

medcare newsletter

A lifeline for Ugandan children

Winter Edition | December 2017

Welcoming 2018

New Challenges, New Memories, New Opportunities

At the beginning of a New Year we can look back at past memories, learn from past mistakes and successes and look forward to new challenges ahead. The New Year also gives us new opportunities to build our dreams and **MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD.**

Medcare plans to use the successes of 2017 as stepping stones into the future, leading to the fulfillment of our dream of providing sustainable, accessible, life changing health and social care to thousands of Ugandan children and their families.

There are plenty of things in the world that each of us would like to change. We want to make a difference, but the problems are so big, where do we start? It can seem daunting, but the truth is there are plenty of ways we can make a difference.

Medcare has been privileged to be able to make a difference in the lives of many suffering Ugandan children.



And you too can make a difference in 2018 by joining Medcare in:

- ✓ Volunteering
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Child sponsorship
- ✓ Team visits to Uganda
- ✓ Sharing the needs of Ugandan children with others.
- ✓ Giving of your time and expertise to assist Medcare in the UK and Uganda.

Our world needs individuals to make a difference for the benefit of all people.

So in the New Year - 2018 - consider joining with Medcare in making the world a better place.



medcare - Together we can make a difference

The Painful Consequences of Childhood Burns

Burns are a global public health problem, accounting for an estimated 180,000 deaths annually. The majority of these occur in low - and middle - income countries and almost two thirds occur in Africa and South-East Asia.

Burns are one of the most devastating household injuries. In Uganda, burn injuries account for 11% of all childhood injuries and children constitute 75% of the burn victims seen in hospitals in and around Kampala. Non-fatal burns are a leading cause of morbidity, including prolonged hospitalisation, disfigurement and disability, often with resulting stigma and rejection. This is the story of one young Ugandan boy, who bravely faced a devastating, life changing burns injury.

Joseph Mbidde is 12 years old. His father is a fisherman but the Ugandan government has stopped his fishing rights following a number of cases of illegal fishing. As a result the family live in desperate poverty.

Joseph suffers from epilepsy. In March 2016 his mother left him alone whilst she went to fetch water. On returning home she discovered that Joseph had suffered an epileptic fit and had fallen onto the fire. He received severe burns to the whole of his left arm and body and was admitted to hospital in Masaka, where he stayed for 4 months. Although paediatric hospital care is free of charge in Uganda there are many other costs which have to be met, such as food, bedding, dressings and medication. After 4 months Joseph's family had run out of money and his mother had to discharge him from hospital. At this time the whole of his wound was covered in pus. For a further 3 months Joseph suffered repeated fits and was in a great deal of pain from his burns, crying constantly. His mother watched him helplessly and expected him to die.



Before surgery

In October 2016 a community worker advised the family to take Joseph to the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre for help. His mother tells us, "On October 26th 2016 we went to Wellspring as we had been directed and sought help. It is true God works through our fellow man. It was through the community worker that we met good people who helped bring a smile back on Joseph's face. At Wellspring we were warmly received and, after a few hours, they took us to Kitovu Hospital, covering all costs. My son at last began appropriate treatment and everything we needed for his stay in hospital was provided. We spent 2 months in Kitovu Hospital and were then referred to CoRSU Hospital for plastic and orthopaedic surgery."

Skin grafting was undertaken but it was apparent that the bone of his arm was exposed. The suggestion was therefore made that his arm should be amputated. The doctors told Joseph about these plans and he bravely replied, "That is fine with me. After all this hand is no longer useful so cut it off and I can be free from pain." His left arm was then amputated from below the elbow.

His mother concluded: "I want to thank the medical staff at Wellspring for being so kind and welcoming. They provided everything we needed to save Joseph's life and free him from pain. I thank Medcare for providing funds for our children who are sick or injured. Not only is Joseph now free from pain his epilepsy is also under control."



After surgery

Thank you and Goodbye to Maura



The Medicare Board of Trustees were saddened to hear of the death of Dr (Sr) Maura Lynch, in December 2017. Sister Maura Lynch joined a Catholic Nursing Order as a teenager and decided that she would like to become a doctor.

Following her graduation from medical school, Sister Maura specialised as a gynaecologist and has devoted her life to the care of women in Africa, first in Angola and then in Uganda. She worked as Superintendent of Kitovu Hospital, Masaka until recently and was the driving force behind the success of the hospital, where many lives have been saved. In 2005, she raised funds to build a dedicated fistula ward and over the years she has built up an international team of experienced fistula surgeons. In 2013, The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of England awarded Sister Maura Lynch a very well deserved Honorary Fellowship for the work she has done in Kitovu.

All who have had the privilege to meet Dr Maura have observed her tireless energy and enthusiasm for the work at Kitovu Hospital. Medical students and junior doctors would quake at the sound of Dr Maura firing questions at them in a broad, rapid Irish accent! But all who knew her were also aware of her very great love for the people in Africa and her compassionate heart for the suffering. Dr Maura will be greatly missed but we are sure that she is now receiving her eternal reward from the God she dedicated her life to serve.

