joined you, me, Maria Jose and Dr. Todd and Teddy Pantelas on a Mission of Love trip to the Yucatan in May. She celebrated her daughter Morgaine's high school graduation in June. She enjoyed seeing her daughter Arielle learning to drive in July. It was nearly Thanksgiving Day when Deb bid her loving husband Rick and beloved daughters goodbye. She was the most devoted mother I'd ever met. She delighted in her daughters and planted her seeds of greatness in them. She reminded me of the importance of living every day fully. None of us is issued any guarantees. How many people wish their lives away? They say, "someday I'll help out," or "someday I'll go on one of Kathy's trips," or "someday I'll contribute." Well I'd like to shout from the mountaintop, "SOMEDAY IS HERE!"

We all have an obligation to live as if there was no tomorrow. Do what needs to be done. Open your heart to those crying for help. They can be around the corner or around the world. When you met Deb and me at the airport last May, your patience and love helped Deb tremendously. She had just finished radiation and was feeling confused and stressed beyond imagining. You had all the details covered. You made us both feel safe and protected - as you do all your volunteers. Traveling with you was a total joy. We felt pampered and surrounded by glorious gifts - physical and spiritual. You smoothed out all the rough edges so that we could simply enjoy being a part of the Mayan magic. Thank you for that gift and the millions of others in the form of wonderful memories we hold in our hearts forever. On that trip you offered us a true, once-in-a-lifetime chance to feel needed and useful at a time when others saw us as disabled. We saw things that made us smile and things that broke our hearts. The important work accomplished made us proud to play any small part.

Deb is gone but not forgotten. Your important work continues. I honor you for using the obstacles that face you daily as stepping stones. You are a 'purposeful living' guide, who has chosen a hard and often thankless road to travel. I know you do not do this work for any material reward or accolades. The world is blessed to have you, and I am proud to call you 'friend.' I know Deb joins me in saluting your efforts and letting you know you made a very valuable difference in both our lives through your personal Mission of Love.

A New Hope

I need a hope...a new hope.
A hope that reaches for the stars, and
That does not end in violence or war.
A hope that makes peace on our earth, and
That does not create evil in the world.
A hope that finds cures for all diseases, and
That does not make people hurt,
In their bodies, in their hearts,
Or most of all, in their spirits,
I need a hope, a new hope,
A hope that inspires me to live, and
To make all these things happen,
So that the whole world can have
A new hope, too.



May 1999 Mattie Stepanek
Poet and Peacemaker
Journey through Heartsongs

eQuilter.com...

eQuilter.com is a family business in Boulder Colorado, owned by my husband Paul and myself. Two years before we opened this business, we lost our daughter Hanna. It was an absolutely devastating experience, but the day after we lost her, I decided that somehow ... some good would come from our loss. After starting eQuilter we decided to give 2% of sales to charity, and I was particularly interested in helping children and families in desperate situations hoping that perhaps I could help spare other families the heartbreak of losing a child.

Since we made that commitment, eQuilter has raised over \$350,000 for charity, and Mission of Love is one of our most important recipients. This is because over the years of my friendship and work with Kathy Price, I have found someone else who is as committed to helping those who are in such desperate need. Having lived and traveled abroad in the 80's, I was exposed to so many communities where children lived in filth and poverty that is unimaginable to most Americans. When I had the chance to help some of these children through Mission of Love, I knew it was a way to honor our Hanna's memory by helping others in need.

We do not give a percentage of profits because that is too ambiguous of a number. We give 2% of monthly sales and we send out checks to our 6 recipients every month. I don't think about what percentage of profits this amount might be - I just appreciate how easy and wonderful it has been to generate these amazing amounts of money through the success of our business since we started our charity program.

I do hope that we have inspired other businesses to consider putting a program such as this in place. We very carefully screen our recipients to make sure the highest percentage of the funds go to helping those in such desperate need. **Once you have looked in the eyes of those who have lost everything, you can never refer to these people as "them" - but rather they are "we" and their troubles are "ours".**

My thanks to Kathy and the Mission of Love for providing the means for these funds to reach where they are most needed.

Luana Rubin
owner, eQuilter.com



A Special Thank You...

There are so many wonderful people who support Mission of Love, we appreciate you all. Once in a while, special thanks is the order of the day when it comes to people like Luana & Paul Rubin, who faithfully sends a donation every month to further the work of the Mission of Love. This kind of caring, thoughtfulness and most of all, love must be commended.

Please check out Luana's website at eQuilter.com for fabrics for quilting, sewing & fashion and see the unique designs and what a creative and loving friend we have.

One must lead by example.

SPECIAL FEATURE STORY

No Retirement from Helping Others...

The following article comes from a piece written by Kate Helm and that appeared in *Lafayette Alumni News*, January 2006. The original article was spotted by a reader of Mission of Love Newsletters and a classmate of Dr. Abdu's Lafayette Class of '56. Ed Reis. We, at Mission of Love, thank him for sending us this story.

RASHID A. ABDU, MD.



As a young boy growing up in the provincial town of Aireem, Yemen, Rashid Abdu dreamed of becoming a surgeon. After retiring from a long and successful career, he continues to pursue his passion for improving the lives of those with limited access to health care.

Last year, Dorrance Publishing Company released Abdu's autobiography, *Journey of a Yemen Boy*, which chronicles his life from poor village boy to successful U.S. surgeon. The three-year project is now the publisher's most popular title, and a linguist is developing an Arabic translation.

"Retirement does not mean idleness or self-absorption," says Abdu. "It is an opportunity to expand life experience beyond that which in earlier years was restricted to building a career and raising a family. It opens new horizons in sharing and in helping those in need, especially the poor and the underserved."

Abdu has traveled to Mexico's Mayan country on the Yucatan Peninsula four times with the volunteer organization, Mission of Love. During his last visit, he and two nurses delivered orthopedic equipment to a 58-bed hospital in the small town of Tizimin and held clinics for poor residents who rarely can visit a physician.

"They kept saying they had never seen anything like it before," he recalls. "Their operating room tables were rusty, they had only one anesthesia machine, and half of the operating lights were not functioning."

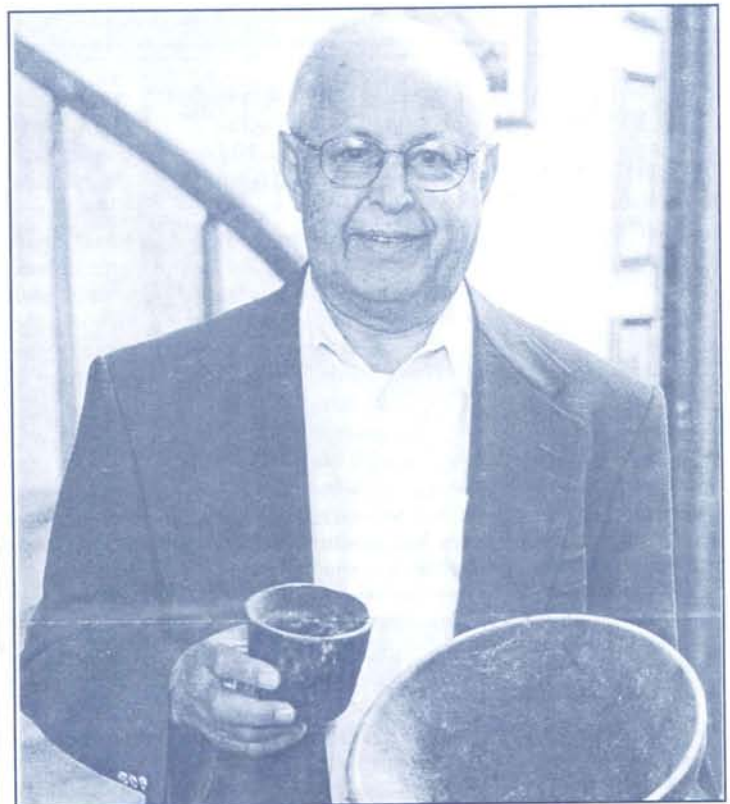
He was invited to return this year to perform and teach surgery. Ohio's St. Elizabeth Health Center, where Abdu is emeritus director of surgical education, donated operating tables, lights and an anesthesia machine that will be shipped before his next trip.

After Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, Abdu traveled to New Orleans to provide medical care for police and military officers headquartered in a vandalized Wal-Mart. Abdu and a Mission of Love team constructed a makeshift clinic in the same store, where Abdu mostly treated leg and foot problems caused by contaminated water. They also provided a hot meal for the officers.

Looking from one end of the street to the other without seeing a soul, except for a sporadic dog walking in a daze hunting for food in what used to be a vibrant city was eerie," he says. "It was physically and emotionally exhausting, but spiritually uplifting. To see those officers who had no bath, no hot meal for three weeks, and who had lost everything was heart wrenching. I will never forget a member of the National Guard, armed to the hilt, holding a hamburger with both hands, telling me it was the best hamburger he ever had."

