



# FOCUS ON COMPASSION

a quarterly newsletter

## A Life Changing Hospice Visit

### NHPCO Staff Member Tours Hospice Ethiopia, Meeting Patients and the “Miracle Workers” Committed to Caring for Them

*In August, Merikokeb Wondafresh, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization’s Website Associate Manager traveled to Ethiopia, her home country, and had an opportunity to visit Hospice Ethiopia. She shared her story with Focus on Compassion.*

This past summer, when I traveled to my home country, Ethiopia, for my sister’s wedding, I decided it was a good opportunity to visit the hospice in Addis Ababa, the capital of my country. My colleagues at FHSSA helped me make the connection with the founder of Hospice Ethiopia and it turned into an experience I will never forget.

*She hugs and kisses everyone. They think she is a miracle.”*

Tsigereda Yisfawossen, picked me up to take me to her hospice. Hospice Ethiopia has a U.S. partner through FHSSA, Caris Hospice in Nashville, Tennessee.

Tsigereda is a nurse with some training in palliative care. She knew about hospice and

decided to open one on her own in 2006. She’s not rich—she’s just a regular person. She rented a house in Addis Ababa and now has 11 beds for patients. Two nurses work with her to care for the patients.

Our trip to the hospice was difficult, the roads are unpaved, so she drives a 4x4 that was donated by someone in America. The roads are so bad that they often



*Hospice Ethiopia founder, Tsigereda Yisfawossen, draws smiles from each of the patients as soon as she enters the room.*

damage her car. She usually parks farther away and walks the rest of the way to the hospice, but even walking is difficult with the holes and muddy puddles.

When we arrived at the hospice she introduced us to all of her patients. When she walks in, everyone is happy to see her. They try to get up to give her a hug, if they can. Some can’t get out of bed. She hugs and kisses everyone. They think she is a miracle.

All of the current patients have cancer, children and adults. With the exception of one patient who was 65 years old, everyone was under 30. One patient is a 16-year-old with a tumor on his back that is so big he must sleep on his stomach.

*continued on page 3*

## Palliative Care in Tanzania Continues to Grow With Dr. Paul Mmbando As One of its Champions

### A Fellowship with the San Diego Hospice's Institute for Palliative Medicine Provides a Leader with an Opportunity to Gain Skills in Training Others.

**W**ith approximately 1.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS and an estimated 20,000 new cases of cancer diagnosed each year, the need for palliative care services in Tanzania is great. Several years ago, FHSSA, along with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT) and the African Palliative Care Association (APCA) sought to address this need through the Continuum of Care for People Living with HIV/AIDS in Tanzania (CHAT), under a grant from PEPFAR. While this grant came to a close last year, efforts to improve access to palliative care continue.

Tanzania's palliative care program is still growing, thanks to champions such as Paul Mmbando, MD. As project manager for the CHAT program, Paul was instrumental in expanding the availability of morphine in his country. His unwavering commitment to improving palliative care services in Tanzania continues in his role as project manager for the palliative care unit for ELCT.

Paul was recently selected as an International Fellow with the San Diego Hospice at the Institute for Palliative Medicine, which involves traveling to the United States six times in three years. As part of his fellowship, he will participate in rotations in palliative medicine and



*Dr. Paul Mmbando speaks with a group of palliative care volunteers in Ndolege, Tanzania.*

be trained as a leader in palliative care so that he may share his knowledge and train others in Tanzania.

*Focus on Compassion* recently asked Paul to share his thoughts on the impact his fellowship will have on palliative care in his country.

“As one of the few palliative care trainers in Tanzania, the skills I have gained from my fellowship have helped me greatly in delivering the right information to trainees with confidence! San Diego Hospice is one place where the types of services provided meet the expected high quality of care. To me, learning from the best is a rare opportunity which will always remind me to be focused on the quality of care despite the huge difference in the available resources in our setting.”

“Most palliative care providers received their first license from Tanzania Food and Drug Authority to prescribe and use morphine last year, but the use is still being masked by the little knowledge, myths and misconceptions among the prescribers and the users. San Diego Hospice provided a wonderful opportunity for me to see the use of morphine at its very best...hence I can help other clinicians in Tanzania to improve their skills and knowledge in the use of this important drug.”

## Life Changing Hospice Visit, *continued from page 1*

The conditions are very rough. They use two small charcoal cookstoves to make all of the meals. I wanted to

*There are signs throughout the hospice about pain. There will be no pain, and no one will suffer.*

buy them a new stove, but Tsigereda told me that the coal for a stove would be too expensive on an ongoing basis, so she prefers to use her cookstoves. Her greatest needs are blankets and bed sheets, they have none to spare.

The rooms are not insulated, so when

it's cold, it's very cold, and when it's hot, it's very hot. They have only one hospital bed, all the rest are just regular beds.

The hospice is always full, when one patient dies, they get a new patient from referrals from two hospitals. Most of the patients don't have a family member in Addis Ababa. They come to the government owned hospital, and are referred to Hospice Ethiopia. If they were to go home, there would be no way for them to get pain medications.



