

# I HAVE FAMILY THERE

If someone had asked Upper St. Clair resident Janet Elders and Kathy Surma why in the world would they want to go on another mission trip to Nyadire, Zimbabwe, their immediate answer would be, "I just have to go. I have family there."

## What family?

Janet's story began in 2006 on the first volunteer in mission trip to the United Methodist Mission in Nyadire. When her team returned, they were so attached to the people, the group decided to organize into THE NYADIRE CONNECTION (TNC.) Their goal is to keep services and programs operational at the Nyadire mission in Zimbabwe during these difficult times of unemployment, disease, and economic and political chaos.

The mission is much like a college campus with a 240-bed hospital, nursing school, school system for 1,200 students, preschool through high school, orphanage, teachers' college, church, and farm. These programs serve a wide rural population. TNC helps to keep a doctor at the hospital; sends medications, medical supplies, and containers of essential items, seeks sponsors for the orphanage and orphans in neighboring schools and rural pastors, and performs needed services when mission teams visit.

Janet's subsequent mission trips mirror how The Nyadire Connection has supported the mission over these past five years. The work is based on the idea of "working as partners, through "chabadza," a Shona

word meaning "to stop and help someone already at work." Another way of explaining the concept is "community spirit."

The 2006 team members noted there were no pharmaceuticals on the shelves in the hospital, the children of the Home of Hope Orphanage (HOH) needed everything, and the orphanage building and program begged for attention. Much of the hospital's equipment (autoclave, x-ray, and ultrasound) needed repair, fuel was scarce, and the remote clinics were in poor condition. The team got the feeling of "chabadza" when they constructed separate rooms in the student nurses' dormitory alongside the Nyadire tradesmen.

When Janet returned to Nyadire the following summer, the pharmacy shelves were filled, and a new doctor with a "top up" salary to ensure his stay was installed at the hospital, thanks to The Nyadire Connection. The doctor, Kasombo Tshiani, shared with Janet the first priority of his Material Management Plan – a secure storage room – and asked her to bring the proposal back to Pittsburgh and TNC. The proposed room in the hospital was vast. Janet recalls the only thing in the room at that time were mattresses on the floor when men slept. The men worked by day to pay



their hospital bills by making bricks. Janet was determined to see that storeroom become a reality.

The Nyadire Connection considered the proposal and agreed that the pharmaceuticals sent to Nyadire twice a year needed proper storage. So did the ocean containers sent by TNC and Brothers' Brother filled with hospital and medical supplies and equipment, tires, books, bicycles,

The primary task of the April 2010 mission team was to distribute the boxes and equipment from the TNC container now housed in the hospital storeroom to the various departments and programs on the mission. The project involved the work of many people with the help of wheelbarrows, oxcarts and vehicles. Forty-five reconditioned computers purchased from Goodwill Industries were transported to the schools and programs all

*"The children are my best memory.  
I can't stop thinking of them.  
I want to be part of their lives."*

clothing, textbooks, batteries, early childhood materials, and other essentials. But it would take two years to complete the project.

over the mission. Five found their way to a room near the hospital that would become the Internet café. Team member Dave Sevick is an Apple consultant who volunteers his expertise at Goodwill Industries to reconditioned Apple computers. Dave was able to set up all the computers despite the fact the power was off 70% of the time. He trained three persons on the workings of the computers in the Internet café and developed a business plan for their use.



In October 2009, at the time when the TNC trips to Nyadire were being scheduled for 2010, Janet realized that the TNC container that left Pittsburgh in November 2009 would be in Nyadire by April 2010 - the time of the first mission trip in 2010. Janet exclaimed, "I just had to make one more trip. I had to see that storage room finished."

Think of the satisfaction and "chabadza" on Janet's face when she viewed the hospital storeroom. It was now divided into seven units for categories of materials, including maintenance supplies, hospital supplies, non-perishable food, hospital equipment, and office supplies, etc. The whole system was locked with an attendant on duty.

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