Abdu was especially concerned about the diabetic police captain with an infected toe. Because a diabetic can easily lose a leg from such an infection, Abdu gave the captain antibiotics and cautioned him to keep his foot elevated for several days. The captain's toe improved the following day. He gave Abdu his badge as a token of his appreciation and mentioned his name on national television.

Abdu has made six trips back to Yemen, often working with local medical personnel to improve facilities and techniques. His visit in 1971 was particularly meaningful. After surgeons in Aden refused to operate on his mother because they feared she was too sick to survive surgery, Abdu performed the operation himself, and his mother lived 28 more years.



Dr. Abdu holds a wooden coffee cup used by his family in Yemen and the family bowl (gafnah) handed down from generation to generation. Photo by Tony Mancino.

His work impressed the villagers, who wanted their children to "be like Rashid." The small village would produce 18 physicians—seven from Abdu's immediate family, including a woman.

In subsequent visits, Abdu helped improve medical education at the University of Science and Technology in Sana'a. He gave the school's first joint lecture to male and female students, and suggested that students anonymously evaluate faculty. He also was a consultant for the location, design and construction of a 250-bed teaching hospital.

His advice to young surgeons has never changed.

"Honesty and integrity must never be compromised at any cost." He says. "Second, approach those who trust you with their lives with humility and reverence, and always remember that each patient is attached to a family that loves her or him."

According to Abdu, he was the first Yemini to attend college in the U.S. "Lafayette prepared me to think as a human being first and as a scientist second," he says. "It provided me with broad and comprehensive education, which gave me better insight into what is important. It instilled in me a sense of idealism. Besides having healthy, wonderful and loving children, grandchildren and good friends, helping people is the greatest joy in my life."



Another Trip to Louisiana...

From articles by Staff Writer Nancy Tullis that appeared in the *Youngstown Vindicator* February 11, 2006

NORTH JACKSON, OHIO—At \$15 a plate, 200 people at a benefit dinner can make a difference. A seafood dinner organized by Kathleen Price, founder of the Mission of Love was held at First Federated Church recently to raise money for a trip to Jean Lafitte, Louisiana that the Mission took on Tuesday, February 23, 2006. Mahoning Valley residents accompanied Kathleen to spend a week building two homes to replace two that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

The trip was one of many made by volunteers of Mission of Love, which takes weeklong mission trips every two months. "The needs are great and in Louisiana and Mississippi, there are needs we can't ignore," said Price. "We have to get out of our comfort zone and help. We have to realize that tomorrow, that could be us."

Price organized the trip to make good on a promise made when she took a group to Louisiana in September, 2005. When Mission of Love learned of the needs at Jean Lafitte, it shipped 50,000 pounds of aid and promised to return to help build.

Carol Haus of North Lima, Ohio volunteers for several organizations, including Hospice of the Valley. She is part of the group that went to Jean Lafitte. "It was my first trip and I was very excited to go," she said. "I love helping people. I'm fortunate to have what I have, and so I want to help."

John and Natalie Larson of Lily Dale, N.Y. near Buffalo have been involved with Mission of Love for eight years and were on the group's last trip to Mexico, where they helped repair hurricane damage and provided children with hearing aids. John owns construction companies in New York and Michigan. Natalie is a nurse who has worked in federal prison systems in emergency and cardiac intensive care units. "The more you give away, the more God gives to you," John Larson said.

Natalie Larson said she is a Mission of Love volunteer because Kathleen Price is so passionate for people and all the money raised goes directly toward help. Although Natalie often uses her medical training to help people on trips, she will do whatever she is asked. "I do what needs done," she said. "I'm a great garbage collector."



LITTLE HELPER: Mission of Love director Kathleen Price holds her granddaughter, Erin Kathleen Keich, 9, during a fundraising dinner for the Mission of Love that funded a trip to Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Erin Kathleen was helping her mother, Chef Bridget with all the details of a successful evening. Photo by William D. Lewis

A Letter from the Mayor of Jean Lafitte, Louisiana...

The town of Jean Lafitte would like to thank you for the wonderful things that the Mission of Love has done for the Dupont and Thibodaux families.. You gave hope to families that were devastated by the Hurricane, and you gave them a chance to rebuild and restart thier lives in a positive way. If it were not for the Mission of Love Foundation, the Duponts would ahve not had the means to rebuild their home and would have been left homeless like so many of our other area citizens. The Thibodauxs were also in great need of assistance, and your foundation was wonderful in helping them to repair their home. Your Mission of Love is a wonderful foundation and we are honored that you have chosen our town to be apart of that mission.

Unfortunately, there are a great many other families in our community that are in the same situation that the Dupont and Thibodaux families were in before you came to aid them. We feel you did an outsanding job and we would deeply appreciated it if you would come back to our town and continue your work here.

Sincerely, Timothy P. Kerner, Mayor



LEFT: The Thibodaux family

RIGHT: The Duponts with Mayor Timothy P. Kerner and Kathleen Price.



A MISSION OF LOVE

Christmas, Valentine's present is Lafitte family's new home...

Ohio group's labors thrill storm victims

By Allen Powell II, *Marrero Picayune*, West Bank bureau, Thursday, February 23, 2006

When Sally DuPont talks about the destruction Hurricanes Katrina and Rita wreaked on the Lafitte home she and her parents shared, tears are just below the surface of her halting words.

Those tears threaten to break through whenever DuPont, 25, describes her father, a cancer survivor with metal rods in his back, struggling to navigate the family's FEMA trailer. They bubble up when she muses on everything that the family lost when Katrina's winds shifted their home off its foundation and Rita sent 18 inches of water into their living room.

But the pain of DuPont's loss is slowly starting to evaporate thanks to the combination of the best Christmas gift and Valentine's Day present she has ever received. DuPont learned in December that a nonprofit organization from Ohio planned to build her family a new home, complete with all appliances, for free. Work began on the home on Valentine's Day.

"This is the best Christmas present anybody could give," said DuPont, whose family has lived in Lafitte for more than 30 years. "When God says he's coming, God sends a messenger . . . If everybody would do something like this the world could be a better place."

DuPont's new home is being built by the Mission of Love, a humanitarian organization that has built homes and provided aid throughout the United States and in several other countries. Kathleen Price, the founder and director of the organization, said it has been providing aid in Louisiana since September and has made several trips to the region with volunteers and supplies.

Price said her group learned about the DuPonts' need from Lafitte Mayor Tim Kerner, who took volunteers on a tour of the damage to his city when they visited in September. Kerner also is allowing the volunteers to sleep at Lafitte's Civic Center while they work on the home, which is expected to take a week to complete.

Mission of Love volunteers had managed to put up several of the walls for the DuPont's home by Feb. 16. In addition, several Lafitte residents built a raised foundation for the home to minimize the risk of future flooding. Strewn throughout the front yard of the home were supplies and appliances that volunteers would place in the structure once it was completed, Price said.

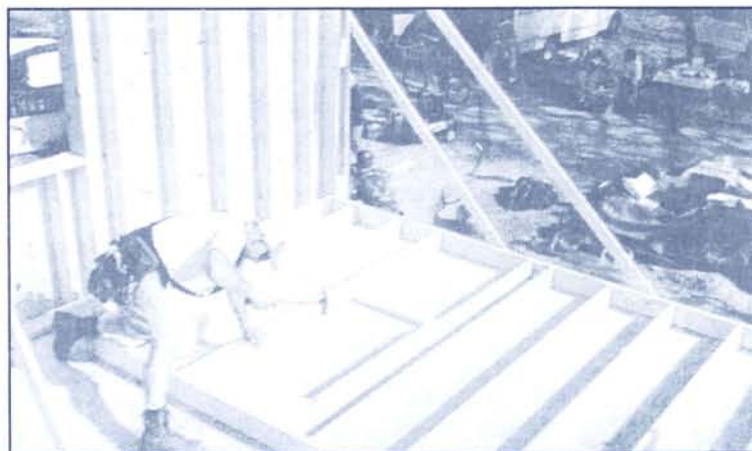
Price, whose intense stare and talkative nature easily convey her passion, said she heard from several Lafitte families who could not afford to rebuild their storm-damaged homes, but chose to help the DuPonts because of the suffering she saw in the Sally DuPont's eyes when she met her. She said her organization believes its mission is to help in anyway it can and hopefully inspire other groups and individuals to do the same.

"The most important message is for other people to recognize the need is so great . . . and get out of their comfort zones and do something," Price said.

She said her organization is considering building more homes in the community if the right resources and assistance can be secured.



Bob Elston of New Middletown, Ohio, a volunteer with Mission of Love, works on a second-story window while helping build a house on Perkins Road in Lafitte on Feb. 16. Photos by Michael DeMocker.



Mark Falatic of Newton Falls, Ohio works on a wall with other Mission of Love volunteers.



Something I've been wanting to do... by Carol Haus

On Tuesday, January 31, 2006 I made a decision to take a journey that would change my life forever. I called Kathy Price of the Mission of Love and made the decision to accompany the volunteers to Jean La Fitte, Louisiana. For the past 12 years this is something that I had been wanting to do but the thought of it was overwhelming to me. However, this is the year I am turning 50 and I have several things I want to accomplish. One is to make a difference in someone's life.

