

*Maternal Life International
326A S. Jackson St.
Butte, Montana, USA 59701*



*www.mlionline.org
Phone/Fax: (406)-782-1719
usacares@in-tch.com*

News From Maternal Life International

MLI News Contact:
Cort Freeman, Executive Director

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Maternal Life Expands to Ethiopia

Butte, MT – Maternal Life International (MLI), a nonprofit AIDS prevention and care organization based in Butte that works to improve health care in developing countries, said it will travel to Ethiopia Thursday to begin its HIV/AIDS prevention programs in this East Africa country.

MLI will present a training workshop for its “The Faithful House” program to community- and parish-based facilitators in Addis Ababa from June 30 to July 6. The program was developed in 2005 by MLI in collaboration with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Baltimore, as a means of providing community based education and support for behaviors and choices that minimize HIV risk.

“The Faithful House was successfully piloted in Uganda in the spring of 2006, was introduced to Rwanda and Nigeria later that year, and now is being expanded to Ethiopia,” said Dr. George Mulcaire-Jones, MLI’s Medical Director. He will lead the training team that includes facilitators from Maternal Life Uganda, an MLI affiliate, and members of CRS’s HIV technical team in Ethiopia and the U.S.

“The Faithful House builds strong marriages by helping couples focus on the four pillars of a stable marriage: love, faithfulness, respect and communication. The pillars support the “house,” or the marital relationship, and reference is made to other values such as gender equity that complete the structure,” he added.

MLI develops, implements and promotes programs for AIDS prevention and care and maternal health services, but the organization does not run the programs

in-country. "That is done locally by the people trained during our workshops, and in the case of Faithful House they will coordinate with CRS' in-country staff for monitoring and evaluation," Mulcaire-Jones said.

"Building strong marriages is a good way to promote faithfulness among couples and abstinence in their children as a way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS," he continued. "The African AIDS pandemic is a huge financial and medical challenge for these underdeveloped countries, and we are just one part of the solution."

Commenting on the experience of the Uganda Faithful House program, Fr. Tom McDonald, a Patrician Missionary, said that he has worked in Africa for many years in Sudan, Kenya and Uganda and had never seen husbands helping their wives with domestic work. "After the Faithful House marriage workshops in different places, I have seen husbands working together with wives," he added. "I believe if we're to fight against HIV/AIDS, poverty and domestic violence much emphasis should be put on husband and wife relationship."

MLI also is sponsoring a soccer camp for parish youth leaders who are involved in the Youth Community Service, a multi-denominational group of young people who are mobilized to provide education and support for abstinence and healthy choices in youth.

The soccer camp will be directed by Dr. Mulcaire-Jones' son, John, a Butte High graduate who will be attending Gonzaga University this fall. The soccer camp has been made possible through individual Butte donations of cash and equipment, such as nets and balls, and the donation of soccer jerseys by Butte Orthopedics.

"A youth track is very important to African families," Dr. Mulcaire-Jones said. "Young adults interacting with each other build robust bonds within a community and they can become an important element of a successful program to build strong marriages."

With the addition of Ethiopia, MLI now has programs in seven African countries and continues its decade-long commitment to health and human development based upon respect for the life and dignity of the person. CRS is the official international relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic community. Under the direction of the National Council of Catholic Bishops, CRS works through local offices and an extensive network of partners on five continents and in 98 countries.