



Helping in Uganda:

'THE KNITTING MAY HAVE SEEMED LIKE JUST A DISTRACTION. THE WOMEN WERE SCARED AND SUFFERING ... BUT IT TURNED INTO SOMETHING MUCH MORE. THEY SAW THAT AFTER BEING SHUNNED AND PUSHED ASIDE FROM THEIR OWN COMMUNITY, OTHERS STILL CARED ABOUT THEM.'

LINDA CHAMBERLAIN



Photos by LYNNE DAVIDSON and LINDA CHAMBERLAIN

Knitting broken lives together



By JULIE RAEFIELD-GOBBO
News staff writer

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" — Mister Rogers

A recent service trip to Uganda by several Gorge women does contain some scary information, but the larger message of their story is found at the heart of Mister Rogers' wisdom.

Service trip leader Linda Chamberlain, a French instructor for a community college in Utah, makes her summer home in Hood River. You may recognize her friendly smile if you have visited Willinda Blueberry Farm on Frankton Road. That spirit of entrepreneurship and Chamberlain's personal love of knitting inspired a unique cross-ocean connection that has brought hope to a wide circle of women this fall.

Having already traveled to Uganda annually for more than 12 years assisting women experiencing medical and domestic violence crises, Chamberlain found a unique opportunity this year to help two additional groups of women — seven who live here in the Pacific Northwest, including two from the Gorge, and 69 more who were awaiting surgery at Kitovu hospital in Masaka, Uganda.

"I had been bringing hand-knit blankets to other Ugandan projects and had been to Kitovu last year," said Chamber-

lain. "This year Sister Maura (Lynch) asked me to bring my friends and, in addition to bringing the blankets, teach the women at the Fistula Project how to knit."

Chamberlain followed Sister Maura's advice and brought a team of five more knitters and two extra helpers to the hospital for a week-long stay. Lynne Davidson and Jen Hanlon-Wilde, both Columbia Gorge Community College employees in Hood River, joined Chamberlain as part of the Fistula Project team.

"I had never heard of fistulas," said Davidson. "I had no idea that this problem existed."

For those who do not know what a fistula is, you can be thankful. It is a condition that is fairly rare now in developed countries, but one that continues to plague women in the Third World in vast numbers. In Uganda alone it is estimated that over 140,000 women live out their lives with unrepaired damage from the trauma.

A fistula is essentially a tear or hole that opens up through the bladder or rectum as a result of obstructed labor, childbirth or rape. For most women, the damage will also result in the death of the baby they are carrying and will leave behind a condition that causes ongoing leakage from one or both of their two waste systems.

Given the very difficult nature of the results, women with the condition are abandoned by their husbands,

Please see HOPE, Page B12

FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

Through a simple skill women and girls, waiting for a chance for a new life in Uganda, were aided toward recovery by Lynne Davidson of Hood River, (top photo) and Jen Hanlon-Wilde (not shown) who taught knitting at Kitovu Hospital. Linda Chamberlain of Hood River (center far right) organized the service trip and brought blankets and hygiene kits to share with Sister Lynch (pictured) and her many patients awaiting fistula repair surgery. Facilities were clean and basic and patients cooked for themselves in simple living conditions.



HOPE

Continued from Page B1

shunned from their villages and left to a life of isolation and shame. They have no way to maintain hygiene and, without village support, live in abject poverty.

According to Chamberlain, most of the women being treated at Kitovu have little or no formal education and do not understand the physiology of their condition. Even if they did understand their disorder, most would have no way to have the needed surgery to repair it. Many simply believe it is a punishment from God. The ones who make it to Kitovu have a miraculous chance to return to a normal life, all with the help of many caring people.

The Fistula Project at Kitovu Hospital is run by the Medical Missionaries of Mary, a Catholic order of nuns and supporters. Sister Maura is the head surgeon

for the hospital and is in her 70s. Additional surgeons arrive as volunteers four times a year to perform seven surgeries a day for ten days straight in a very simple, clean operating room.