On February 14th we arrived in Jean Lafitte. We were greeted by Mayor Tim Kerner. Right away I felt welcomed. Here was a man that was truly concerned about his community. He had so much compassion and integrity. His town was all but destroyed by the devastation of the hurricanes. On day two, we arrived on site to build a house for the Dupont family. It was amazing how 7 women and 15 men were able to accomplish this in 6 days. We all worked from sun up until sun down, starting with unloading the truck, sorting through materials, pounding nails, designing the house, cooking for the volunteers, doing whatever it takes. (sore feet and all). The greatest joy was the day the locks went on the door and we had constructed a home. At lunch one day, Sally Dupont said that because of the generosity of strangers from a town faraway we were able to fulfill her dream and give her family not only a house but a home.



Carol Haus and Gaynel & Joe repairing thier home in Lafitte, Louisiana

Two days before we left Jean Lafitte, Kathy decided that we were going to start our second project. We were going to repair the home of the Thibodeaux family. Joe, Gaynel, Marjorie, Martha (who is pregnant with her first baby), Rodney and their cocker spaniel, Lady, were living in a FEMA trailer on the side of their house. After Rita, their house was not safe to live in. They got over 2 feet of water. The walls were covered in mold. They had rats the size of cats. When we arrived, the walls were completely stripped of drywall and the floors were bare to the wood. In 2 days, we were able to repair their house so this family would not have to spend another night in the small FEMA trailer. They were the most gracious family I have ever met. Joe could not talk about the hurricane without welling up with tears. Everything he worked his whole life for was gone. They had nothing left. This family was very special to me. They did all of the cooking for us at lunchtime and since I was on a certain food plan, they made me special meals. It warmed my heart that we were there to take care of them and here they are making sure that I am taken care of. The Mission of Love brought hope to these people when they had none. They witnessed first hand strangers reaching out to help them. It was a life changing experience for me.

You can't even begin to imagine the real devastation from hurricanes Katrina and Rita. FEMA trailers positioned all over town next to homes that were missing roofs, windows and doors blown out. Trailers that housed 3-7 people that were meant to hold maybe 2 people comfortably. Families squeezed in like sardines in a can. Trailers that sat for weeks because FEMA did not give them the keys and they had to live in tents. On the last day, we went to New Orleans where the levees broke. I would never of believed it had I not seen it with my own eyes. The images you see on TV are nothing compared to what stood before me. Huge ships stacked on top of each other on the road and in the marina. Land where restaurants once stood, now washed out to the gulf. Houses completely destroyed. It was so eery to see the X's on the doors with the number of bodies found inside the homes. Truly a ghost town. I walked around speechless. My heart ached. NOTHING was being done about the destruction here. What is going to happen in a couple months when hurricane season is once again upon us?

I am so grateful to have been able to go on this journey. One of the most endearing things to me was the friendships that developed between volunteers and also the towns people. I've made some friends for life and will love them forever. I pray that I will be able to continue on this journey and go on many more trips in the coming years with the Mission of Love.

HOW CAN YOU HELP MISSION OF LOVE HELP OTHERS?

NEEDED ITEMS:

- BLANKETS
- GENTLY USED SHOES
- GENTLY USED T-SHIRTS
- BASIC LEARNING TOYS
- WINTER COATS
- HEARING AIDS
- BUILDING MATERIALS

- SCHOOL SUPPLIES
- EMBROIDERY THREAD
- SEWING NEEDLES/SUPPLIES
- CHILDREN'S MOTRIN
- CHILDREN'S VITAMINS
- COUGH MEDICINE

- TYLENOL
- MONETARY DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS APPRECIATED.



From the Children—To the Children by Natalie Larson

My husband and I received a telephone call not too long ago from Kathleen Price, founder of the Mission of Love foundation. She told us that she had received a call from Sharon Kestler, Principal of Perseus House in Erie, Pennsylvania. She told us that Sharon's students built two canoes for the children of Jean Lafitte. Kathleen asked us if we would be interested in picking the canoes up and driving them to Ohio. They would then be loaded onto a truck and transported to Jean Lafitte with the other household and building items to be provided by the Mission of Love.

No problem! We had planned to attend a February Mission of Love fundraiser to build new homes to replace hurricane ravaged homes in Jean Lafitte, Louisiana. We planned to drive the approximately 2 1/2 hours from our small town in southwestern New York State to the fundraiser location in Ohio.

Jean Lafitte, Louisiana, is a small town with other smaller towns surrounding it. It's the kind of small town in many ways like the one you may live in. It's the kind of small town with schools and many children of all ages.

The day of the fundraiser we placed some nylon ties and fasteners in our car and borrowed roof racks from a friend. We then drove to Erie, Pennsylvania to the harbourfront, the school's location on Lake Erie. We entered Perseus House and were totally astonished by what we saw. The floors glistened, the windows were spotless, and the walls were immaculately clean. There was a large sailboat in the lobby with many pictures of other boats surrounding it. We glanced around the entrance and thought that the children who attended this school must be extremely lucky and also extremely wealthy.

We were immediately cordially and politely greeted by a young boy about the age of 11 who extended his hand and introduced himself. He asked if he could help us. We told him we were there to see Ms. Kestler. We were then escorted by this young boy and a second student, a young girl who greeted us in the same manner as her fellow student. Sharon told us how excited the students were to help other children who were in need of help. They had heard and studied about the effects of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. They had heard that the Mission of Love and its volunteers were traveling to Louisiana to help build homes for families. They wanted to help in some small way. Little did they know how much they helped not only the small residents of Jean Lafitte, the children, but also the big residents of Jean Lafitte, the adults. Little did Ms. Kestler and her students know that their help would ripple down from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico.

Sharon then told us about Perseus House. Perseus House is a charter school of sixty children between the ages of 11 and 14. The children were not rich, their parents were not rich. Perseus House only accepts children who can not "fit in" at other schools. The children were from all ethnic backgrounds and certainly did seem different somehow. Different in a good way in that they were polite and well mannered, no pushing or loud name calling each other, respectful and courteous would be appropriate words. This charter school for young children who could not fit into standard schools focused on providing maritime studies and lessons for the children, in addition to their regular curriculum.

Underlying all of this was the story of two people who wanted to help children. They owned a small shack on the harbourfront of Lake Erie. They wanted to do something with the property and searched for ways to help children. After many attempts, they were told that they had to affiliate with a school. Big ideas, bigger yet their intent to help others, especially the children. Thus, the affiliation with Perseus House, growing into an extraordinary charter school with extraordinary staff for extraordinary children. We were correct in one way with our first

impression, the children were lucky, not rich in material items, but now rich in what they were learning.

Being the end of the school week, the children had assembled together in a large area that contained many tools and woodcraft equipment. On behalf of the Mission of Love, we were presented with two flat bottom canoes, built by the children, for the children. We also accepted many grocery bags of food items that had been collected by the children to be given to the children of Jean Lafitte. We were very humbled as a large group of children carried the canoes out to our car and helped us strap them on the roof racks. We were especially touched that the children had signed their names inside one of the canoes.

We then, accompanied on our trip by what we called the "singing canoes", vibrating with the wind as we drove the interstate, reached the canoes' temporary destination in Ohio where they would then travel on their second leg of their journey to their next destination in Louisiana.

When the canoes were unloaded in Jean Lafitte, Mayor Tim Kerner accepted them on behalf of Jean Lafitte and its children. He was especially touched by the children's signatures and said that the autographed canoe would be placed in the town museum's exhibit about the hurricanes of 2005, the hurricanes that had affected their entire town. The remaining canoe was destined to be playfully enjoyed by all the children.

The children of Perseus House, Sharon Kestler's 11 to 14 year old students that "don't fit in anywhere else", only wish is that they could be pen pals with the children of Jean Lafitte. Children helping Children. People helping People. With Love. Is there anything else one can say?



Students Michael Stratton (left) and Anthony Stratton (right) with Natalie & John Larson.



Andrew Tuzynski, Principal Sharon Kestler, John Larson and Nathon Wieczarek



If Only...

by Natalie Larson



If Only—. If only we could learn from their lessons. They have a special way, a culture that is so rare today. I ask myself how that culture, their phenomenal way of life, could have survived all of these centuries?

We call them the Mayan Indians of Xhualtez, San Francisco, Tizimin and so many other small communities that we in America don't even know exist. We have heard of the Yucatan Peninsula, but where is it? What's there? If someone says "Cancun," then we say "Ah-ha" and "yea, I know of it." It's somewhere where one can vacation relatively inexpensively, has warm weather and where one can bathe in the clear blue waters of the ocean.