*Two small charcoal cookstoves are used to make all meals for the 11 patients cared for at Hospice Ethiopia.*

There are signs throughout the hospice about pain—that there will be no pain and no one will suffer. Tsigereda used to run out of pain medication, but now the medications are manufactured in Addis Ababa, and at the moment she has no shortage.



*Outside view of Hospice Ethiopia, which cares for 11 patients.*

But she still worries, because there is no regulation. There are not enough doctors trained in palliative medicine. She wants badly to make policy changes to make things better, but it's a lot for her to do—to take care of patients and do all the advocacy work.

She's grateful for the money she gets from her FHSSA partner, Caris Healthcare, and other hospice friends in America. She applied for government funds in Ethiopia but to date has not received any government funding. She hopes to have a bigger place someday, maybe with more land she can build a bigger, better house for her patients.

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*Merikokeb was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She came to the United States 17 years ago with her husband. They have one daughter who is 15. They have traveled back to Ethiopia, eight to 10 times, thanks to the free tickets they get through Delta, her husband's employer.*

## Nursing Scholarships Given to Six African Nurses

### FHSSA Gets Personal Insights from One Recipient

**A**s part of its mission to expand the availability of hospice and palliative care in sub-Saharan Africa, FHSSA, in partnership with the African Palliative Care Association (APCA), created the African Palliative Care Nursing Scholarship in 2010. The goal of the scholarship is to further the knowledge and skill of African nurses in the provision of palliative care, and will support the education and training of 11 nurses over two years.

The scholarship was made possible by a generous donation from an anonymous donor in honor of Kath Defilippi and her many achievements during her career as a nurse in hospice and palliative care in Africa.

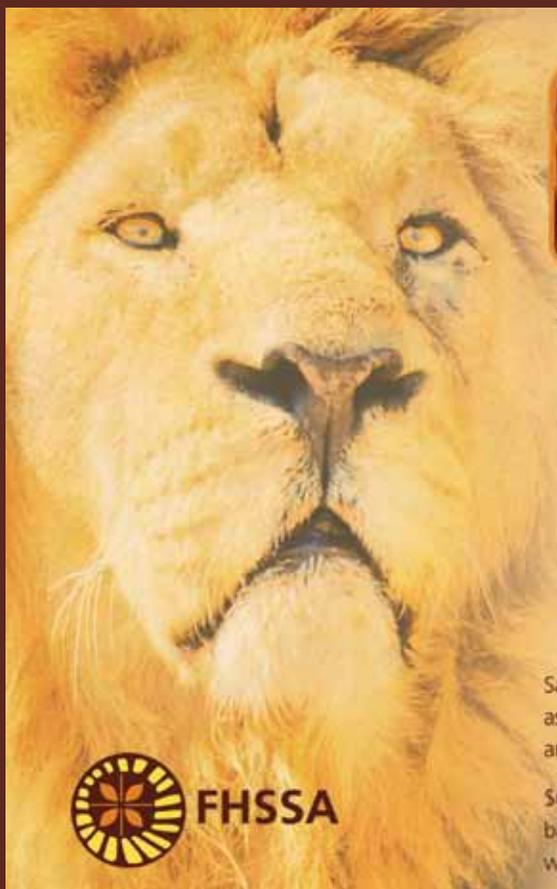
The scholarships were given to two nurses from Cameroon, one from Malawi, one from Nigeria and two from Uganda. Ndikintum George Mbeng, head of the recently formed Cameroon Palliative Care Association, is one of those scholarship recipients. He recently shared his

thoughts with us on the meaning of this opportunity.

“I cannot underestimate how much I have gained from this course in terms of skills and professional development,” he said. “I’ll use this knowledge to foster training, advocacy and mentorship in Cameroon. The knowledge gathered about policy and social development equally places me in a better position to lobby and campaign for development of a national policy towards palliative care.”

FHSSA and APCA continue to track the nurses who received the scholarship and are encouraged by the potential impact it may have on furthering palliative care in Africa. Six to seven nursing scholarships will be awarded in 2012.

**To learn more about supporting this program, contact FHSSA Coordinator, Erinn Nanney at [enanney@fhssa.org](mailto:enanney@fhssa.org) or (703) 647-6684.**





A FOODIES AND FRIENDS EVENT TO BENEFIT FHSSA

**SATURDAY**  
**May 19, 2012, 7:00PM – 10:00PM**

**United States Patent and Trademark Office  
 Madison Building Atrium  
 600 Dulany Street, Alexandria, VA 22314**

garage and street parking; metro accessible; casual dress; cash bar includes wine and specialty cocktail

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Sample the culinary works of amateur chefs as they compete using the secret ingredient and cast your vote for your favorites.

\$60 Admission includes food tasting and ballot for People's Choice Award. Cash bar will include wine and specialty cocktail.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. If you would like more information on becoming a sponsor or a chef, please contact Joy Nguyen at [jnguyen@nationalhospicefoundation.org](mailto:jnguyen@nationalhospicefoundation.org), 703-647-5167 or visit [www.fhssa.org/lionchef2012](http://www.fhssa.org/lionchef2012).

**Thank you for your support!**



**FHSSA**

## “Okuyamba,” A Powerful Glimpse into the Desperate Need for Palliative Care in Uganda, and the Champions Who Provide Care.

