

BANSANG HOSPITAL APPEAL

NEWSLETTER

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www.bansanghospitalappeal.com

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MITIE HOUSE STAFF ACCOMMODATION ~ Staff have now moved in; it has been a mammoth project with so many unforeseen difficulties to overcome but the result has been worth it. We are aware that the MITIE HOUSE has to be maintained for all future staff and visiting volunteers. With the support and help of Jim Wadda, our Rotarian contractor, and a letter from the Bansang Hospital Appeal we have managed to secure funds from a number of organisations and businesses in The Gambia to ensure funding for not only furniture but for the upkeep of this magnificent home for the staff.

HOUSE OF COMMONS ~ I was invited to speak at this symposium by Dr David Southall OBE, Hon. Medical Director of Childhealth Advocacy International. Other international major health and aid agencies represented included World Health Organisation, Médecins Sans Frontiers and Maternity Worldwide. The objective of the meeting was to discuss ways to reduce the mortality rate in emergency maternal, neonatal and child healthcare worldwide. The aim of the symposium was to link all agencies together supportively and take forward this objective. I felt very honoured to be the only non-medical speaker and my remit was to speak on the lines of the importance of staff retention. This is something I am passionate about. I have always said the key to improving Bansang Hospital and reducing mortality is to retain staff. We have done this by providing decent accommodation, motivation, and involvement in decision making. I have ample evidence to prove that this is the correct pathway to lowering the mortality rate. In 1993 we were admitting an average of 2000 children per annum. Over the years as improvements took effect we gradually saw a reduction in mortality rates. By the end of 2007, the first full operational year of the new children's unit the admissions had risen to 5719 children, cared for by the same number of staff, and the mortality rate had dropped to 4.7%. In 1993 this hospital was on the brink of closure, now it is one of the most sought after placements for qualified staff, and receives approximately 800 applicants per year for 50 places at the SEN school. Improving staff morale works on all levels from orderlies to senior nurses. A further meeting is scheduled at the House of Commons for June to continue pushing this initiative forward.

THE NEW FEMALE WARD ~ This was officially opened in November whilst I was there. The ward is seen as a palace by both staff and patients. The final cost was approx £62,000, the increase due to the falling pound, the rising cost of materials and other problems encountered along the way. No longer will our poor female patients have to endure dragging

themselves upstairs to a ward that would have long since been condemned in the UK. The new ward is full of light with white floor and wall tiles up to the big windows and new furniture, showers, toilets and sinks. It is sectioned off into medical, surgical and gynaecological areas also a staff room and treatment room. This magical transformation of the old Children's Ward is all down to you, our dedicated supporters in both the UK and France. You have succeeded in 'making a difference. Thanks must also go again to Jim Wadda for co-ordinating the whole project and coping with every problem with such skill and also the Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund for again supporting and funding much of the furniture.

MIDWIFERY AND SPECIAL CARE BABY UNIT ~ The recent visit by Chris Rospoppa, Community Midwife, Mawsley Surgery, Kettering, and Jeanette Payne, Sister in Charge of SCBU at Kettering General Hospital was a great success. Chris talked about delivery techniques in the labour ward, which the staff were able to put into practice right away. Jeanette's remit was to teach resuscitation, temperature control and care of the sick newborns. They were very impressed by the motivation, skills and professionalism of the staff and SEN students and were heartened by how enthusiastic and committed they were to working in their own country. Jeanette has left them her email address so that they can contact her over any problems that may arise. While in Banjul they met the Minister for Health, Dr Mariatou Jallow, who is very supportive of Bansang. Jeanette is planning to return in November 2009 with her husband Chris. She will continue training in SCBU while Chris implements procedures to organise the medical stores. Bruce Lamford from the Rotary Club of Kettering will accompany us to help with a multitude of practical tasks.

THE BURNS UNIT ~ Nick Brighthouse, President of The Rotary Club of Norwich, which raised over £18,000 last year, writes that the club had applied for a "matching" grant from Rotary International which is the controlling body of Rotary. RI had approved the grant in principle, but the "credit crunch" intervened, and they decided to put a complete freeze on matching grants for those applications still in the pipeline. Norwich was in that position along with many others across the world. So, it has been decided to resubmit the application after 1st August, and just hope that RI will be in a position to honour the spirit of the application. Nick says that whatever the outcome, the £18,000 is safely held in the Charity Account of his Club.

