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## News From Maternal Life International

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### Maternal Life International Travels to South Africa

#### *Organization's Programs Target Maternal Deaths and the AIDS Crisis*

BUTTE, Mont - Maternal Life International (MLI), a Butte-based nonprofit organization that provides innovative programs in maternal health services and in AIDS prevention and care, announced today it will travel to South Africa in April to discuss expanding key programs.

"We will cover four main topics with health care professionals and relief organizations aimed at reducing the number of maternal deaths and improving the delivery of AIDS assistance in Africa," said Dr. George Mulcaire-Jones, MLI's president and medical director.

For example, in Nigeria the lifetime risk of a woman dying in pregnancy and childbirth is one in 13. In the United States the same risk is one in 7,500. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, 58 percent of those who are HIV positive are women, mainly of reproductive age. And in the KwaZulu-Natal region near Durban, South Africa, 36.5 percent of pregnant women are HIV positive.

Mulcaire-Jones said the four areas of interest include:

- Presentation of MLI's maternal health program "Safe Passages: Emergency Obstetrical Care in a Time of AIDS" to regional health care professionals and the staff of St. Mary's Hospital, Mariannahill -- a center of excellence in HIV care near Durban. The program's focus is to prevent maternal deaths and mother-to-child transmission of AIDS, especially in rural areas.

"In many places in rural Africa, women still give birth in conditions that have changed little in 2,000 years," Mulcaire-Jones said. "They may labor in a hut that has no running water, no electricity, no sterile supplies and no trained maternal health care provider. If something goes wrong during childbirth -- bleeding, infection or obstructed labor -- there is little that can be done. Our aim is a safe delivery for every woman."

- At St. Mary's Hospital, MLI will discuss developing a Parish Nurse Training Center of Excellence for the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

“The training center would build on our successful three-year Swaziland Parish Nurse Program, the first of its kind in Africa,” Mulcaire-Jones said. “Parish Nurses and their assistants work with priests and ministers, delivering care and medications to the sick in their homes, mainly rural homesteads. This type of care has multiple benefits to patients and their families, combining the practical and the spiritual dimensions of health care,” he said.

The United Nations and Yale University Medical School have acknowledged the excellent results of Maternal Life’s parish nurse program, citing, among other advantages, improving a community’s awareness of AIDS and alleviating poverty. The parish nurse program was developed through a partnership that included MLI, Bristol-Myers Squibb Inc., and eventually eight Christian denominations in Swaziland.

- In Johannesburg, MLI will attend the African Family Life Federation’s (AFLF) biennial conference that brings together some 100 African experts and others on topics of youth HIV/AIDS prevention, behavior change, and natural family planning.

“We will be delivering a general session paper on MLI’s patented Bead System of Fertility Awareness, which allows women to track the fertile and infertile phases of their menstrual cycles by observing physical changes that are matched and tracked with different colored beads which are placed on a string,” Mulcaire-Jones said. “Users of the bead system understand those times when conception is likely to occur and those times when it is not -- providing a natural way to achieve child spacing, while increasing respect for women and improving couples’ communication,” he said.

- While at the AFLF conference, MLI also will give a workshop on its “Circles of Life” behavior change program that is used in Uganda and Malawi to promote abstinence before marriage, faithfulness in marriage, and fertility awareness.

“Overall, our programs are gaining recognition, and, as we reach out to wider audiences, Maternal Life increasingly will be regarded as a vital link in the overall effort to reduce maternal deaths and to eliminate new HIV infections.”

Maternal Life International (MLI) is a nonprofit, private voluntary organization dedicated to providing safe, practical, life-affirming, and innovative programs in AIDS prevention and care and in maternal health services, mainly to prevent women from dying during childbirth. The organization integrates its programs as needed and partners with government, private voluntary organizations, and community- and faith-based groups for maximum results. MLI predicates health care development upon respect for the life and dignity of the human person.