“Okuyamba” In Lugandan, the meaning of the word is “help,” making it an appropriate title for a documentary film created by The Center for Hospice Care in South Bend, Indiana with the Notre Dame University Film School, about a common mission shared by palliative care nurses in Uganda.

With exceedingly high incidence of HIV/AIDS and cancer, limited facilities for treatment, little to no access to adequate pain control, hospice or palliative care, it comes as small surprise that the adult life expectancy in Uganda is only 52 years. “Okuyamba,” is an extraordinary film that follows Rose Kiwanuka, the county’s first palliative care nurse and national coordinator for the Palliative Care Association of Uganda, as she travels throughout the country training, supporting and encouraging the nation’s

120 palliative care professionals.

The film offers viewers a glimpse into the harsh realities of living in a poverty-stricken East African country where the majority go a lifetime without seeing a doctor. As the film’s website describes, “from the training of traditional healers in the Buyija Forest to that of nurses and clinical officers at Hospice Africa Uganda, the film explains the interrelationships between traditional and western medicine as well as the manner in which they complement one another in the identification and care of dying patients.”

*Catch a special viewing of Okuyamba at NHPCO’s Management and Leadership Conference. For details, see below.*

## FHSSA Opportunities at the MLC Conference in March

### Learn more about International Partnerships, Network with Existing Partners and African Hospice Leaders

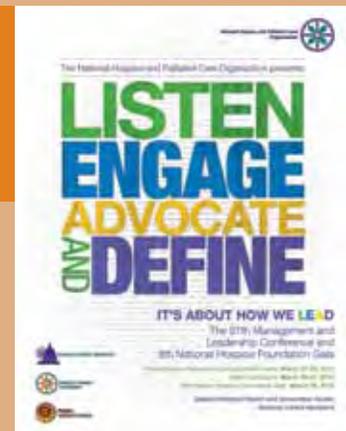
NHPCO’s 27th Management and Leadership Conference has much to offer those interested in FHSSA, international partnerships and the progress being made in furthering the availability of palliative care and hospice services in Africa.

The conference, which runs from **March 27-30** at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center at the National Harbor in Maryland, will feature:

- The FHSSA Breakfast **March 29, 7 a.m.** — an opportunity to meet with other US and African hospice leaders.
  - We will celebrate the successful completion of the “One Cause, Two Continents” Campaign,
  - Announce the winner of the FHSSA Global Partnership Award,
  - Celebrate new program partners and,

- Introduce FHSSA Ambassadors
- Two Sessions focused on international efforts
  - It Takes a Village: Engaging your Local Community through International Outreach **March 31, 10-11:30 a.m.**
  - Four Seasons and PCAZ: Celebrating an International Partnership **March 31, 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.**
- Special viewing of “Okuyamba,” an important documentary film about a common mission shared by a group of palliative care nurses in Uganda **March 29, 3:30-4:30 p.m.**

Don’t forget to visit the FHSSA booth in the Exhibit Hall! Opens **March 29 at 5:30 p.m.** Please check final MLC program for locations.



## “One Cause, Two Continents” Continues to Broaden its Reach

### Ambassadors Help Spread the Word about the Benefits of Partnering

Partnerships have long been considered and remains one of the most valuable FHSSA programs. Partners provide technical assistance, support and friendship. Indeed, partnerships are the core of our mission. They work collaboratively to expand access to hospice and palliative care services in sub-Saharan Africa, a region where the need is great and resources are few. While there has been great success in establishing partnerships, FHSSA recognized last fall that many African hospices were still hoping for a US partner. To invigorate interest among US hospices in becoming a partner, FHSSA launched the One Cause, Two Continents Campaign.

An important component of campaign is the “FHSSA Ambassadors” program. These Ambassadors represent US partner hospices and can speak knowledgably and powerfully about the challenges and opportunities of being a partner.

One such Ambassador, Steve Taylor, spiritual care coordinator with Hospice of Washington County in Hagerstown, Maryland, shared his thoughts on what being an Ambassador means to him. “To be an ambassador of FHSSA to me is to represent a global initiative that I am passionate about: that is offering hospice and palliative care to our dear brothers and sisters in Africa. Being an ambassador with FHSSA is



about communicating the needs and inspiring others to partner to make a global difference in the world by extending hospice care to those who are dying in pain and isolation. I long to foster more partnerships so that more people may be touched and comforted in their journey towards the end of life.”

The partnership campaign has been very successful, drawing new organizations interested in partnering through FHSSA. Following the first month of the campaign, FHSSA staff and Ambassadors followed up with 43 organizations to discuss their options for becoming engaged, and as a result, we now have one new US partner, bringing the total to 95 and six organizations are in the final stages of acquiring board, leadership or health system approval.

To learn more, visit [www.fhssa.org](http://www.fhssa.org) or contact us at [info@fhssa.org](mailto:info@fhssa.org) with any questions.

The Foundation for Hospices in Sub-Saharan Africa is now doing business as FHSSA.



**FHSSA**

*Compassion has no borders*

1731 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

CFC# 11018 • (703) 647-5176

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