If Only—. If only we could leave our topsy-turvy world and adopt the Mayan ways for only a day, or even an hour. What a wonderful, loving and peaceful world we could have! I told Kathleen Price many times during our late September 2005 Mayan trip and since our return home how blessed my husband John and I are to have been a part of that trip. Kathleen is our fabulous, knowledgeable, committed and devoted leader and founder of the Mission of Love. There is absolutely no way one could find and purchase a trip like ours, even if money were no object. Most people traveling to the Yucatan do so because of Cancun. They see the beach, eat in restaurants of their choice and stay in one of the big concrete hotels. They are loaded into a bus and transported to Chichen Itza or one of the other Mayan religious sites and are then taken back to their temporary concrete world where they live by the beach for a week or so.

So permit me to tell you a story. Permit me to tell you about a few of the many things I really learned from those days that I spent in those small, unknown to America, Mayan communities. I came away knowing that there is at least one small dot on the world map where there is love, peace, joy, sharing, a simple life, and sense of community. There is that simple life, a life of acceptance and a life of "letting it be" as the Beatles and the great multi-disciplined religious leaders of the past have said.

The lessons were everywhere, one had only to look around. I would like to share some of these lessons with you. Kathleen took us to the small Mayan community of San Francisco. Our main mission was to provide medical care to the community's inhabitants—a mission so important to the residents, people who have never had the opportunity to venture outside their own community and have no medical clinic, medicines or hospital available to them. So the volunteer doctors and nurses who accompanied Kathleen and her other volunteer entourage ran the clinic and visited with the community for a few hours. There are no telephones anywhere but word got out quickly that the Mission of Love was in the village. The men were working hard in the field, trying to make their meager living in order to support their families so they came later in the day. Meanwhile, the medical team was seeing dozens and dozens of women and children patients. The rest of the Mission of Love volunteers kept busy working with the community in a variety of other ways by using the other individual skills they each possessed. Some of us followed Kathleen to the community store, run by the Mexican government. This was one small structure only a little bigger than most of our bathrooms and contained only a few shelves and fewer items available for purchase. Kathleen did manage to purchase their entire stock of plastic cups, one half of a sleeve consisting of twenty cups. She also purchased two two-liter sized bottles of Pepsi and a couple of dozen snack sized bags of chips. We returned to the community and poured out half glasses of Pepsi and distributed them to the women and children. Another lesson learned, this one again about sharing and sense of community.

If Only—. If only the children and adults in America behaved as did these wonderful Mayans—No pushing, no crowding, no calling each other names, no me-first. Politely and quietly they passed the cups along to others. The cups were then returned for refills and then passed again to others who had not received the initial refreshments. This happened again and again until all cups were returned and there was only one half of a two-liter bottle of Pepsi remaining. We left cups and the remaining Pepsi on the side of the patio. Some of us were then invited into a typical Mayan house, a vertical stick and mud structure with a thatched roof. Inside were a couple of hammocks and a small fire pit where corn tortillas could be made—No sofas, no chairs no pictures on the walls, no lamps, no beds with mattresses, no sinks or toilets, nothing else we would identify as creature comforts and necessities. This one room house was home to an entire family and many times also included an extended family. Following the gracious tour, we made our way back to the village square, walking by a field of turkeys and sheep. I asked where the fences were. How could one tell whose turkeys belonged to whom? I was told that they belonged to everyone and that on special occasions a turkey might be killed and cooked and shared with the entire community—corn tortillas with some vegetables are the typical meal of the day. Some of our group turned once again to the children and soon there were dozens of children following two of us to the back of the structure where stories were told and charcoal portraits of the children were drawn. This was probably one of the favorite activities of the children as the children had never seen themselves in a mirror or in a picture. We returned to the front of the patio and one of our group noticed that the Pepsi was still there where we had left it and wondered why it was still there. We discovered that the Mayans were too gentle and polite to have helped themselves. We poured out the remainder and that was quietly distributed to others as was previously done.

When Kathleen gave a woman with Downs Syndrome a doll, a second hand doll that many American children would not want if they were offered it free, the Downs woman hugged it and smiled the biggest smile I have ever seen, lighting up her eyes and her entire face. She then danced in a circle around the rest of the Mayan community members to show off her "baby." Most Americans would shy away from this congenital deformity of an adult Downs person, but the Mayans embraced her and responded with enthusiasm. If Only—. If only we did not judge. If only we readily accepted others. The mother, now grandmother to the newly acquired baby doll, profusely thanked Kathleen and all of us and hugs were plentiful and shared by all.

We had packed one suitcase in preparation for our trip. That suitcase contained only the barest number of clothing items to get us through our planned week of work. The remainder of the space was filled with toys and crayons and paper and games for the children, children's clothing, soap and shampoo and cloth and embroidery thread for the women. If Only—. If only we could learn what really is important in life and what is really needed by humankind. Everywhere we went, Kathleen distributed love in the form of hugs, in the form of merely stroking a child's or a woman's face to show her love for them, or in a smile of acceptance of their culture and ways.

I thank Kathleen Price and the Mission of Love for another wonderful lesson that late September 2005 week. I thank Kathleen for sharing the Mission of Love's mission statement, "We are not here to save the world, but to touch the hands that are within your reach." If Only—. If only we too could do one thing for one person. Some of us are overwhelmed by the great need in our world and don't know where to start. (So instead of getting up and taking action, we believe that what we can offer is not significant enough to make a difference so we choose to do nothing). If Only—. If only you too would take a trip with the Mission of Love, you too could see what love truly is and that you too could make a difference in the lives of so many and could truly make the world a better place. God bless you, Kathleen and the Mission of Love. God bless you and all people everywhere and all creatures great and small!



Sharing With Mayan Communities...

My husband Rafael and I joined Kathy and her wonderful group of volunteers in the Yucatan for a week of good work. On the van ride to Xualtez we all commented on the large numbers of fallen trees and blown-out buildings near the coast. This was the work of terrible Hurricane Wilma. We saw a number of people wearing "I survived Wilma" T-shirts. So it came to pass that Natalie and John Larson, Donna Reigel, John Conti, Jack Russell, Sherry and Frank Weldele, ourselves, and Kathleen Price ended up sitting around a table as Maria Jose Medina explained her program for empowering poor Maya women to stand tall and fight for their rights in a society which would probably rather they weren't there at all.

After a good night's sleep in our hammocks, we were agreeably awakened by a symphony of bird song. The assignment for Rafael and me for the next days would be to assist Drs. Sherry and Frank Weldele, audiologists, as translators. The Weldeles planned to hold an audiology clinic for Maya children and a few adults with serious hearing loss. Rafael, a retired psychologist, settled naturally into the "intake" role, taking down data useful to the doctors in brief form after questioning each patient. I worked with the audiologists translating their interactions with patients and family members. From time to time we called in two wonderful women to translate Maya/ Spanish, and I would in turn interpret Spanish/ English. Listening to the Maya translators, I realized that most modern vocabulary is a Spanish admixture, so I could hear that the Maya translators were really "telling it like it is" in terms their countryfolk could easily understand. Many indigenous people speak little Spanish, especially older adults and those living in remote areas. The "Multiple Services" center where the clinic was held provided organizers and audio technicians who explained about the use and care of hearing aids to patients and their families. The families had hitchhiked in from remote villages, leaving their homes at 4 or 5AM in order to get a number and sit in the long rows of benches in the outdoor waiting area and then be seen by the Weldeles.

Sherry and Frank swung into action, each one taking patients all the way through their testing and hearing aid fitting process so that they could attend to two people at once. We saw about 30 people per day, mostly small children. Despite this awesome patient load, the two doctors treated each little or big person with respect, care and humor. This dignified and professional, yet very human interaction did not need translation to get through to patients. Sherry and Frank explained that usually when they worked at home they would send specifications off to a lab to have the special fittings for hearing aids made to order. However they knew that their Mayan patients did not have the luxury of time or the funds to wait. For this reason, the professional couple made and fitted everything by hand on the spot; a tremendous amount of precision work which they accomplished with lightning speed. I commended them on their sculptural skills. The most impressive moments came when small folk with dramatic hearing loss received hearing aids for the first time. There was a startle response, an enormous grin, and then a long look of deep thought on the little faces. They had just discovered the enormous universe of sound for the first time.

Meantime, John, John, Jack, Natalie, Donna and Kathy had been either painting walls much in need of a new coat, or going on fact-finding journeys with Maria Jose.

Our next assignment was a food-buying spree. Black beans, cooking oil, milk, eggs, and other staples for 35 families in the town of Francisco y Madero. Rafael, John Larson and myself had helped Kathy build a health clinic there years before. We were eager to see it, but also fearful that it might not be standing after so many hurricane attacks. We rushed around bumper-car style, filling the carts and knowing how much people needed these small gifts of sustenance we would bring. We loaded all into the van like a submarine going out on mission, and settled ourselves gingerly between the eggs and the milk. Kathy kept stopping to pick up hitchhikers, and there always seemed to be room for one more plus their enormous bundles of heavy produce for market and long, carefully wrapped machetes on the way to a work site. Our riders chatted amiably with Rafael and me about farming, their families, and a little local politics. Hitching rides is very common here because few people have access to any kind of transportation other than their own feet or the occasional bicycle. After bouncing up and down a bumpy, but now paved and cleared road, we finally arrived. There it was. A miracle. The clinic still stood, and inside was a doctor helping patients. There was even a pallid version of a mural I had worked on now decorated with health posters. The building was the worse for water damage, and its roof had blown off a few times in tropical storms, but MOL would come back and repair it. I worked with the village leader on a permission document and list of medical needs while Kathy went to the tiny preschool in a thatched hut to see what kinds of furniture and supplies its young teacher might need. The other volunteers unloaded the food, and we found to our chagrin that the town now hosted 70 families. The village leader assured us that he would divide the small gift loaves and fishes fashion so that everyone would receive something that they needed.

