



**SPRING  
2009**

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

**Billy's Malawi Project**  
P.O. Box 312  
West Springfield, MA 01090

**Officers:**

Tim Allen  
Suzanne Meserve  
Judith Kappenman, SSJ

**Members:**

Paige Diamond  
Don Dowd  
Mary Ellen Lowney  
Kathleen Lynch  
Caroline Murray



Billy's Malawi Project is registered with iGive.com

If you order anything on line, consider doing so through this web site. Billy's Clinic would benefit if you order through iGive.com and choose 'Billy's Malawi Project' as your cause.

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

## **A visit to raise awareness of Billy's Clinic By Mags Riordan**

I made a promotional visit to West Springfield in April. My visits up to now have been annual to attend the Big E. It was very nice to be back again after only six months. The board members had planned a busy schedule for me and I was more than happy to fill the engagements they had organised. I arrived from Ireland on a Thursday evening. On Friday morning I attended the First Friday Mass and breakfast at St Michael's Cathedral with board members Caroline Murray, Suzanne Meserve and Sister Judy Kappenman. After Mass I was introduced to the organisers of the First Friday Breakfast. I hope to pay a return visit as a guest speaker at some time in the future.

Later on the same day, Sister Judy, Tim Allen and I were the invited guests of Steve Jablonski at the Springfield Rotary Club lunch. We enjoyed hearing guest speaker Kevin Rhodes talk about the Springfield Symphony Orchestra. The members kindly presented me with a Rotary pennant which I

shall, in turn, present to a Rotary Club in Malawi. Some members expressed interest in our organization and in having a speaker from the Trust address their lunch meeting at a future date.

I met a number of people from the West Springfield area and beyond at Don Dowd's house on Saturday and Sunday afternoons at receptions. Board members Sister Judy, Tim Allen, Suzanne Meserve, Kathy Lynch, Mary Ellen Lowney and Don Dowd attended the receptions. I showed the DVD of the project, we chatted with the guests, exchanged further fundraising ideas and enjoyed the delicious food which Don and his team of ladies kindly provided for us.

On Monday Don, Sister Judy and I travelled to Boston to meet with some people at Tommy O'Neill's office on Chardon Street. Mr O'Neill is a supporter of the Trust and hosted a meeting with us last October. Once again he has given his support to the Trust and he held a reception on Tuesday evening.

We met with Shelley McPhee and others who are interested in helping us secure funding from various donor sources.

Wednesday saw us making a trip in Westfield to speak to the Westfield North Middle School. The seventh grade class health teacher, Ms Pat Mahoney made the initial contact with Suzanne Meserve. In the auditorium we showed the promotional DVD and answered many enthusiastic young questioners afterwards. The students have raised \$10,000 for the purchase of mosquito nets that they sent to UNICEF. Under the direction of Ms Mahoney the pupils are now going to establish support for the work of the Trust. Their special area of interest is in malaria prevention. With the malaria education and net provision programme of the Trust, we hope to engage in a very direct way with the school efforts.

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## Never Doubt By Tim Allen

Can you finish the Margaret Mead quote that titles this article? The answer is coming.

Think on these things.

Think of Mags Riordan living her life in Dingle, Ireland. Raising her family, going to work every day. Making a difference in people's lives.

Think of the people in Cape McClear, Malawi at that time.

Think of the lack of medical care, the lack of education, the sickness reflected on the skin of so many of the children.

Think of Mags coming into their lives. Here was a person who cared enough to dedicate time, and eventually her life to bettering the life of the people of a village. A medical clinic was built and medical care for the most basic of health issues was available to them.

Think of the changes in Cape McClear. Better health, such a fundamental part of life, became a possibility for the first time. There was someone on the scene who had a vision, could mobilize people, raise funds, find volunteers, organize the effort....all in all, someone who could help create an environment in Cape McClear that made people believe that their lives can get better, that they can have a tomorrow, that hope for a better life can exist.

Think of how a better life exists now because of her leadership and the efforts of so many behind her.

Can you finish the quote now?

It continues, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has."

Many of Mags initial plans are com-

plete, but as with most things, there is so much to do. Mags takes care of the first level of care – making sure the clinic is working, that it is staffed as it should be, that supplies are obtained as efficiently and at the lowest possible cost. But without the people behind her, the work couldn't be done.

There are the people who work in the clinic. And then there are the people like you who support her work financially, or through emotional support. Mags now lives eight months in Malawi and four months in Ireland, or on the road back and forth to the United States. I think the best thing we can do to support the outstanding work being done in Malawi is to support that work as best we can. Many of you have already been doing that.

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### A visit By Mags Riordan continued

I attended a meeting of the Board on Wednesday evening. The meeting was held primarily to acquire feedback and to update members on the visit. Plans for the second Miles For Malawi walk on Thanksgiving morning in November and other possible fundraising activities were discussed. The Trust is very fortunate to have an active and hard working board of directors in the United States.

