

# Living Hope

## Oluchi The Great Fighter

**O**luchi is a thirteen year old girl whom Dr. Okere met during HIMM mission 2005 to Nigeria. "I still remember the tears in her mother's eyes when she was explaining to me the low self esteem, pain and suffering Oluchi was going through because of her tumor", said Dr. Okere. When Oluchi was 8 years old, an attempt to resect the tumor at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Enugu was unsuccessful. The situation became hopeless for Oluchi and her parents until they came to the HIMM 2005 mission site and met Dr. Okere and his team. HIMM published Oluchi's case on its website and continued to pray for a miracle to save her. "My desire was for God to use me to help Oluchi", said Dr. Okere.

Oluchi's miracle began when Cori Stern from The Next Right Thing, a non-profit organization dedicated to linking people in medical need with doctors willing to help, read about Oluchi on HIMM's website. Cori contacted Dr. Okere and expressed her organization's desire to help Oluchi by finding a hospital in the United States that will treat her for free. In collaboration with Tami Shobe of the Children's Medical Mission West, the organization secured Dr Marx of Miller School of Medicine to handle the case.

Dr Robert E. Marx is an outstanding Oral Maxillary Surgeon. He is a Professor and the Chief of Surgery at the Miller School of Medicine, Miami Florida. Dr Marx did not only contribute his skill towards the case, he also paid the bill to Jackson South Community Hospital, Miami, where the surgery was performed. All other physicians involved in handling Oluchi's case – the anesthesiologist, pathologist, laboratory, diagnostic imaging and radiology – waived their fees for Oluchi's surgery.



13-year-old Oluchi on her first visit to the HIMM clinic



8-year-old Oluchi after her first surgical attempt.

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HIMM took care of all necessary local Nigerian arrangements including securing a passport for Oluchi, performing local laboratory tests and purchasing a round trip flight ticket from Nigeria to Miami.

The surgery was successful and Oluchi returned to Nigeria to meet her family. Her father, who waited anxiously for her to arrive at the airport terminal had this to say when he saw her, "I saw Oluchi, with a new face. She looked more confident, not timid ...Thank you." Oluchi will be returning to America in two years for facial reconstruction. Details about this will be published in due time.

HIMM would like to extend special thanks, on behalf of Oluchi's family, to all the non-profit organizations that came together to put a smile on their daughter's face. We all also give special thanks to Irsia Delgado,

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## President's Message ...



**Chief Dr. Kennedy K. Okere**

Last year our theme for mission 2005 was "Bringing Hope to the Hopeless". We featured Chigozie Okoye, a young child with a hole in his heart, whom, with the help of the Deborah Heart Foundation, HIMM was able to bring down to the United States from Nigeria for surgery. HIMM reported in its last newsletter that the surgery was successful. Today the young boy is currently enjoying a healthy life, just like his peers.

Our theme for mission 2006 was Bringing Smiles to Sad Faces. What is the difference between bringing hope and making people smile? In bringing hope to the hopeless, HIMM has continued to fulfill its ministry, providing free medical care to the people in rural Nigeria, year after year. By doing

this, the people are encouraged and hopeful knowing we will return and carry out what God has set apart for us to do. Our mission has also been well appreciated and recognized by the Nigerian Government and the traditional Rulers of Imo State, Nigeria. The Nigerian Ambassador to USA, Prof George Obiozor, in his congratulatory message to HIMM said, 'May I congratulate you on the noble achievement of your team. Appropriate Nigerian Authorities have been informed of the wonderful achievement your team has made and is still making in the area of rural health development in Nigeria. Once again, I congratulate you and wish you continuous service to our dear country.' We pray that we continue to do more and continue to bring hope.

In bringing smiles to sad faces, due to our lack of equipment and an appropriate facility to perform some surgical procedures, we come across cases which we are not able to handle during our mission trip. All we can do is find partners in the United States who will collaborate with us and take on these cases at minimum cost to HIMM. You will read about a case of "Oluchi the great fighter", which is our feature story in this issue of our newsletter.

HIMM has faced a lot of challenges in providing free medical care to rural areas. Despite that we have been blessed to accomplish more than we hoped. In six years we have provided care to more than ten thousand people in Nigeria. We have been involved in the financial sponsorship of major surgical procedures in Nigeria and the United States, assisting kids with major heart diseases, cancer and other ailments to receive surgical and medical care for free in the United States; kids from families who otherwise could not afford medical care. Our biggest challenge was to build an 8-bed hospital in Ihiaigwa, Owerri West LGA; our greatest success was to complete it.