Spina Bifida

Spina bifida occurs when a baby's spine and spinal cord don't develop properly in the womb.



It is a type of neural tube defect, the neural tube being the structure that eventually develops into the baby's brain and spinal cord. The neural tube starts to form in early pregnancy and closes about four weeks after conception. In spina bifida, part of the neural tube doesn't develop or close properly, leading to defects in the spinal cord and vertebrae.

Spina Bifida can lead to weakness or total paralysis of the legs, bowel and urinary incontinence, loss of skin sensation in the legs and around the bottom which can lead to accidental injury, and there is also a risk of hydrocephalus (water on the brain). Children in Uganda suffering from physical disabilities such as spina bifida have little hope for a productive future. In Uganda the incidence of spina bifida is estimated to be 1,400 births per year.

Baby Olowo's mother noticed 2 swellings on his back soon after birth. None of her friends or neighbours knew what these swellings were, some calling them abscesses and others a form of umbilicus. The baby cried continuously so his mother decided to take him to Masaka Hospital from where they were referred to the Mulago National Referral Hospital in Kampala.

Olowo's mother continues the story: *"The doctors in Masaka did not seem to realise that it was impossible for me to take Olowo to Kampala because I had no money for transport, hospital bills or feeding. My family of 6 people have to live off £10 a month. Therefore I took him home and went to see the local healer to see if he could excise the 'abscess'. Even they wanted money, which we did not have and no further advice was offered.*

The months went by and I still had no hope of help for my baby. Until, when Olowo was 8 months old, I was advised to visit the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre in Kamutuuza. The lady who advised me said that her son had his foot corrected, paid for by Wellspring. When I arrived at Wellspring I was seen immediately and photographs were taken, which were sent to the UK for advice. Within 24 hours I was told that Olowo was to be given money for his treatment and arrangements were made straight away for his referral to CURE Neurosurgical Hospital. All costs were met by Wellspring.

I thank God that my son found someone to care for him and for knowledgeable experts to treat him. If I had taken him to the healers he would be dead. I thank Wellspring staff for connecting us to good people who are willing to help us get very expensive treatment for our children and for treating our children well. God bless you all and continue saving more lives."

The cost of Olowo's life transforming surgery, including all transport, living costs while an inpatient at CURE, and post operative care at Wellspring, was £400! Olowo is now receiving regular physiotherapy at Wellspring in the hope that he will eventually be able to walk and lead a normal life.

Living with the Stigma of AIDS

My name is Shakire Namwanje and I am 15 years old. When I was 7 years old I was found to be HIV+ve. At the time I did not understand what this meant or how it could affect my life.

For many years I had repeated illnesses but once I started taking my medicines I kept very well. However, because I did not understand the nature of my problem, I eventually stopped taking my tablets thinking I did not need them anymore. I soon became ill once more and developed rashes all over my body. Our neighbours recognised that I had AIDS and stopped other children from playing with me. Even at school, children began to stigmatise me and I began to believe that I was a curse.

I was taken to TASO (a Ugandan AIDS agency) where I was counseled and informed about the nature of my illness. I began to take my tablets regularly and remained at school for another year. Then my father told myself and my 2 sisters there was no need for us to go to school anymore because we were all HIV+ve and were about to die. My sisters and I thought he was joking, since I am the only one HIV+ve. But our father went ahead and abandoned us in a rental house with our mother. I became very depressed and gradually began to waste away. My mother couldn't afford to feed us and I blamed myself for having been born with HIV. Life became very hard. We could spend days and nights without eating and sometimes I could not take my drugs because I had no food.



I once again began to fall sick. The doctors at TASO found I had a dangerously high viral load. They blamed me for neglecting my life which could lead to my death. It was then that my mother told the doctors about our home situation and so they began to find a way in which we could earn some money. I was recruited onto the TASO adolescent group. In this group we sing, act and dance in line with sensitising the public about HIV. TASO gave me money every time I attended rehearsals, which helped my family a lot.

I still loved my father and persuaded my mother to allow me and my sisters to visit him. He appeared to be glad to see us but his wife seemed to hate us. She only gave us food when



“To my dear fellow children, especially those who are HIV+ve – never give up on your life; stop self stigma; avoid depression; then you will live longer. It is true we face many challenges in the world of HIV but God is always on our side.”

my father was around and one day I found my tablet bottle was full of water, so destroying the tablets. I stayed at my father's house for one month and during that time had no tablets to take. My viral load again began to rise.

At this time TASO decided I needed the help of Wellspring. Here I was registered with other children and I began to gain hope for my life. The COIN sponsorship scheme gave me a reason for living and hope for the future.