Off in the van again. On the way, we stopped and spent a lovely hour visiting an ancient Maya ruin called Ek Balam (Star Jaguar). Up with the birds, our next assignment was to paint a mural which contained Maria Jose's logo and the word "Compartimos" (Sharing). We scrounged charcoal from peoples' cook fires, peeled some sticks, commandeered measuring tape and other essentials from the two Johns and Jack, and set to work. Our MOL crew had painted Maria Jose's walls a delicate spring-leaf green, leaving a space for us. I borrowed Donna's huipil blouses to use as flower models, and asked locals about colors of the native parrots and such things as the sketch came together. Meantime, a pile of kids had gathered and began drawing and coloring up a storm around us- a very inspiring creative environment. Rafael and I scribbled away and the hours passed without our knowing until the sun began to sink. Kathy and the two nurses in our group, Natalie and Donna, had gone with Maria Jose to arrange for the upcoming delivery of a donated dialysis machine and other medical supplies. Maria Jose wanted to thank us. She told us tearfully that MOL volunteers have been the only people who have helped her impoverished Maya people to have even the most basic human needs. A few of us answered her by saying that she is the one who deserves the thanks for giving us the opportunity, with Kathy, to get involved in the 'Sharing' that her logo inspires.

—Mary Strong, and Rafael Domingo, MOL volunteers



Recent Mission of Love Yucatan Trip reported in Mexican Newspaper...

These two articles appeared in the January 20, 2006 edition of Diario de Yucatan. They were translated by Mary Strong.

FAMILY WITH RARE AUDITORY DISORDER by Javier Briceno Perez—A family from Trascarral, Tizimin exhibits a very rare type of auditory disorder: five siblings are all unable to hear well. The Canul Chan Family children were born with this problem, according to the oldest sister, Margarita. However, thanks to a medical program [sponsored by Mission of Love] that came to Espita, they all received hearing aids. They now have hope, for the first time, that they will be able to be successful in their studies at school.

Jose Trinidad Uc Uc was also very happy with this special medical attention. He is a construction worker from Panaba. His son, Jesus Santiago, age eight, received a hearing aid. Now the boy can hear and will be able to read for the first time. He could not do these things before, because he could not even hear his own voice.

Jesus Santiago's father brought him to Espita for treatment. They got up very early and hitchhiked from Panaba to attend the clinic offered by North American doctors.



Dr. Sherry Weldele with Jesus Santiago

NOW THEY WILL ENJOY READING: A hitchhiking trip from Panaba to Espita to receive hearing aids by Javier Briceno Perez and Guadalupe Osorno Martinez—Many of the local area people were filled with joy when two doctors, Frank Weldele and his wife, Sherry Weldele in collaboration with the Mission of Love Foundation from the United States arrived in Espita.

Jose Trinidad UC UC, construction worker of Panaba, came with his son Jesus Santiago, eight years old. The boy received a hearing aid. "It is a blessing from God," said the thankful father. It had been more than a year since his son had been diagnosed with a hearing problem. For that reason, Jesus Santiago was sent to the School for Special Education in Panaba. However, he could not get a hearing aid because they are extremely expensive at a price of 8,000 pesos (approximately 800 U.S. dollars) each.

The mayor's office at Panaba announced that hearing aids were coming to Merida, but it never happened. "This time I was advised to just go ahead and travel to Espita...so I left Panaba at five in the morning and hitchhiked to Espita. I got there in time to get a number and have my son seen by the doctors," said Jose Trinidad. Obliviously happy, Jesus Santiago said, "Now I can really hear! It's not like before when I had to read lips in order to understand what my teachers and other people were saying to me. That's also the reason I didn't like to read, because I couldn't even hear my own voice. Now I'm going to actually be able to read."

Another case worth mentioning is that of the five Canul Chan siblings from the town of Trascarral in the Tizimin municipality. All of the children have auditory problems and need hearing aids, which they received.

mayor's office at Panaba announced that hearing aids were coming to Merida, but it never happened. "This time I was advised to just go ahead and travel to Espita...so I left Panaba at five in the morning and hitchhiked to Espita. I got there in time to get a number and have my son seen by the doctors," said Jose Trinidad. Obliviously happy, Jesus Santiago said, "Now I can really hear! It's not like before when I had to read lips in order to understand what my teachers and other people were saying to me. That's also the reason I didn't like to read, because I couldn't even hear my own voice. Now I'm going to actually be able to read."

The altruistic doctors attended with equal care and attention to patients from Colonia Yucatan, Sucila, Panaba, Tizimin and various other municipalities, Valladolid, a person from Motul, as well as patients from Espita. The Center for Multiple Attention #22, with its director Martha Eugenia Mena de Sanchez collaborated in fostering the event in conjunction with the Mission of Love, with its director Kathleen Price. The philosophy of Mission of Love is: "You are not here to save the world, but only to help those within your reach."

The team of North American doctors recorded data, cleaned ears and fitted hearing aids with great professionalism as well as humanitarian sensitivity, according to our observations. The doctors treated everyone as equal and with great patience. They not only fitted the hearing apparatus, but also gave patients tests using computers and other equipment. They offered instructions and advised patients to check on their hearing status every six months. Mission of Love has been helping people for 16 years, including disaster assistance (for example--when there was a hurricane or tsunami).

Eleven people were working in CAM #22 including a director, a general organizer, a psychologist and workshop teachers (to give instructions about hearing aid operation and care). Several rooms, including a reception area, examination room, hearing aid fitting room, outside waiting area and a number of other spaces served for different therapies.



Sherry Weldele with some happy faces.



Dr. Frank & Sherry Weldele prepare for a day of examinations.



*Dr. Frank Weldele with patient.
Photo by Javier Brinceno Perez*



Beauty & Blessings Yucatan Update...

1-22-06

I wanted to talk to you today on this cloudy and overcast day about the sunshine and warmth a group of us traveling with the Mission of Love just experienced. We drove to Cleveland Airport and boarded a plane to Cancun, Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Mexico. Kathleen Price, founder of Mission of Love 15 years ago, then rented a van for our group of 10. We would be joined later by another 2 people, a couple already in Mexico. Our group came from varied backgrounds, audiologists, a retired psychologist, an archeologist, nurse, builder, restaurateur, and someone in the food business. Some of us made only a few dollars per hour for our daily work, some of us were retired with modest pensions, and some of us were what we would call "well off". People with varied backgrounds who had, for the most part, not met each other before this day. We came together for a common cause and goal.

When we arrived at our destination, the place we would call "home", the place where we would hang our hammocks for the next few days, in Xhualtez, Mexico, at the medical clinic Mission of Love built and maintains, it didn't matter who we were, where we had come from, or what we did. John and I graciously received what has been jokingly referred to as the honeymoon suite. This is luxury housing, compared to Mayan housing standards, as our building has some screening over its opening for windows, a cement floor, and cement walls extending a few feet above the ground before the vertical wood poles begin which continue upwards and meet the thatched roof. Repairs to this building from Hurricane Wilma and the previous hurricane had already been made. This in itself was quite a feat as the wood poles and the palm thatch for the roof in the Mayan tradition can only be harvested when there is a full moon. The wood is felled and cut using machetes and the spiky palm leaves must be woven into the roof while they are still green and bendable.

Our Mission of Love on this week-long visit was to test the hearing of small children and fit them with hearing aids. In addition to this, we were to visit some of the clinics and homes that Mission of Love had built in the past and to paint and to do maintenance on the main clinic in Xhualtez. So after we arrived and hung our hammocks, we settled in with a wonderful lunch of fresh fruit juice and enchiladas and got to know each other a little better. Our day the next day would start early and end late. The roosters and the birds would be our wake-up calls and the stars would tuck us in at night.

