

# AN OPEN LETTER TO CWL MEMBERS

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Buy-A-Net Malaria Prevention Group



Summer is over and so is the annoyance that mosquitoes bring. Unlike our brothers and sisters in Africa, we go about our daily lives without the threat of losing a child to a mosquito bite. In Africa, the bite of a mosquito is deadly because it causes malaria.

I travelled to Uganda in 2004 and met many smiling men, women and children who showered me with warmth and affection. One would never know the crippling effects that malaria had on them.

My introduction to malaria was blunt, shocking and life changing. I was in Uganda for two days. On a boat trip across Lake Victoria, I came across a young boy in the tall grass on the shoreline in a malaria-induced convulsion. His name was David and he was eight years old. I learned that malaria kills many children and cripples entire families. For the first time in my career as a registered nurse, I felt completely helpless in the face of a preventable and treatable disease.

David and all the children like him spur me on to save lives from malaria through Buy-A-Net Malaria Prevention Group ([www.buyanet.ca](http://www.buyanet.ca)). I think of them often when I tuck my own four children into bed at night, because it's at night when children are most vulnerable. Malaria is spread through the bite of an infected female, *Anopheles* mosquito, which bites between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m.

Malaria is the most significant global health threat of our time. It affects up to 500 million people worldwide and every year is responsible for over a million deaths. Ninety percent of those deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa. Pregnant women and children under five are particularly vulnerable to this devastating disease. In Africa, a child is lost every 30 seconds to malaria.

Here at home, we are living through a pandemic with the H1N1 virus. I remember learning about the death of the young boy in Toronto and feeling so much sadness and sorrow for his family. The incidence of a death like this in Canada is extremely low, and because of this, I am reminded how

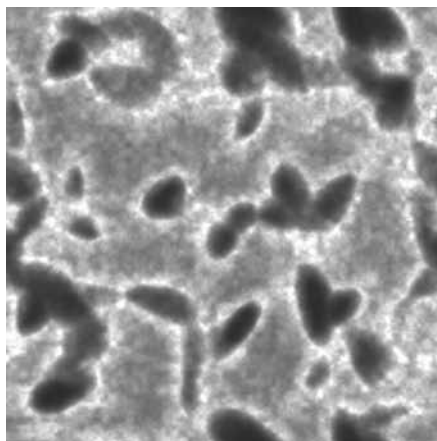
fortunate we are to live with great abundance and resources. Imagine the horror if a child died every 30 seconds in Canada from a preventable disease. This is the reality for our brothers and sisters in Africa.

Malaria is not just a health crisis; it also poses a crushing burden on the productivity and potential of nations. Sadly, malaria costs African nations up to \$12 billion each year in health care, lost productivity, trade and tourism. Unhealthy, less productive people generate less income, which is needed to lift them out of poverty. Freedom from malaria allows children to go to school to hopefully become successful and give back to their communities, and men and women can go to work and provide for their families.

With all the needs worldwide, why should Canadians care about malaria? Because malaria is a highly preventable, 100% treatable disease that can be stopped for the cost of \$6.00. Because lives can be saved right now with the use of bed nets. Because the future of the next generation who are the hope of Africa can be protected. Bed nets not only save lives but they provide hope in the struggle against poverty.

Established in 2004 as Canada's first citizen-driven initiative aimed at saving lives from malaria, Buy-A-Net brings hope. It is part of a growing global movement to fight the disease. Coordination worldwide and grassroots efforts are helping to provide bed nets and drug therapies along with the education so desperately needed to fight malaria. With the mantra - \$6 Bucks, Buy-A-Net, Save a Life - bed nets are the most efficient and cost effective way in which to prevent malaria.

This year is an important milestone for the fight against malaria as the United Nations (UN) has declared that all those who are in need of a bed net have one by the end of 2010. Estimates vary but it is generally accepted that to achieve this goal, 250 million bed nets are needed. One of the 6<sup>th</sup> UN Millennium Development Goal targets is to "have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases". Universal bed net coverage by the end of 2010 will certainly help to achieve this very important goal.



On behalf of all those affected by malaria, as well as the Buy-A-Net board of directors, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to CWL parish councils across Canada for their support. Since the introduction of the lifesaving efforts of Buy-A-Net to the League in 2007, women have opened their hearts and provided over 8,000 bed nets to those in need. These lifesaving gifts have been received by the poor in Uganda, which has the highest malaria burden in Africa. Through distribution by Ugandan community-based partners, including many within the parishes of Bishop Matthias Ssekamaanya, of Lugazi, Father Emmanuel in Kayunga, and Father Peter Paul Semakula in Masaka, Buy-A-Net is having success. The incidence of malaria has been reduced by as high as 95% in recipient villages.

To date, Buy-A-Net has provided over 70,000 bed nets and 25,000 courses of anti-malaria medicines. In addition, Buy-A-

Net's program model fully embraces the vital importance of education at the community level if gains are to be made in the war on malaria. Education and partnerships form the foundation of a successful malaria-fighting program model. Knowledge and community partnerships build sustainability at the local level where it counts the most. Communities are empowered, ownership of health occurs, maternal health improves, lives are saved and health systems are strengthened.

The solution is simple and the rewards are immense. Thank you for your past support. If you wish to receive more information, please contact me at Buy-A-Net Malaria Prevention Group, P.O. Box 1063, Kingston, ON K7L 4Y5. Telephone (613) 542-1264. Fax: (613) 766-1449.

PS: By the time you finished this article, four children will have died from malaria. †

## ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

New Hazelton, British Columbia



During a mass on May 24<sup>th</sup> for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Mary Parish Council, a stained-glass window of the Holy Family was dedicated in honour of past members, priests, sisters, lay-apostles, and other men and women who have contributed to building up the parish over the years. The design and colour of the window was chosen by local members.

The council has dwindled over the years, but even with a much smaller group of active members, they still try to support individuals, families and our various communities with proceeds from their annual spring Mayfair.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

### Congratulations to Parish Councils Celebrating Anniversaries

#### 80 years

St. John the Evangelist, Marquis, Saskatchewan

#### 75 years

Timmins Diocesan Council, Ontario

#### 50 years

Holy Cross, Burnaby, British Columbia

St. John Vianney, Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia

St. Raphael, Burlington, Ontario

St. Rita, North Bay, Ontario

St. Thomas the Apostle, Red Bank, New Brunswick

Should your council wish to be listed as having celebrated a significant anniversary, please send your request in writing to national office. Notices will be placed in the issue directly following the anniversary date.



*For God and Canada*