In mission 2006 we were privileged to visit Ezioibodo, Ihiaigwa, Umuguma, Nekede and Umuoye-Imerienwe in Imo State. We were also able visit Ikot-Ambang in Akwa Ibom State for the first time. We saw approximately 2,000 patients in two weeks and treated common ailments such as malaria, arthritis, typhoid, open wounds, tumors of assorted types and repair minor lacerations. All missionaries were able to adjust to the very warm temperature and accomplish a lot. They all look forward to HIMM's next mission.

We can hardly do much without God and our partners. We are grateful to all individuals and industries that have contributed financially to our mission. We give special thanks to Takeda Pharmaceutical Industry for their donation and continuous support, Southwest Community Church, Savannah Georgia for their prayers and financial support, Candler and St Josephs Hospital, Memorial Health University Medical Center, Savannah, Georgia, Rotary Club of Savannah (District 6920), Mezie Ihiaigwa Association, USA , Marsh Point Elementary School, Savannah, Georgia, Americares and Map International.

**High Chief Kennedy Kelechi Okere, MD  
President**

## Memorial Health Establishes Sister Hospital Relationship with Horizon Medical Center

Memorial Health University Medical Center (MHUMC), Savannah, Georgia has initiated the process of establishing a Sister Hospital relationship with Horizon Medical Center (HMC), located in Ihiagwa town, Imo State, Nigeria. Mr. Bob Calvin, President and CEO of MHUMC said this in his speech during the National Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Award and Dedication day celebration held at Memorial Health on May 19, 2006. This celebration was held to honor the EMS workers who work hard daily to ensure that people get to the hospital in record time during emergency situation.



MedStar One Ambulance donated to HMC

Mr. Bob Calvin recognized the EMS employees as heroes during the celebration. In his speech, Mr. Calvin also recognized Dr. Kennedy Okere as a hero for providing humanitarian services to people in need; for using his medical knowledge effectively and efficiently not only in the United States, but also in a third world country to provide world class health care. Mr. Colvin also expressed his desire that the sister hospital relationship provide educational opportunities for resident physicians, medical students and nurses from Memorial Health University Medical Center in tropical medicine and rural health care. This desire has been one of the long-term objectives HIMM has documented as a goal the organization must achieve. The plan was to complete HMC and then begin working on curriculum which provides this opportunity. We are excited that our goal is on its way to being achieved.

In further gesture of good will, to support HMC and to help the people of Nigeria, Memorial Hospital donated a fully equipped ambulance to HIMM. Dr. Kennedy Okere, in his thank you speech to MHUMC, said that the ambulance is one of the most important pieces of equipment needed in the new center; HIMM is very grateful for the donation. Memorial Hospital is helping people feel better globally. This kind gesture is love across the Atlantic.

Dr Kennedy Okere completed his residency program in Family Medicine at Memorial Health University Medical Center, and then worked at the Curtis V. Cooper Health Center in Savannah, GA. He later returned to Memorial Family Practice Center as a Faculty member in the Residency Program.

The Memorial EMS team pledged to go with Dr. Okere on a mission to train HMC personnel on how to use the ambulance in emergency resuscitation.



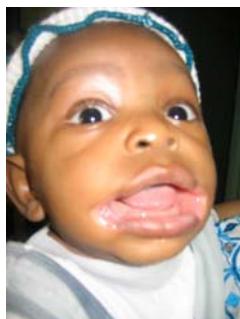
From the left: Mr. Bob Colvin, CEO and President MHMUC; Lolo Mrs. Leslie Okere and Chief Dr. Kennedy Okere.



Memorial Health EMS Team

## HIMM Partners with Onabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital Cleft Lip/Palate Program

The incidence of cleft palate and lip in Nigeria appears to be low because cases in the rural areas are underreported. Of the 32% of cleft palate and lip reported, only 1% is repaired in Imo State, Nigeria due to lack of awareness that this condition can be repaired and due to poverty. Currently Onabisi Onabanjo University Teaching Hospital (OOUTH) in Ogun State, Nigeria repairs cleft lip and cleft palate for a cost of two hundred and twenty dollars (\$220.00). Dr. Yinka Olawoye – one of the plastic surgeons at OOUTH – shared a testimony, with Dr. Okere, of a young boy with the cleft lip and palate condition. This young boy was from a poor home in Ogun State and in his case, his mother was aware that this condition could be fixed. She travelled to the teaching hospital a couple of times every year to see if she could get a surgeon to repair her child's face. For two years, she had to go home disappointed because she did not have the funds to pay for the surgery. "This was quite touching to me; I figured that for that amount, HIMM could change the life of a young kid and bring hope to a family. I decided to pay for the surgery" said Dr Okere. In the United States this congenital anomaly is repaired within 6 months of birth.