The next day some of us set about painting. We were to paint the exterior of the clinic, the clinic's surrounding few homes, one of which was the one we were staying in, a storage shed, and the building Mission of Love had built the community so they could make their food staple, their corn tortillas. The rest of us traveled to a small rural community to a school where we would hold hearing clinic. In honor of our arrival, and to be able to host the clinic, school was closed that day. There was a long line of mothers and their children when we arrived. No pushing, no shoving, no one looking at their watches or the clock on the wall - for they don't own watches or clocks and they are a quiet and loving people. Our new patients waited patiently for the opportunity to have their children evaluated and fit with a hearing aid. We saw one small boy who had been tested approximately two years before and had been promised a hearing aid from the government of Mexico. It was determined later that only two hearing aids were provided to the Mexican state of Quintana Roo but no one had since seen either of the two devices. A basic hearing aid in Mexico would cost over 8,000 pesos, over \$800 in our country. A typical Mayan family would not earn that much money in their entire lifetime. What a joy to see the children hear a sound for the first time. Some jumped in surprise and others put their hands over their ears, not understanding where the noise was coming from. The mothers cried tears of appreciation that someone cared enough for their child to change their child's life. The next assignment from Frank and Sherry, the audiologists, was for the child to make a sound. Their "mantra" was now "bop, bop, bop" for these two

days as they encouraged the child with his or her new hearing aid to make the "bop" sound. Emotions were at an all time high with each look of surprise on each child's face and with each mother's tearful face when she heard her child make a sound for the first time. For when a child in Mexico cannot hear, they cannot speak, and so they cannot go to school. A closed door to a child and its family was just opened. This scene was repeated for the 49 children, most of whom traveled great distances on foot to come to the clinic. A true Mission of Love! Travel in Mayan country is by foot. If you are one of the few men who are lucky, you have an old bicycle, perhaps with a cart welded on the front of it so you can carry your wood or other products. Our van also became a bus for the people Kathleen saw walking on the roads. Women and children who had been to market and walked many miles along the narrow, lightless roads who were now walking home after dark. The weathered, leathery dark skin of the thin, bent over man who appeared less than 5 foot tall and very, very old, was carrying his bag of juice oranges he harvested to the small market where he would sell them and bring the money home for his family. When Jack helped this human being from another culture, another world than ours, he stated that the bag of oranges our new passenger was carrying weighed about 80 pounds. This gentle man did this every day of his life, walked over 10 kilometers, about 6 miles, each way every day. He had tears of appreciation in his eyes and even more when Jack handed him a bottle of water to drink. Then there was the young boy who had come from school and was walking the over 20 kilometers, about 12 miles each way to work for money, clearing fields for new plantings of sugar cane and pineapples.

These people are so clean. Their dark hair shines and their clothes are so clean, much cleaner and whiter than our clothes. And their eyes shine and their faces light up when they smile!

Shining eyes were with us the entire trip. When we finished the painting and repairs, we all piled once again into the van and drove to a market where Kathleen purchased food items for the people of the village of Francisco Maderia, about 40 kilometers, or 24 miles down an old road into the countryside. We bagged the food consisting of corn meal, sugar, oil, rice, beans, limes, tomatoes, garlic, and eggs, into separate bags. The simple plastic grocery store bags would later be used for many unknown tasks and were highly valued by these people who had nothing. John and I walked around the village square and saw the women who had just come from market. They were dressed in their finest dresses, white lightweight dresses, each one adorned with its own brilliantly colored, personally embroidered flowers. The high wood back of this panel truck carried about 30 women, all of whom had traveled standing up, packed like sardines, appreciative of being able to get to a market each month or so. Some of the women carried a small bag containing a few unknown articles, many carried nothing home. When they left the truck, I asked them if I could take their photo. I then showed them the digital picture on the camera. There was a great amount of humor and discussion, none of which I could understand as they spoke in Mayan. One could understand, however, that this was the first time that they had seen themselves for they have no adornments at home, no mirrors, no furniture, no pictures on the wall, no family photos. As I was showing them their picture, they began touching my hair and then, having no resistance to this, they began running their hands through my hair. Once again I couldn't understand their fast chatter and conversation, but knew that it was directed toward me, who at 5 feet 6 inches, towered above them and had blonde hair. It was then that I realized that they had never seen someone with blonde hair. If I ever have the opportunity to return, I will take individual pictures to show them and will sit down and let them play all they want with my hair. This visit was fairly short, to deliver our food to the families, and to assess the condition of the medical clinic that the Mission of Love had built about 8 years ago. I was told that the building was constructed by Mission of Love volunteers who worked 20 hours straight to get it done before they had to return home to the States. Surprisingly, considering the time of construction and the weather in that part of the world, the building was in amazingly good shape although maintenance was determined to be made during a future trip. The doctor had been there for 8 years. We were told that the government has a rule that no one

(continued on page 11)



(continued from page 10)

under the age of 5 or over the age of 40 is allowed to receive medication. Medication is in very short supply and virtually nonexistent in most of the clinics. Many people see their local shaman in order to get herbs and medicinal plants for their illnesses.

Women were gathered at a small clinic in one of the communities. They had been told that Kathleen from the Mission of Love would be returning once again. Many bundles of colored embroidery thread were presented to the women of the community so they could embroider, not with 9 women sharing 1 sewing needle as they had done before, but they could each now have their own needle. White cotton blankets were delivered to each woman, to be picked up by Kathleen on a future visit and the small amount of pesos for the beautifully embroidered goods given back to the person.

Our full van, always with space just enough for that person or persons walking along the road to some distant destination, was packed once again and off to help another person or visit another clinic. During our trip, we visited 4 medical clinics Kathleen and Mission of Love had either constructed or helped supply. We asked what was most needed: wheelchairs, sterile gauze, medicines. We in the United States are a disposable society. After traveling with Mission of Love, you appreciate each Ziploc bag, each grocery store bag, having an oven rather than having to cook over an open fire, having a refrigerator, having clean drinking water, having a car, having a telephone, having hot showers, being able to purchase food at a grocery store, being able to purchase Motrin or Tylenol or being able to get antibiotics or access health care. Outdated sterile gauze pads, 2x2 inches, were like giving the doctors in the clinics bars of gold. Outdated medicines we have to throw in the garbage were prized in Mayan country. Old wheelchairs are an extremely valuable commodity.

Each time we have traveled with Mission of Love, Kathleen Price checks one or two wheelchairs with our luggage. We visited the home of a past recipient of one of the wheelchairs, the "Bartolo" Mayan home of Veronica, a young girl crippled with cerebral palsy. We had learned that Veronica had died a few months before but her wheelchair had been prized as Veronica had been able to get outside and be in the sunshine and travel around with her family. Her mother, a widow with several other children, welcomed us inside their home that Mission of Love had built some time before for this widow and her children. For in Mexico, to be a Mayan is to be a third class citizen. But to be a widow and be a Mayan is not even anywhere on the charts. I asked the children if I could take photos. After I took the outside picture of the rooster tied up with a string to a wood stick, and a picture of their small cooking fire with one thin round iron piece of metal on top of the fire, used to cook their meal of corn tortillas, the children escorted me inside. One larger room, no bigger than some of our bathrooms, was their living space. No furniture, only one hammock for the mother and her 5 children, plus Veronica when she was alive. In one corner were 3 bags of something that was probably cornmeal or rice. In the other corner were 3 small cardboard boxes stacked up. The boxes contained all of the family's clothes. The one remaining room had a shelf with a candle and a handmade small wood shelving unit. No where in the house did I see any food or food items other than those 3 bags in the living area. The 8 year old child then led me to a partial wall between the home's two rooms and asked me to take a photo of their light. She was so proud of the bare, 24 inch long fluorescent bulb that was hung vertically on the partial wall between the 2 "rooms" of the house and she asked me to take a picture of the light. She then took me into the small room, barely enough space for 1 person to turn around in, and picked up her radio and asked me to take a picture of her radio. The radio was a tiny 6 inch boombox type of radio with an electrical plug, the type of radio that isn't often sold in the States but that used to be given away for some promotions. These 2 prized possessions were her only photo requests of the day.

Our next visit was to a family in one of the small but larger towns, a visit to the home that Mission of Love had built. We unloaded the wheelchair and knocked on the door. Kathleen was immediately recognized by the family and welcomed. The recipient of the wheelchair was an older man who seemed to have had a stroke and had had one leg amputated. He

was wheeled around their small house and then was wheeled back to the platform bed where he apparently slept. He had tears streaming down his face and said that he was now able to go out into the streets and see the outside and see the people of the community once again. In gratitude, Kathleen was presented with an ornamental feature hung like a chandelier for decoration in their living area that the man had made out of sticks and colored plastic pieces, one of their few meager possessions but proudly displayed in their family's home. Leaving the wheelchair recipient and traveling on (Kathleen leaves no dust on her shoes), sterile supplies, things that would be discarded in our country but highly valued in theirs, were delivered to a couple of clinics that perform minor surgery. Promises of returning to paint the interior and doing maintenance in one of the clinics were made. Next a stop at the home of an elderly Mayan couple who have helped the Mission of Love in the past, a stop where Kathleen delivered a new glucometer for the husband who has a history of stoke and diabetes. This was a most prized possession, for the Mayans have no access to bloodwork or medical laboratories. The donated new glucometer had only English instructions. Even if the instructions had been in Spanish, the Mayans have their own very old language. So time was spent teaching the couple how to perform fingersticks and to operate their new glucometer. Hugs of appreciation and gratitude were plentiful. "Home" after long days filled with learning opportunities of love, home to our temporary home where we could walk under the stars at night and be surrounded by beautiful butterflies and birds singing by day. Returning home to the airport in the States seemed a blessing as we could now wash our hands in water that we could drink if we wanted to, we had plentiful soap, we had paper towels to dry our hands. Thinking of the Mayan people, thinking of their lives, their happiness, their joy, is a blessing. For our lives would never be the same, touched so much by these gentle and beautiful people.

