Site Selected for new Hospital in Harrar

The fourth of five new mini-hospitals is being built this year in the town of Harrar in east Ethiopia. The Hospital is being funded exclusively by the Fistula Foundation and by the Tesfa Ineste – Amharic for “Let’s give them hope” – fundraising effort by Ethiopian Americans. (Please see Latest News for a report on the recent activities in Washington, DC.) The team in Ethiopia is pleased with the new site that has been designated for the new hospital. It is set to be completed before Christmas this year. Stay tuned!

CEO, Mark Bennett and Senior Surgeon Dr. Biruk Tafessa visit Liberia and Nigeria to advise hospitals on fistula treatment

Hospital Chief Executive Officer, Mark Bennett, and Senior Surgeon Dr. Biruk Tafessa, traveled to Liberia and Nigeria in West Africa in February. They did so at the request of Christian Blind Mission. In both countries, they visited a number of hospitals to make recommendations about the requirements of setting up programs for the treatment and care of patients suffering from obstetric fistula.

(continued on page 6)
Dear Friends,

I visited Ethiopia before Christmas, staying with CEO Mark Bennett and his family in Addis, and then traveled up to our first new hospital in Bahr Dar. I wanted to give you a brief report on my trip and the indelible impressions it left on both my head and my heart.

On the trip to Bahr Dar in northwest Ethiopia, I traveled with Ruth Kennedy and Annette Bennett, both trained midwives. They were wonderful tutors about the extreme challenges of safe deliveries in rural areas. The Bahr Dar hospital is now operating at capacity. The overflowing ward and the women waiting for treatment on the outside lawn spoke volumes about the need for not only fistula treatment, but also obstetric care in this provincial city. I'm happy to report that the Fistula Hospital is working closely with the local hospital to significantly strengthen their emergency obstetric capacity, to try to prevent death and disabilities, such as fistula.

Once back in Addis, thanks to Dr. Hamlin, I was able to spend an entire morning observing in the Operating Room or as they say the “Operating Theatre”. It is a large room with four operating tables, unlike anything I have seen in the U.S. There is a hushed silence as the surgeons focus on repairing the injured bodies of their delicate young patients. Generally, the women receive only local anesthesia, so they are awake for the entire operation, lying patient and stoic. I was surprised by the intensity of the experience, as my eyes kept welling up with awe for the courage and strength of these young women, and the caring skill of the surgeons and nurses -- grace in action.

As I left the Operating Theatre that day walking into the long and cheerful “Florence Nightingale” ward brimming with patients, I was struck again by the grace of the young women treated there, with faces - at once filled with strength and hope. How very grateful we are for the contributions of generous people like you that help ensure that the life transforming treatment I observed will continue both now and in the future.

With gratitude for your generous and kind support,

Kate Grant
Dr. Hamlin recovers and returns to Ethiopia

We are delighted to let you know that Dr. Hamlin returned to Ethiopia in February, after being airlifted to London in December for a life-threatening illness. Once she left the Hospital in January, she recuperated in London at the home of her son and his family. She is nearly fully recovered, and we are all grateful for the many prayers and well-wishes from supporters all over the world. Thank you to everyone who signed the “digital get-well card” on our website. Over 1300 people, from 47 states and 26 countries signed the card. Dr. Hamlin, with her typical humility, said that she was honored by the card and was surprised that so many people care about her well-being.

Washington, DC: The hardworking team in red by Tsedale Assefa, hosted a sell out event that raised over $50,000 towards the new hospital in Harrar. Fistula Foundation’s Kebede and his wife, Liya, along with Fistula Foundation Board Member and Fistula Hospital align Gedamu all came to Washington for the thanks to Congressman Chris Smith and photographer, Mary Calvert, and journalist, attending as featured speakers.

Radio: On January 18, 2007, NPR reporter, provided a gripping and detailed report in her on the work of the Fistula Hospital, featuring interview with Sister Ruth Kennedy.