The women patients arrive quarterly from all from across Uganda. Generally, they take about 70 patients per quarter, and each arrives with a helper and their additional children.

The entire surgery and recovery process requires the women to stay at Kitovu for about a month. Each woman is responsible for cooking and doing laundry for themselves and their families with their helpers taking over after surgery. However, other than these daily chores, to pass the days away, there is nothing but waiting.

The women and helpers all share sleeping arrangements in one tent — placing the 64 mothers who lost their babies in close contact to the few lucky ones whose babies survived. It is a place where suffering is commonplace in

many forms.

But Kitovu is also a place where help is given, accepted and appreciated in abundance. It is a place where hope is reborn.

“It was very powerful to feel that the small things we were doing were really impacting these women’s lives,” said Davidson, who helped teach 25 women basic knitting skills.

In addition to arriving with yarn and needles and a willingness to teach, the team from the Gorge and Northwest brought 17 transport boxes containing 90 knit blankets and individually crafted hygiene kits, plus stacks of material to help make a new dress for each woman undergoing surgery.

Davidson used the trip to hand deliver knit blankets that came from another group of knitting women, all mother’s of children enrolled in St. Francis House of Odell’s after school program. Davidson was able to organize that knit-support group with the support of Colum-



bia Gorge Community College’s employee volunteerism program. CGCC funded Davidson’s two hours a week of volunteer work to help the local knitters produce blanket squares.

The group’s fundraising campaign prior to the trip also helped purchase two treadle sewing machines to be left at the hospital — ensuring future patients could learn to sew and make their own hospital-departure dress.

“The knitting may have seemed like just a distraction. The women were scared and suffering ... but it turned into something much more,” said Chamberlain. “They saw that after being shunned and pushed aside from their own community, others still cared about them.”

And the women — all 69 patients at the hospital plus family members — wanted to be taught how to knit. The team accommodated by working together in small groups outdoors under the shade of a few trees.

The results were inspiring. The women were smiling, laughing again and learning. According to Chamberlain and Davidson, many of the women kept their knitting

with them throughout the day, insisting on keeping their needles and yarn with them as they went in to surgery. Ideas on how to use the knitting began to emerge from the patients themselves, resulting in cellphone carriers and other useful items.

That sense of joy and hope was magnified in the larger mission of the clinic, when the women emerged from successful surgeries. According to Chamberlain, shouts of joy, singing and clapping could be heard when the women realized their first moments of being dry after months or sometimes years. Sixty-four of the 69 women were completely cured.

The women who have been

knit back together by caring surgeons and the donations of many who support the clinic know that they are no longer alone. They will return to their remote villages and can share the knowledge of how to receive care. They have been made whole again and will help others become whole again in return.

For Chamberlain, Hanlon-Wilde and Davidson, there is no better remedy for the ills of this world than to become part of the cure. Perhaps the best way to “look for the helpers,” than to become one yourself.

To donate to the Fistula Project visit: www.medicalmissionariesofmary.com, select “Donate Now” button and indicate Kitovu Fistula Project, Uganda.



JOYFUL dancers greet the Northwest volunteers and Linda Chamberlain (center top photo) as they visit an orphanage and school on their way to the Kitovu Fistula Project. With the help of hospital staff (above) 69 patients plus additional family members were given hands-on knitting lessons and encouragement that a hopeful future awaited them.



Mortgage Deeds

DONE DIRT CHEAP!