On Thursday morning I paid a return visit to Westfield to finalise the connection with the school. My last engagement on Thursday afternoon was facilitated by Mary Ellen Lowney. I pre-recorded an interview with Don Healy for his



Pictured above: staff and volunteers at Billy's Clinic, Malawi, Africa

Sunday morning show as an update for his listeners. I had been interviewed by Don in the past. The visit to West Springfield was very successful. Meeting with the board and also connecting with many other interested people has proved in the past to be the way forward. The work of the Trust in Malawi is vital to the community and must continue. Uncertain financial times bring many challenges to the charity. However with the support of many good people, we will continue to develop this largely neglected and impoverished part of our world.

**Please continue to help us to help the people of Cape Maclear help themselves.**

## Students give life and hope to the people of Africa

By Sister Judith Kappenman

**B**illy's Malawi Project has a new advocate for the cause. Pat Mahoney, health teacher at North Middle School, Westfield read about our Project, and contacted us in March. And so, when Mags Riordan came to raise awareness of her work in Africa in April, we arranged with Pat for Mags to speak to her students.

Last fall Mahoney taught a lesson to her classes on malaria, its impact on people's lives, especially children, and how the disease is preventable when people use mosquito nets in Africa.

Her 166 students in six classes decided they wanted to do something and they became very enthusiastic. To date they have raised \$10,000 and sent it to the organization called Nothing but Nets under the UNICEF umbrella at the United Nations.

These 13-year-old students ran all kind of fundraisers. Several students spoke at local organizations; one student had a tag sale; another walked dogs for a fee; still another organized a marathon in the neighborhood; one sold his Poke-

mon cards; several worked together collecting money outside the local Wall Mart; another group worked with their teacher at a pancake breakfast.

They were honored by the Nothing But Nets Foundation at North Eastern University where they met members of the Celtics and Team Revolution teams. They received a proclamation from the city of Westfield.

The students had learned that every thirty seconds a child dies from malaria somewhere in our world. To see for themselves the sheer numbers, they calculated just the time they spent in school to discover that on any given day, 750 children died between 8:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. To visualize what that meant, they cut out 750 crosses, one to symbolize each one of the victims. They posted these crosses in the hallway of the school, a reminder of how devastating the disease is.

In the question/answer session after showing the DVD, Mags told the students that she could purchase mosquito nets at half the cost that the United Nations quotes. She also



explained how she has a system in place in the village to ensure that the nets are used properly. After hearing these two bits of information, and being moved by her story, the children decided that any future funds they raised would go to help Billy's Malawi Project.

Before Mags left the school, she met one of the students, Sam Thresher in the hallway and he insisted that his photo be taken with his teacher and Mags. Then, he reached into his pocket, dug out \$13 and handed it to Mags, saying, "This is the first of our donations." Several students followed his example. They collected a total of \$33 for Billy's Malawi Project on the spot.

Pat Mahoney has taught health at the middle school for eleven years. She began her college studies at the age of 36, first attending Elms College where she joined the service trip to Appalachia. She transferred to Smith College, receiving her degree in sociology. Later she earned her Master's degree in biology at Springfield College.



**Pictured at left: Pat Mahoney's students; above Pat Mahoney, student Sam Thresher and Mags Riordan. Both photos show the crosses posted in the hallway.**



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## **Never Doubt** by Tim Allen continued

If you like what we are doing, and it's the right time in your life to help us, here are a few ways available to make a difference in the lives of the people of Cape McClear.

1. Send a donation to Billy's Malawi Project. The address is listed on page 1. Since Billy's Malawi Project is a 501©3, your donation is fully tax deductible.

2. Give us your ideas. We are not experts on raising money or doing outreach. You may have ideas on better ways to raise money or engage people. Contact us.

3. Offer to join our board or to support us in an ongoing way. There are eight of us on the board and we presently have two openings. Or offer to get a group of people together and we'll come

with Mags' DVD and tell the story of the clinic.

4. Support Miles for Malawi – our annual fundraiser. Last year the inaugural one took place in Springfield on Thanksgiving morning. It's a run/walk and is currently getting organized for this year. Get your friends together and get out walking before the big dinner later.

We are hoping to double the size of this run/walk this year. Can you help us and join a committee to help make it happen?

Thanks for your support of Billy's Malawi Project. We and the people of Cape McClear appreciate it. You are part of the small group of thoughtful, committed people changing the world.

## **About Malawi**

- Where: Sub Saharan Africa:: Borders with Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania.
- Population: 13 million.
- Life Expectancy: 37 years.
- 95% of the population are without electricity.
- 5% of girls and 7% of boys receive a 2nd level education.
- 20% infant mortality rate among children under 5 years.
- 75% of people live on less than \$2 per day.

## **SAVE THE DATE!!**

**The second annual Miles for Malawi Thanksgiving Day race — run or walk or bike— will be held on Thursday Nov. 26, 2009 at 9 a.m. Details to come.**