Times: Pulitzer Prize-Winning writer, Nicholas 25, 2007 published another deeply moving op-ed, titled “They think they’ve been cursed by God”, about maternal mortality generally, and the work of the fistula hospital specifically.

• The Wichita Eagle: Published “Hospital in Ethiopia offers hope for devastating childbirth injury” by Shashank Bengali, on February 25, 2007.

• Sunnyvale Sun and Cupertino Courier: These Silicon Valley papers published an article on January 10, 2007, “Repairing childbirth injuries, women’s lives: Fistula Foundation helps Ethiopian moms”, by staff writer, Erin Hussey.

• American Association of University Women and United Methodist Women: Fistula Foundation Executive Director, Kate Grant, spoke at the AAUW meeting in Silicon Valley on January 9, 2007 and the UMW meeting on February 28, 2007, describing the work of Hamlin Fistula Hospitals and the Foundation.

We’re giving a young, beautiful woman a new life.
– Dr. Catherine Hamlin

Washington D.C. Tesfa Volunteers
The long-awaited feature length documentary “A Walk to Beautiful” will premier at the San Francisco Film Festival on May 5, 2007. The movie was produced by Engel Entertainment, based in New York. The production team visited Ethiopia three different times, shooting over 120 hours of film from which to craft the 90 minute film. The final film is a masterful effort; it movingly documents the plight of fistula sufferers and the inspiring journey of five separate women as they move from devastation and despair to restored health. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the San Francisco Film Festival, one of the oldest and most respected film festivals in the country. The May 5th screening will be held at the Pacific Film Archives in Berkeley, near the University of California campus. For more information about the screening, please call our office.
“New Flower” Scarf in time for Mother's Day giving

Just in time for Mother’s Day giving, we are introducing our “New Flower” scarf. Addis Ababa, the capitol of Ethiopia and the location of the founding Hospital, means “New Flower” in Amharic, the most common native language there. The flower motif is designed to also represent the lush gardens surrounding the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, which patients and visitors alike find rejuvenating. The large garden of wild flowers and grass provide an important part of the oasis of healing for which the Hospital is renowned.

The scarf was custom designed for the Fistula Foundation in cheerful hues of gold, green and blue. It has a discreet “The Fistula Foundation from despair to dignity” signature in the bottom corner. It is a full 3 feet by 3 feet square, so it may be worn as a shawl or a scarf. It is 100% silk. You can see a more detailed image of the scarf in color on our website. With a donation of just $95 you can send your mother, or another woman you want to honor, this lovely gift. You can also, of course, obtain one just for yourself. Either way, we hope this scarf will help remind you of your important role in supporting the work of the Fistula Hospital.

You can order the scarf by sending your donation in the enclosed envelope. Or you can order it at our website (www.fistulafoundation.org) or by calling our office at 408 249-9596 between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm Pacific Time. If you wish to send the scarf as a Mother’s Day gift, please place your order with us no later than Monday, April 30th. Make a personal connection with the Hospital, helping restore health and dignity to patients at the Hamlin Fistula Hospitals.

Transformations
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Our Mission:
The Fistula Foundation is dedicated to the treatment and prevention of obstetric fistula, the most devastating aftermath of prolonged, obstructed labor, through the support of the programs of the Hamlin Fistula Hospitals in Ethiopia.
One key outcome of the trip was a plan for the Fistula Hospital to host a meeting of fistula experts later this spring in Addis Ababa, as a way to share knowledge and expertise and advance the field of fistula care and treatment pioneered by Dr. Hamlin and her team.

Foundation website gets a facelift

The Fistula Foundation website (www.fistulafoundation.org) has recently been updated. If you visit the site, you will notice that we’ve added several features to our home page, to make it easier for our visitors, like you, to find content more easily. For instance, you can sign up for our newsletter, or see our recent presentations directly from the home page. Please check it out, next time you’re “surfing” the net, and let us know what you think!