I am now in Senior 3 and working hard. It is a struggle to keep up the school fees but I still perform in different drama groups in order to pay my fees. I will continue to work hard because my ambition is to become a social worker so that I can help others stigmatised by AIDS.

I thank TASO for having given me my tablets and regular counseling since I was a young child. They turned my life around when I became a member of their adolescent group. Wellspring, you changed my life greatly! TASO gives me drugs but sometimes I couldn't take them because of food challenges – Wellspring solved this problem and ensures I keep in good health with regular food. I am now a happy girl, focused on achieving a bright future.

NOTE: Senior school costs are met through the Medicare Schooling Initiative at a cost of £200 annually. Sponsorship of a child with AIDS through COIN costs £25 monthly.

A Container of Hope for Uganda



A 20ft container has been purchased and delivered to the car park of Kings Church in Frodsham. This container will be packed by volunteers in January and February, with a proposed shipping date of March 1st.

The container will be packed with a large 'play ship' for the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children's playground, together with health and hygiene goods, clothes, educational supplies, and toys - to be used in the Home. In addition, medical and physiotherapy equipment will be collected and eventually distributed between Wellspring, the Home and other local health facilities.

Team Visits...

March 2018: Pauline Hutchinson (chairman) and Malcolm Cleugh (volunteer) will travel to Uganda to discuss administrative matters and visit the homes of some of the most seriously deprived children referred to Wellspring for assistance.

June 2018: A team of volunteers from SPL will join other volunteers for a week in Uganda. They will be responsible for the construction of the 'play ship', and will complete any other jobs remaining to enable final completion of the Noeline's Home project.

Another medical visit is proposed for later in the year. TBA.

Wellspring Home for Disabled Children & Noeline's Home Project



Grace Emery, aged 97 years, has donated 50% of the cost of the building of the home. Many thanks, Grace. What a wonderful legacy for the children.

SPL International are providing Medicare with funds in 2017 and 2018 which will provide a large proportion of the rest of the funds needed for the build.

King's Church Frodsham have raised funds to equip a large boy's dormitory, housing 18 boys.

Frodsham and Helsby Inner Wheel have supported Medicare for a number of years. They have raised an amazing £4,000, which will enable the rest of the home to be fully equipped.

BM Construction, a reputable Ugandan construction company, have provided a tender within our budget for the build and are our builders of choice. Building will begin in January.



Fundraising

Many thanks to all our wonderful volunteers for raising funds through Medicare May, a Gin Tasting event, a Christmas Fayre and many other individual events. In the words of Tess and Claudia...
"KEEEEEEEEP FUNDING!"

There is much to do in 2018!

Chairman's Letter

Once again the Medcare Board of Trustees wish to thank all our generous donors for their support throughout 2017.



Noreen



Betty



John



Sam



Sandra

Throughout 2017 there have been times of great joy and excitement, combined, sometimes, with a measure of sadness.

- The Wellspring Home for Disabled Children / Noeline's Home Project is now well underway, after 6 years of planning and fundraising.
- Over 20,000 children have been successfully treated at Wellspring within the last 12 months.
- UK doctors travelled to Uganda to work in clinics and provide health education talks at the medical centre and in the villages.
- UK volunteers ran holiday clubs and fun days in the villages, to the delight of adults and children alike!
- A new home was built for little Steven and his grandmother, which they moved into in June this year.
- 150 children are now receiving life transforming sponsorship through our 4 sponsorship schemes.
- We have received increasing support for the work of Medcare in Uganda from the UK and USA.

During 2017 there have also been sad times – we remember the tragic deaths of baby Noreen (4 months old); Sandra Naluwoza (16 years old); Sam Nakibinge (17 years old); John Baliruno (4 years old) and Betty Namuddu (10 years old). Much of the suffering of these children could have been prevented in an ideal world, where ALL CHILDREN should have access to world class health and social care. But, such sad events have strengthened our resolve as trustees to ensure that more and more children in Uganda receive the best quality care through the work of Wellspring and that an increasing number of at risk and needy children will be provided with life saving and transforming sponsorship through COIN and MDI sponsorship schemes.

Medcare is anticipating more progress and exciting developments in the work of the Wellspring Children's Medical Centre in 2018:

- A container filled with medical and health and hygiene goods will arrive in Uganda in May.
- The building of the Wellspring Home for Disabled Children will be completed by June.
- Wellspring is to become an official paediatric AIDS unit.
- Increased funding will enable more children to be referred for specialist hospital treatment.
- Child sponsorship will rise to 200 before 2019.
- AND MUCH MORE!

As a result more Ugandan children will receive the rights of all children worldwide, of food, shelter, health and social care, encouragement and love.

Wishing all our supporters, and all the wonderful Wellspring staff and the children under their care, a Christmas filled with joy, hope and wonder, and a fulfilling, exciting and successful New Year.

Pauline Hutchinson Chairman of Medcare