



**SPRING  
2008**

**Billy's Malawi Project**  
152 Piper Road  
West Springfield, MA 01089

*"All donations  
are welcome. All  
donations are tax-  
deductible."*

**Officers:**

Tim Allen  
Suzanne Meserve  
Judith Kappenman, SSJ

**Members:**

Don Dowd  
Mary Ellen Lowney  
Kathleen Lynch  
Caroline Murray

We are pleased to announce that Mags Riordan will make her annual visit to Western Massachusetts, from September 4-15. Mags will have a busy schedule, including time in the Irish Cottage in the International Building at the Big E. She will also be on local radio stations and at other events, to be announced. Please come out to support Mags and the Billy Riordan Memorial Clinic!!! Thanks to the generosity of many donors, the newly formed Billy's Malawi Project recently made our first official donation, which will be used for medicines to treat those who visit the clinic seeking medical care in Cape Maclear, Malawi, Africa. Thank you!!!

## **Billy's Malawi Project non-profit established in U.S.**

**B**illy's Malawi Project Inc. organized as a non-profit charity in September 2007. The inspiration was Mags Riordan, a Dingle, Co. Kerry educator who raised money to build a medical clinic in memory of her son Billy, who drowned at age 25 while swimming in the lake on Cape Maclear in 1999. The clinic opened in 2004, and has since been expanded. Our organization is a 501(c)3.

Mags Riordan first came to Springfield, Massachusetts in September of 2003 as member of a group of merchants and artisans from Dingle, Ireland to participate in the Eastern States Exposition. This transport of an Irish Craft Village, set in the grounds of the "Big E" fair was the result of cooperative efforts between the Eastern States Administration and the Irish Cultural Center at the Elms College of Chicopee.

Mags came to the Big E with a model of the village in Malawi, her story, handouts and crafts created by the villagers. Her ongoing goal is to raise funds for the Medical Clinic, and to bring awareness to the plight of the Villagers of Cape Maclear, Malawi Africa. Inspired by her passion and dedication to this cause, the Irish Cultural Center has hosted several fundraisers to help support her work.

Mags returns to the fair every year, and area musicians play their Irish music in the make-shift Irish cottage, collecting donations from fair attendees who come from all corners of the United States.

The Springfield area is not the only American soil touched by her noble work. In late 2007, a woman from Pennsylvania was moved after meeting with Mags in County Cork, and gave a sizeable donation to our own organization. A man

from Saratoga Springs, New York participated in the building of Billy's Clinic. He then returned from Africa and enlisted the members of Kerryman of Saratoga Springs to donate funds. In the summer of 2005 an Irishman of Meath, Ireland collected funds from the sponsorships of Americans who supported his fundraising walk of the Appalachian Trail. He walked the 2175-mile trail and raised \$50,000 for The Billy Riordan Memorial Trust. These are just a few examples of the American involvement in this project.

Many other Americans have been touched by Mags' work. Our goal is to make many more people informed about what one individual has done to change the world for the better for the villagers of Cape Maclear. Together, we can join her as partners in giving!!!

## The story of one family's struggles in Malawi by Mags Riordan

Agnes is twenty-five years old and a mother with three children, aged six, four, and three. She also cares for her young sister and two young brothers. Her mother is dying of uterine cancer. Her husband died of AIDS several months ago; Agnes is also HIV positive.

She attends the Billy Riordan Memorial clinic and is taking anti-retroviral drugs. However, they do not prevent her from becoming ill very often. She is too weak to work, even if she could find some employment. She tries to survive on selling firewood which she and her little family gather on the mountain.

In November when she came to the clinic, she was very weak and sick from lack of food. She feeds

her children before herself and sometimes there is simply not enough food to go around. The old maize crop becomes scarce and expensive and the new crop does not emerge until the early months of next year. At this time of the year, many Malawians, while not officially starving, are hungry and malnourished. This time of year is known as "the hungry season" in Malawi.

Agnes' children were on the feeding programme. She receives supplementary feeding from the Trust for them. The Project cannot feed the children what they should have. But we can, with our limited resources, give them a little.

Are they too, HIV positive? We

do not know. If they become ill, we will then test them. We cannot feed Agnes, but we can care for her when she becomes ill again.

What will happen to Agnes and her little family? I cannot say. We will do what we can. There are thousands of Agnesses and their families in Malawi. There are already more than half a million HIV orphans in the country. We will try to keep Agnes' children from joining this statistic for as long as possible. To do this, we need funding to purchase medication to treat her and all the other AIDS victims in this beautiful but sad country.

Visit the clinic's website at [www.billysmalawiproject.org](http://www.billysmalawiproject.org)

## The need for medicine

by Mags Riordan

The long awaited in-patient facility was officially opened in May, 2007. This unit means the end of long, expensive and physically difficult journeys for many patients from the area. Of course, not all patients can be admitted because the facility is limited. There is no surgical or obstetrical unit, no operating theatre or anaesthetics. Working with the Ministry of Health in Malawi, the Trust launched services including counseling, testing and distribution of anti-retroviral drugs. Dr. Jeannette Van Os and Nurse Catherine Ginell lead the programme. They service both HIV and AIDS patients and their families. Formerly, they



Pictured above: Mags Riordan tells her son's story in front of his photo on a boat on Lake Malawi in Cape Maclear shortly before he died.

### Malawi Facts

- 25-30% of the population has HIV/AIDS.
- 1 in 5 children die before their 5th birthday.
- Life expectancy is 42 years old.
- 75% of people live on less than \$2 per day.
- We need your help!

needed to make long trips each month for help. As the numbers attending the Billy Clinic grow each year, so does our medication bill. Since the opening of the clinic in 2004, they have treated more than 40,000. Not all patients require expensive medication, but the vast majority do need some form of drug treatment. Antibiotics, antifungals, analgesics, malaria treatment and arthritis relief are just some of the medications purchased each month. Fundraising specifically for these requirements is a priority. The costs for medicine for the next twelve months is in excess of Euro 30,000.