Dr BILL ASKEW ~ Dr Bill returns to Bansang in June 2009 to continue training staff in the protocols of the Malnutrition Programme, which I am delighted to report, is running very successfully. Malnourished children need constant long-term care and the staff has risen to this new nursing skill with determination and love. Dr Bill's remit also involves training the staff in the care of burns patients. Hartmann, the oldest dressings company in the UK are helping us by heavily subsidizing the specialist dressings which allow faster healing and less pain for the patient. Statistics for 2008 show that not one patient has died from burns which is quite remarkable. Dr Bill will also be assessing the needs in other departments and brushing up on his obstetric skills.

ORLINGBURY BROWNIES ~ Thank you for sponsoring a family desperately in need. The family consists of mother Sarjou Samureh who is blind, her daughters Isatou 11 Kumba 9, and Rhoey 7 and son Musa who is 5 years old. They were left destitute when their father, a well digger, fell into a well and drowned. There are no state benefits in The Gambia; the only way to survive is to beg. Isatou acts as her mother's eyes, which means she is unable to attend school. The other two girls are bright children and thanks to the Brownies support of £25 per month are now in regular education and there is a little money left for food and the most basic of needs. The Brownies have changed the lives of this family and in a letter dictated by Sarjou she expresses how happy she is that her children no longer have to wear rags, and have enough food to get by.

BARCLAYCARD ~ Steve Clist and Stewart Robinson went out again in February to continue upgrading the computers. Demba, who came to the UK in April 2008, to be fitted with a new leg, has been trained to build and maintain the network in the hospital. Again our thanks to the Barclaycard team without whom there would be no computer systems in the hospital, the SEN school, the high school, the police stations, the Red Cross, and many other places.

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, NEC
Approximately 24,000 Rotarians from around the world are expected to attend. The Rotary Club of Kettering applied for a stand in the Hall of Friendship, and were delighted when they heard they had been successful. I shall be manning the stand helped by a number of friends. Our aim is to generate enough interest to enable us to provide a new desperately needed second operating theatre. I must offer special thanks to John Miles of the Rotary Club of Kettering for his sterling work in producing a new information pamphlet for the occasion.

ONGOING WORK ~ this continues in the labour and maternity wards. The windows will be enlarged with new aluminium frames and mosquito screens. New electrics and plumbing will be installed. This work will cost approximately £11,000. The outer walls of the old corridor connecting the two wards are constructed of open breeze block. These will be replaced and windows put in to provide more light. As this is also where the patient's families sleep it will offer a safer more mosquito free environment. Childhealth Advocacy International

(www.caiuk.org) is continuing to train traditional birth attendants in the outlying villages to ensure that problems are now recognised in early pregnancy/labour. As 1 in 17 mothers die during pregnancy and childbirth often leaving a family orphaned and destitute, we wholeheartedly support this initiative. For our part we need to upgrade our facilities for the increasing numbers of women expected to come into the hospital with early diagnosed problems.

THE TASK FORCE ~ The Task Force was originally set up by Michael Costello, a business psychologist with the Dove Nest Group. The aim was to identify key members of staff with leadership qualities who would volunteer to form a committee to promote staff motivation, retention, loyalty, and morale through a series of initiatives including inter-departmental competitions, leisure facilities and other incentives. This has really been embraced enthusiastically by all the staff and the committee have now introduced a staff counsellor.

BOB PARFITT ~ Wellingborough Rotarian and invaluable helper and supporter for many years. Bob accompanied me to the hospital in May. He was so impressed by the difference being made by the Task Force that he has offered to provide them with supplies of toiletries, gifts and other items as prizes to keep the momentum going. Bob also contributes medical supplies and continues his admirable support of the local schools.

THE TRUCK ~ This has been off the road for over 2 months in need of new tyres, which are not readily available in The Gambia. We eventually found a set, which we had to purchase at a highly inflated price. However, Lloyd Barratt and Bruce Lamford once again came to our rescue by going to an auction and successfully bidding for a quantity of tyres and spare parts. These will be shipped out in our next container hopefully arriving in time for Bruce to service the truck during his visit in November.

A special thanks to Richard Harvey our Treasurer, Trustee and friend, for keeping everything on track, loading containers when needed, and for putting up with me arriving in the middle of his dinner, yet again! He is now entering his 18th year of helping The Bansang Hospital Appeal.

Once again it falls upon me to offer my sincere thanks to all of you for your invaluable support. Without it we would not be in the position today where the hospital has become the focal point of hope for so many. We are hoping that what we have achieved at Bansang will help to shape a blueprint for other agencies working in sub-Saharan Africa. This is an achievement which would not have been possible without you, our loyal supporters and friends.

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