So we are at home, seemingly not a blessing as we get back to our daily routine of phone calls, bills, problems. One foot in their world and one foot in our world, at least for now. We want to jump back into the "real" world, which is their world, much more simple, much more loving, much more appreciative. We are all blessed, no matter where we are, who we are, what we do, each in our own way. We need to wake up to see the beauty and the blessings around us. For our lives are all a "Mission of Love".



Mary Strong, Brooklyn, N.Y. and the delegate of Fransico and Madero, Victor Manuel Che Che requesting help for the community and clinic.



In Fransico Madera, Jack Russell of the Salem, Ohio Rotary and John Conti of the Boardman, Ohio Rotary.



The Giraffe Heroes Project...

Hello, my name is Ashley Brunko and I am a fifth grader at Glenwood Middle school. Our class has just concluded a project titled "The Giraffe Heroes Project."

Each student in our class was given the opportunity to sign up for this special program. The project involves researching, writing and interviewing skills. I jumped at the chance; I knew it would be a great opportunity to express my abilities and I love these sorts of challenges. I had no idea that so much would come out of it!

I need to explain why the project is called The Giraffe Heroes Project. There are four qualities we found that are similar between an animal giraffe and a human Giraffe. One of the qualities of an animal giraffe is that even though their size is large and awkward, they can run for hours without stopping or taking water if they need to. Human Giraffe Heroes show persistence because they do not stop until the job is done, even through great difficulties. Another characteristic is that animal giraffes have twenty-four pound hearts (they really do)! Human Giraffe Heroes are caring people, or they have a big heart, so to speak. Thirdly, they have very long necks (six feet long) and this relates to a human Giraffe

Hero because they take risks and "stick out their neck" for the greater good of humanity. Lastly, animal giraffes look out for their own and other animals around them on the Savannah. A human Giraffe Hero shows this action by helping others when they see a problem exists.

I began my research in the newspaper and found an article about the Mission of Love organization's director, Kathy Price. From this article entitled "Mission of Love is a never ending effort," I was able learn about the great things the group has recently done. I found out that Ms. Price took a group to help victims of Hurricane Rita. I thought that Kathy Price would be the perfect person to interview! So my teacher called her and invited her to come to our classroom for an interview.

Finally the day came! Mrs. Price came to our class on Thursday, February 23, 2006. When Mrs. Price came in our class I was completely touched by her stories. I interviewed her and she told us so many things I never thought where really true. Often times I just thought people said things because they thought it could have been happening. Mrs. Price knew that we probably aren't familiar with what's happening around the world, so she brought a movie and handouts to make sure we realized what was really happening and what she was really doing!

This project brought a real Giraffe Hero to our classroom and we are inspired by her dedication and persistence because what she does is not very easy or comfortable. I have decided to create my own Mission of Love project and I have created a flier to give to my classmates. We will be collecting items and in a few weeks shall have many things for Ms. Price and her Mission of Love crew to pick up.

Now, everyone in my class will become Giraffes because of Ms. Prices visit. Anyone can become a Giraffe Hero and start a mission of love....you can, too!

advertisement



Open 'round the clock!

Silks Rayons COTTONS Velvets

Your World full of Fabric!

Tapestries

eQuilter.com

Graphic Inspiration

Over 20,000 Fabrics Online and In Stock!

Call us TOLL FREE: 877-FABRIC-3

2% of All Purchases Donated to Charity

Secure Online Ordering

www.eQuilter.com

5455 Spine Road, Suite E; Boulder, Colorado 80301 USA



Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...

NICE TO HAVE MET YOU...

Dear Mission of Love & Kathy,

**Pine Ridge,
South Dakota**

After hearing so much about you from Mary, it was nice to finally meet you. You've done a wonderful job with Mary's house, Donnie and Delane's too!

During our visit, we talked about the size of our family, with the kids at school, work or doing other things during the day, our days always end with the evening meal though we have to eat in two shifts...kids, then adults, or if the kids are scattered, it's adults, then kids. During the holidays, we average 21 to 30 people, inviting friends and extended family. Our kids usually fix plates for the elderly and those whose families are not around. Easter, we look forward to because if it's not too cold, we can set up tables outside, otherwise, it's a small table in the living room for the kids.

So, our dream would be to have a dining room where we can sit down to a meal together. A little about our family—Ben has worked at Loneman since 1987 as a bus driver. He was also community chairperson for the last six years. One of his dreams has been realized...his cows. We got started with bucket calves which we would raise, then sell when the kids needed school clothes or at Christmas. Ben's time at Loneman is part-time bus driver and part-time teacher's aide. He's worked at this for two years now.

As for me, I'm a stay-at-home mom, watching the grandkids, beginning with Rhiannon, who's nine-years-old now. This year I was elected to the school board. I like this position, but I don't relish the travel. Most of the time, travel means flying.

We have seven girls and seven boys, three granddaughters and one grandson. Jolene was 26 in December. She lives in Colorado with her husband and two daughters. You met Karen. She's 24 and lives next door with her boyfriend, one daughter and one son. Tonya is 20. She was in the Army, stationed in Korea until she was discharged this past February. Clayton is 19. He helps his dad and works on other ranches. Linda is 18. She's in school in Colorado. Sheena is 15. Donovan is 13. Adonis is 11. Noah is 12. Logan is 10. Jerome is 9. Nate Ashley is 10. Mary is 8. Uriah is 5. The grandkids are Rhiannon, 9, Anpo Wi, 5, Brody, 13 months and Devin, 10 months old.

I hope this is not too long of a letter, but I wanted to tell you how our family got so big. At first, it was to keep the siblings together, but when Jolene had Rhiannon, Rhiannon needed a buddy to grow up with, so we found Jerome and Mary. When Karen had Anpo Wi, she needed a buddy to grow up with, so we found Nate Ashley and Uriah. So, now who knows? Those kids may find us or we will go looking for them.

To end this, any thoughts or consideration you give to our request will be greatly appreciated. Once again, it was nice to finally meet you, Kathy!

Thank you and God bless,
Ben & Gloria Scabby Face & Children



This sweat shirt became a familiar sight in Louisiana as Mission of Love volunteers stepped in to help the victims of the hurricanes.



This mural was created by Mission of Love volunteer, Mary Strong, for the Mayan community in the Yucatan.

HOPE...

Dear Kathy,

**Pine Ridge Indian Reservation
South Dakota**

Your presence brings hope and resolution to our family. The team you work with are so dedicated to helping Lakota people who the Mission of Love touches.

In October, your mission was still going strong. The work done to our new tipi-house and the electricity proves this; Darrell Janis' home also shows this.

We have six children. The last two are juniors in high school. New we have a grandson we love to raise—a large family. To build a family a new home at no cost is making a tremendous impact economically on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

As my story and many others on this reservation goes, "the poorest county" in the USA is true. The unemployment rate is high, drugs, alcohol and violence, tribal corruption and poor medical health, poor water quality, child abuse and poor housing is all real.

Many families live in one home. Because of lack of housing, I feel our young Lakota couples become discouraged, self esteem goes down and a long term negative effect occurs. For reasons like this, the old HUD (Housing and Urban Development) home will be renovated and secured to live in for the younger generation.

Our people have lived happily with the poor conditions we have and all we will get from our tribal, BIA agencies. I accept the Mission of Love projects to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation that I am a concerned member of.

Many families are living with fixed incomes, some with no income. After all, the unemployment rate is fact to be 80-85%.

I also want to thank you for helping the Ka-Kalas (grandpa) and uncila (grandma) at Cohen Home.

Count us in on your team here on the reservation. We would like to help on the projects. When we become more fortunate (Having jobs), we would like to pay our own way to other parts of the world with you to help build for others.

I know you have other works helping the indigenous peoples besides here on Pine Ridge. Your efforts are so vast.

We love you, Kathy and the whole team from volunteers to contributors to those you touch. Lila pila.

Respectfully,
Don & Susan (Two Bulls) Skockey



Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...

REQUEST...

Dear Kathy,

Iquitos,
Peru

Thanks for the reply. Our wish list is very simple. We just need T-shirts for the kids--as many as we can muster up and more candy to take to Iquitos.

Although we fell a little short of our goal, we were able to raise enough money to provide two days of dinners for the kids and we are trying to give them breakfast, but are still a couple of hundred dollars short. I am still confident that I can get it together though.

I will need to talk to you about another project we have in mind that will require your expertise. We want to get a free clinic and school program started. Many, many kids who want to go to school can't because they don't have the uniforms and necessary school equipment or even the tuition to go. We have been told that many people are not getting medical attention, especially the children and expectant mothers.

A couple of children we know of were born with defects because of not getting the proper prenatal care. Many children need eye checkups and are not getting those. River blindness and parasites that can be cured are being left untreated. Even the people in the city of Iquitos are getting turned away for medical attention because they have no money.