Jeff Sacre
Sr. Mortgage Specialist
NMLS #1081210

DIRECTORS
Mortgage

541.436.2662 Office
541.806.1556 Cell

102 3rd Street, Hood River, OR 97031



**SHOP
LOCALLY**



Husqvarna VIKING

HICLASSTM E10

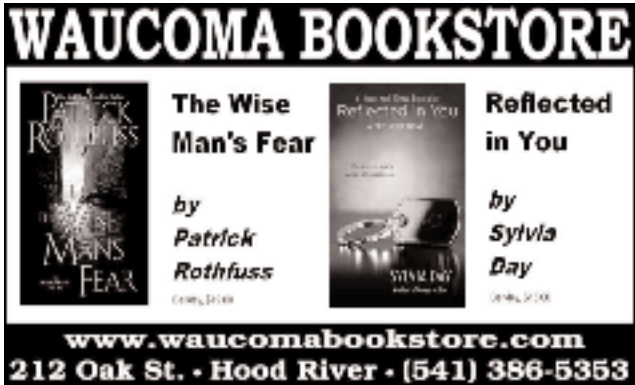
Easy to use.
Great for the
beginning sewer

\$169

• FREE INSTRUCTION • ON-SITE SERVICE • LAYAWAY

A's Sewing Shoppe & Janitorial Supplies

422 E. 2nd St. The Dalles • 541-296-9522



WAUCOMA BOOKSTORE

The Wise Man's Fear
by Patrick Rothfuss

Reflected in You
by Sylvia Day

www.waucomabookstore.com

212 Oak St. • Hood River • (541) 386-5353



THE POLAR EXPRESS

BE BELIEVE

All Aboard!

**THE POLAR EXPRESS
TRAIN RIDE**

Riding along with the story as the train makes its magical round trip journey to the North Pole. Meet Santa and enjoy roasting, hot cocoa, a treat and a special gift for each child. Families are encouraged to wear their pajamas!

DEPARTING FROM HOOD RIVER, OREGON

**TICKETS
ON SALE NOW!**

TIMES
11:30am | 2:00pm | 4:30pm | 7:00pm

DATES
Starting November 10th
running through the holiday season.
Check website for full schedule.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR CALL FOR RESERVATIONS & DETAILS:

800-872-4661 OregonPolarExpressRide.com

www.oparexpressride.com



Ford RAY SCHULTENS MOTORS

LAST CHANCE Sale

TAX CODE 179
EXPENSE UP TO 100% OF THE PURCHASE PRICE

NEW 2012 FORD F150 SUPERCAB

XLT Model Trim, 5.0L V8 Engine, 17" Aluminum wheels & so much more!

MSRP \$33,810

LESS FORD REBATE - 4500

LESS FORD CREDIT REBATE 1 - 1500

LESS TRADE-IN REBATE 2 - 1000

LESS SCHULTENS DISCOUNT - 2000

YOU PAY Only \$24,810

2007 BMW 525X1
4DR, AWD, LEATHER, MOONROOF, LOW MILES
STR # PF0139, VIN# 525095

2009 HONDA CIVIC
HYBRID AWD, SUPER EDITION, LOADED, 2004 MILES
STR # CF3824

2008 PONTIAC SOLSTICE
CONVERTIBLE, AUTO LEATHER, LOADED, LOW MILES
STR # PF0135

2010 FORD FUSION
HYBRID, LEATHER, PWR, MOONROOF, LOW MILES, LOADED
STR # PF0130, VIN# 522095

2006 FORD E-350
15-PASSENGER W/126 AUTO, LOADED
Only \$995

1996 FORD RANGER EXT
2400 PU, 5 SP, A/C, GREY, ECONOMIC
Only \$699

2001 FORD TAURUS SE
4DR, AUTO, A/C, TILT, CR, PWR, PL
Only \$895

2007 NISSAN VERSA
4DR, AUTO, A/C, TILT, CR, PWR, PL, LOW MILES
STR # PF0127, VIN# 514095

2003 CHEV 1500 HD CREW
4DR, LT PWR, LEATHER, LOADED
STR # CF3854

1999 FORD RANGER
2400, A/C, PWR, A/C, PWR, PL
STR # CF3854

2008 HONDA CRV 4X4
4DR, A/C, TILT, CR, PWR, PL, LOW MILES
STR # CF3854, VIN# 514095

Ray Schultens MOTORS

"You can count on us!"

2400 W. 6th Street, The Dalles OR • (541) 296-6191 or (800) 934-9835

www.schultensmotors.com Prices good thru 12/31/12