

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

February 9, 2010

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**FAMILY OF DOCTORS AND NURSES HEADS TO UGANDA TO
TREAT ORPHANS**

New Jersey Organization Seeks to Raise Awareness of Medical Crisis

HOLMDEL, N. J. – Over 1,000 children in Africa will feel much better next month when their adopted grandmother Sylvia Allen, founder of Sylvia's Children, returns to their village. But this time, she's bringing a surprise: a family of American doctors and nurses.

Through her 501(c)3 organization, Allen has had the opportunity to visit Mbirizi, Uganda eight times since 2003. On her upcoming ninth trip from March 11-20, she has enlisted the help of various medical volunteers, including Dr. Tricia Gilbert, a Pulmonary and Intensive Care Specialist at New Jersey's Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, and three nurses: JoDee Anderson of Holmdel, NJ, Betsy Anne Gilbert of Crestwood, KY and Dora Burke of Cranford, NJ, and Joseph Todisco, a retired EMT and firefighter from Bay Head, NJ.

When the group arrives at the Mbirizi Advanced Primary and Day Care School, a school 40 miles away from the nearest health facility, they will have with them donated supplies, such as bandages, sutures, syringes, wound cleansers, crutches, glucometers, antibiotics, antiepileptic drugs, stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs. They will then begin a rigorous clinical examination of each child to produce their medical history as a baseline for future medical service. Because they will only be in Uganda for five days, they will each need to work extra hard by seeing an average of six children an hour within a working day of only six hours.

When that is complete, Dr. Gilbert, along with the nurse volunteers, will get started on administering treatment for any ailments which they encounter, which can include anything from diseases of poverty, consequences of malnutrition and complications of HIV/AIDS.

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Add One/ Sylvia's Children Celebrates 2008 World Orphan Week

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Says Gilbert, "I am both thrilled and humbled by this opportunity. It is a chance for me as a physician to practice medicine purely for the love of medicine and to serve the people. It is my hope that we are laying the foundation for a sustainable health program that focuses on prevention, education and health maintenance."

The purpose of the trip is to create awareness among the medical profession as to the urgency of having a health clinic at the school that not only serves the children of the school and their families but the village at large.

Launched seven years ago by Allen, Sylvia's Children was started with the intention of supporting children in the Mbirizi Advanced Primary and Day Care school in the village of Mbirizi, Uganda, Africa, 25% of whom had been orphaned due to losing one or both parents to the AIDS pandemic plaguing their country. Its mission has been to raise awareness and funds to educate, feed, clothe and shelter these children at the School.

Since starting the organization, Allen has succeeded in getting annual sponsorship for 93 of the 235 orphaned children and has raised \$300,000, all of which has gone directly to the school. She has also constructed a fresh well; built a library and filled it with books; purchased seven acres of land; donated a computer with internet access; constructed a dormitory; built a playground; bought additional triple decker bunk beds for the boys' dorm; provided sporting and musical equipment; and built three additional double classroom blocks as well as hiring a full time nurse and building new stoves for increased cooking efficiency.

The entire thrust of Sylvia's Children is to create a self-sustaining model that can then be taken to schools in surrounding villages. The seven acres of land have been planted in corn and the school now has a corn milling business. Allen's next plans are to develop a chicken farm, a uniform sewing trade, an arts and crafts cooperative, a health clinic and a fair-trade coffee business, which will allow the school to be self-sustainable. For more information please visit www.sylviaschildren.org or call (732) 946-2711.

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