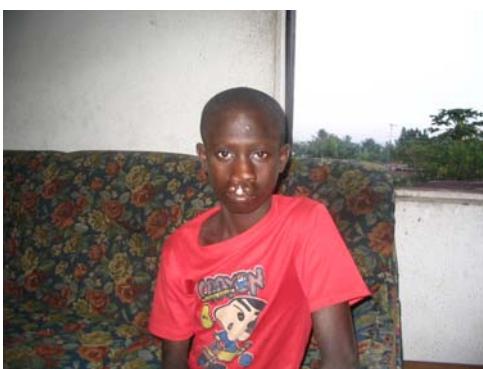
Cleft  
Lip—  
Pre-Op



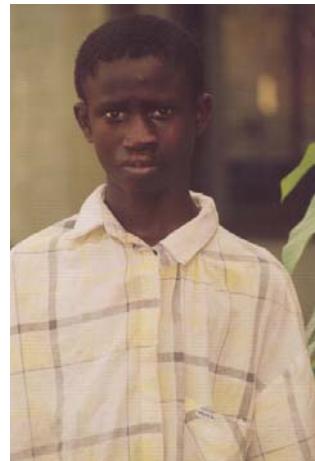
Cleft Lip—Post Op

After the young boy's successful surgery, HIMM decided to partner with the OOUTH so that more of these surgeries can be performed. Our goal is to sponsor about thirty surgeries in a year. We decided to spread the word and send agents to look for kids who were born with this condition. We found Onyeamuche Chiedo.

Onyeamuche Chiedo is a 13 year old boy from Obinze in Imo State. He and his mother traveled for 8 hours from their home in Imo State to Ogun State to repair his cleft lip and palate under the HIMM sponsored program. Onyeamuche had been lonely and socially withdrawn while growing up because of his cleft palate and lip. Other kids in his village and school would laugh or tease him and this affected his performance at school. After the surgery, when Onyeamuche and his mother returned home, the villagers gathered, beating drums and singing, to rejoice over his new physical look. Onyeamuche has begun to feel more confident in himself; he now looks right at people when talking to them instead of trying to hide his face. Onyeamuche and his mother expressed their appreciation to HIMM.



Chiedo at the mission site before his operation



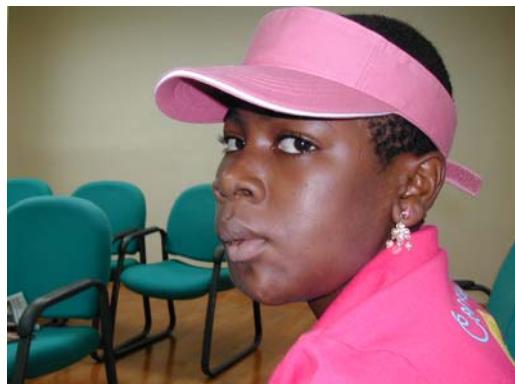
Chiedo after  
the operation



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Oluchi's host mother, and her friend Anna Tejeda. These two wonderful women offered their home to Oluchi through out her stay and they took good care of her. They showed Oluchi love and affection like Oluchi was family, they bought clothes for her and comforted her in an environment she was not used to. Mrs Salgado said, "We have too much in life and we have to share what God has given us." We say thank you Irsia and Anna, you are very special in our hearts. You demonstrated true love and care which many of us need to learn.

## God Bless You All!



Oluchi Post Surgery

From the left: Dr Robert E. Marx and Oluchi



Irsia and Oluchi Smiling



From the left: Anna Tejeda, Irsia Salgado, Oluchi

## HIMM Mission 2006: Bringing Smiles to Sad Faces

### HIMM Visits Akwa Ibom State

Though the theme for HIMM's mission this year was "Bringing Smiles to Sad Faces", HIMM has been able to continually execute it's theme of three missions past which was "Doing More and More". We started out visiting only one and then two towns in Imo State, next we expanded out to visiting an entire Local Government Area (LGA; also known as a county in the US) within the state. We further expanded our mission to include two additional LGA in Imo State. This year HIMM was able to expand out to an area outside of Imo State and visit another state. HIMM visited Ikot-Ambang in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State of Southern Nigeria. Akwa Ibom is the home state of one of our missionaries who has been with us for 4 years, our pharmacist Dr. Owoidogho Ukpong, and Ikot-Ambang is his home town.