I know this is a huge undertaking and I haven't even started to look into the things that will be needed to go into such an effort. But, I am sure you can give me tons of advice and help. People are already trying to discourage me from doing this because they say it will never happen—it's too big of a pipe dream.

My husband, Roberto, and I have always had our focus on helping children. We have personally put several children through school in Peru who are now going to University. One will be a nurse shortly and another a teacher. One is studying building, another is going into environmentalism. We send money down as often as we can just to get food supplies to the children down there. I have actually seen seven and eight children sharing one piece of bread. So maybe, it is a pipe dream, but I really can't turn myself away from kids that need help.

On a personal note, this past Christmas was not our best. My mom's tumor in her liver is growing. My son, who is in the army, was supposed to come home so we could plan his wedding, but he got sent to Pakistan. My dad and brother are not doing well. Sometimes, it gets a little hard to maintain a positive attitude, but I try.

Thanks and take care.
Love, Cathy

NOTE: The Honor Society of Chagrin High School gave 900 T-shirts. Mission accomplished!

IT WAS A GOOD YEAR...

Dear Mission of Love,

Red Shirt Table

Pine Ridge, South Dakota

The year 2005 was a very thankful year for a lot of people and also for my family. We are so thankful for what Mission of Love does for us and the building of the community.

Mission of Love has sent over 40 boxes of winter jackets to pass out and that we did. We had fun at Christmas when Mission of Love gave the whole community hams, bread and candy bags which we were all happy to receive.

Mission of Love helped us to get furniture which we really needed. With 15 children, my furniture is well used. I am so happy and the children were sure happy. They said it now looks like we live uptown. Ha, Ha! The kids around here call our house the reservation "mansion" thanks to Kathy Price and all the work she and Mission of Love has put into our home. The children said we can't build "out" anymore, we have to go "up." I started to laugh and told them I don't think so, but we are moving our laundry room upstairs because it is so hard for me to go up and down the stairs.

I have a bad hip and leg, but I keep going for my children. I need to be strong for them and keep going. This is what this is all about...the children.

Kathy Price is the only person who does all this work and gets all the donations. She gets out there and does all this, even building in the cold weather. With all the help Kathy provides for others, this grand lady still takes care of her own family. We all have to remember that Kathy Price is not a machine...she has a heart and feelings and love!

I would also like to thank the people who donated the boots. My daughter loves them and wears them to school. She said they are just what she wanted. There were some little ones for the little guys too. We are very thankful.

Thank you again, Mission of Love and Kathy Price.
Mary Fast Wolf & Family



UPCOMING BUILDING MISSIONS OF LOVE

April 29

June 20-28

July

August

October

To Jean Lafitte, Louisiana; Building homes and repairing others.

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

To Jean LaFitte, Louisiana; Building homes and repairing others

Mayan Communities

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

Mayan Communities of the Yucatan

CALL OR E-MAIL KATHLEEN IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BEING PART
OF OUR BUILDING TEAM FOR THE MISSION OF LOVE

330-720-0278 amissionoflove@sbcglobal.net



Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...

THANK YOU VERY MUCH...

Dear Kathleen,

Pine Ridge,
South Dakota

Hi! We would like to thank you very much for all the things you helped us with like the gas and food money when we moved our house.

When Ted called and said he was moving the house, we were all happy and so we helped. We went to Oglala and helped setting the house and getting it ready to get moved. Then the third day, we were getting ready to move it. It was a very exciting moment to see it moving and the moment it was on the road, I knew it was our home and I couldn't believe it was going to be put on our own land.

It was very fun and exciting following the house that covered the whole road. Coming down the road was very joyful. We were ahead of them house and we had some exciting moments when we were close to Red Shirt Table, going on the Cuny Table Road. We sideswiped a pickup with boards, so we had to help fix the boards on the back of the pickup and we had to leave the house on the Cuny Table Road, but no one bothered it.

We moved it the following day, a very exciting 2 1/2 hour drive to our destination...our own land. It is a very wonderful sight to see our house sitting on our own land. We still can't believe it. It's like a dream, a dream come true. It is a day we will always remember.

We would also like to thank you for the propane you put in our house in Red Shirt Table and the gas money and the room you got for us when Darrell's nephew passed away in Eagle Bulls, South Dakota. We want to thank you very much for the propane you got us again in December. It was very cold and we were freezing. The house was very cold, but thanks to you, we were in a warm house again. The kids were all happy because the house was warm again. And thank you for the clothes too.

We never thought of owning our own house. Thank you very much for everything you have done for us. We will enjoy the house for the rest of our lives

Thank you...Love you very much
From your friends (kola's) in South Dakota
Darrell & Donna Janis
D.J. & Tex Janis
Leon Janis
Adam, Latrell & Teanna Janis
Tom, Antoinette, Talanna & Trara Janis
Caroline (Kerri) Janis



AFTER KATRINA AND RITA...

Dear Mission of Love

Jean Lafitte,
Louisiana

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita took a devastating toll on the entire Gulf Coast. Some of us were more fortunate than others. The less fortunate families ended in loss of life, other families lost everything they owned. Some of these families were forced to live in tents for months at a time while waiting on a FEMA camper. Although these campers are not like living in your own home, it is still better than living in a tent.

As for the Thibodeaux, Danos and Lemoine families in Lafitte, Louisiana, we were more fortunate than others, but not as fortunate as some. When we returned home from our nearly month long evacuation, we found dead rats and other stuff in our house.

Then there was Rita. We were not as fortunate for this one. We had nearly two feet of water in our home. This is where we lost all our belongings to water and mold. On top of all this, Marjorie Thibodeaux had to have emergency gall bladder surgery at age 15. Then, Joe Thibodeaux had to have two knee replacements. On January 21, Joe lost his brother to cancer. Then in January, Rodney Lemoine had to rush his grandfather to the hospital for an allergic reaction to medication.

On February 12, 2006, his mother had a mild heart attack. Despite all this, a blessing from the Lord above came down and gave us these wonderful people who came in and helped out however they could. If it would not have been for Mrs. Kathy and her volunteers, we would still be trying to figure out how we are going to pay for supplies while paying our bills on a fixed income.

This goes to show that there really are people out there who truly care. These people have been our Guardian Angels. Thank you for all you have done and may God bless you.

Sincerely yours,
Marjorie, Joe and Gaynel Thibodeaux
Rodney, Martha & Baby Lemoine
Miriam, Jesti & Mia Danos

A PLEA FOR HELP...

Dear Mission of Love,

Jean Lafitte,
Louisiana

Hi! I live in Lafitte, Louisiana. My name is Ina Thibodeaux. Because of Hurricane Rita, my husband and I lost all of our things including our home. With two feet of water inside our home we were living in a 30 foot FEMA trailer. We had no insurance; my husband was on disability because of lung cancer.

We were married for 26 wonderful years on November 24, 2005. On December 20, 2005, my husband turned 54 years old. On January 21, 2006, he passed away after I quit my job to take care of him. I'm still living in the FEMA trailer.

Seeing how the Mission of Love has helped a friend of mine with a house and hearing of the kind people who came here, I was wishing that I could have a house to live in one day.

Yours truly,
Ina Thibodeaux





Mission of Love Foundation
 2054 Hemlock Court. Youngstown, Ohio 44515
missionoflove.org / amissionoflove@sbcglobal.net
 Kathleen Price, Founder/Director • (330) 793-2388



On January 14, 2006, during a musical tribute to Martin Luther King in Youngstown, Ohio, Kathleen Price was presented with a Special Humanitarian Award for her work with Mission of Love. As part of her acceptance speech, she quoted these powerful words of the late Mr. King.

**"Use me, God. Show me how to take who I am,
 who I want to be, and what I can do,
 and use it for a purpose greater than myself."
 —Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Please take the time to read about the acts of great love in this issue

"You are not here to save the world, but to touch the hands that are within your reach."



Volunteers in Louisiana



VOLUNTEERS
 Rex Luckage
 Mitchell (Mitch) Mays
 Brian Paisley
 George Paisley
 Patrick (Pat) Paisley
 Pam Rogers
 Karen Romelfanger
 Don Schrock
 Sally Walker
 Robert (Bob) White

VOLUNTEERS
 Kathleen (Kathy) Price
 Michael (Mike) Anttila
 Connie Dutcher
 Robert (Bob) Elston
 Mark Falatic
 Dennis (Denny) Frantz
 Carol Haus
 Stuart (Stu) Hitchcock
 Jeff Housel
 John and Natalie Larson



The Mission of Love Foundation is a non-profit organization that provides humanitarian aid to those in need worldwide, especially children. Backed by individuals, local businesses and the U.S. Military's Denton Program, the Mission of Love airlifts clothing, medicine and food and building supplies to third world countries, including the poorest community in the U.S.— Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota. Once the supplies arrive, groups of people, both young and old, from all walks of life, are there to utilize the supplies by building medical clinics, repairing orphanages, administering medical treatment to the ill and serving those who need help.