The people of Ikot-Ambang in Ibiono Ibom Local government Area of Akwa Ibom state, the commissioners for Information and Health were there to welcome us. With joy the women displayed their special traditional dance.



**Ikot-Ambang Women Entertaining**

The mission began with the missionary team splitting up into two; one team worked at the mission site while the other team performed the olden day method of visiting patients who couldn't make it to the clinic due to ill health and other extreme circumstances.



**Dr. Izuegbu, a patient and Dr. Okere**

Dr John Izuegbu, one of HIMM's 2006 missionaries and an official of the organization found it interesting for himself to return to this old house call method carried out by Doctors many years ago in order to treat patients. HIMM was able to help 600 patients at Ikot-Ambang during its two day visit. Diabetes and hypertension were the two major diseases of concern. Malaria was also common with the chloroquine resistant type prominent.



## Rotary Club of Savannah Making A Difference

The Rotary Club of Savannah (District 6029), led by Dr. Bob Ashley, the Rotary Club President, has donated medical equipment worth \$250,000 to equip the Horizon Medical Center in Imo State, Nigeria.

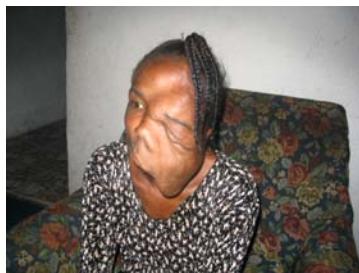
We are indeed grateful for all God is doing with HIMM especially through our generous donors. Our challenge is to ship the equipment and ambulance to Nigeria, which will cost ten thousand dollars (\$10,000). We seek financial support for this endeavor.

Rotary Club Medical Equipment Transport Van

## Increase in Tumor Cases

Over the past 6 years, HIMM missionaries have battled cases of malaria, arthritis, hypertension, typhoid fever and skin diseases on the mission field. Recently, however, the number of cases of unusual tumors HIMM has seen has been increasing. Although we do not have good studies on the incidence of cancer in Nigeria over the past 6 years, experience in our mission has shown a gradual increase in cases appearing at the mission site over the past 4 years.

Esther Achogbuo is a 28 year old lady from Obinze, Imo State. She has had this facial tumor since she was 2 years old. It started out as a small lump and progressed in size as she grew up. Now the tumor covers the entire left portion of her face, her left eye and causes her skin to sag. Can you help put a smile on this face?



Esther: Left view of her face



Esther: Right view of her face

Golden Awulonu is a 23 year old college student from Umuoye-Imerienwe, Imo State. He has had this tumor growing on his forehead for 15 years. The tumor has worsened to the extent that his right upper and lower extremities are paralyzed. Can you help put a smile on this face?



Golden: Front view of his face

## New Missionaries on Board

HIMM was very opportunated to have five new missionary nurses from the US for Mission 2006. One of the nurses, Ms. Muriel Young got to know Dr. Okere when he rotated at Memorial Health as a medical student. She worked with Dr. Okere again when he returned to Memorial as a Resident Physician; two years after his arrival HIMM was established. Muriel had this to say in July, 2000 during an interview with Savannah Morning Newspaper after HIMM Mission 2000, "It's been a long term dream of mine to go to some area of the world that doesn't have the facilities and see what I can do to help. I always wanted to go to Africa. I know more and more American nurses who are getting more and more involved with mission work. The people are so appreciative of the little things you do – things that you take for granted here."



Suzie Owens and Teresa Hensley



Muriel Young

Finally, Muriel got a chance to realize her dream! "My trip to Nigeria was an experience I will never forget. This mission trip was something I've wanted to do ever since Dr. Okere started the mission six or seven years ago. I've been working as a nurse for 35 years and believe me, I've had some rewarding experiences, but none like the two weeks I spent in Africa. The people were so thankful and full of love and appreciation for what we were doing. God made it possible for me to fulfill my dream and with God's help; I plan to go back again." – Muriel Young.



*"Touching the World with Medicine"*

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**HIMM**

Horizon International Medical Mission, Inc

We Touch the World with Medicine

**Mission Statement:** HIMM is committed to taking action to resolve rural health issues as opposed to giving lectures with no action executed and no plan to take action. It plans to develop a relationship with medical schools and residency programs to create a program that will enable medical students and residents to travel to these rural areas to see patients, work on various health issues and gain experience dealing with tropical medical issues. HIMM plans to work with rural health workers to educate the people on their health issues.

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