

Kristus Center 2005 Annual Report

Highlights

Significant activities of the Kristus Center for Cross Cultural Friendship during 2005 are highlighted below. All activities were consistent with the 3-year Strategic Plan (2004-2007).

Another computer was added to the Distance Learning and Resource Center at Yagaum Lutheran Hospital in Madang Province, Papua New Guinea, bringing the total to three computers with related software and peripherals. Air conditioning was installed in the center to ensure a climate controlled environment for the comfort of the students and to minimize adverse effects on the computers due to dust and humidity. A hard-wood counter top and wood shelving was added in the center, and office chairs purchased to assist with computer-learning ergonomics. Security protocols of equipment and other property housed at the Yagaum Distance Learning and Resource Center were reviewed and clarified, and student log-in sheets and usage-records initiated. These reports are provided monthly by Yagaum Hospital staff to Dr. Duane Saari, the overall coordinator of the Learning and Resource Center project.

Thomas Adiguma, the Kristus Center IT consultant and trainer at Yagaum Hospital, continued to provide formalized training to selected Yagaum nursing and outreach staff. Training included basic computer, word processing, internet, and e-mailing skills and other professional development training. Training was supported by volunteers in the US via the Kristus Center web site and also a field visit to Yagaum by Kristus volunteers during July and August. During the site visit, an evaluation of the project was also completed; problem areas and corrective actions were identified and discussed with hospital staff to ensure the continued success of the project. Specifically, infrastructure development continues to be an on-going challenge.

Nutrition-related and other documents were posted to the web site for access by Yagaum staff, and various in-service assignments tasked students with researching pertinent health care topics via the web. Special acknowledgement is extended to Dr. Rija, the Yagaum Hospital Missionary Physician and current Superintendent, for his continued support and encouragement of the project.

The new Kristus Center web site was completed and can be found at www.KristusWay.org. The web site hosts a Learning Section and related-forums which have been specifically designed for students and staff at Yagaum Hospital. All students have log-in access via personal passwords. Special appreciation is extended to Andrew Garrahan, the Kristus Center student volunteer intern in media design and graphic arts, for his support with all aspects of the development of the web site.

A second Distance Learning and Resource Center was established at Abatan Lutheran Hospital in Benguet Province, Philippines. A satellite dish, a computer and printer, and an internet service plan was purchased for the hospital and installed with the assistance of volunteers in the Philippines (special appreciation is extended to Jeruel Basalong - the Kristus communications engineer consultant in the Philippines, Dr. Meriam Lasegan - the attending physician at Abatan Lutheran Hospital, and Rev. Benjamin Lasegan - Bishop of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines for his continued guidance and encouragement). More computers are planned for the near future. Training of hospital staff is scheduled to start in February 2006. Seed funding for this project was provided by First Lutheran Church, Ellicott City, Maryland. This is the first time the small mountain community of Abatan has ever had internet access and is a noteworthy accomplishment given the challenges of the remoteness and lack of infrastructure of the project location.

The Kristus Center documentary *To Serve Our People* was distributed via the Kristus web site and shown to various congregations and community-groups as an educational and fund-raising tool. The entire 25-minute documentary may be accessed in the Media section of www.KristusWay.org. Of special mention was the presentation of Kristus activities at Yagaum and Abatan Hospitals during the annual ELCA Global Mission event in Baltimore. Katherine and Larry Harms also provided a power point presentation during two workshops at the conference about their experiences in Papua New Guinea.

Production of the Kristus Center educational documentary *Food for the Spirits* was completed during July and August; post-production is scheduled for 2006. The completed documentary will be used as a fundraising and educational tool and portray the challenges of Yagaum Lutheran Hospital as it responds to the health-related problems of the community which it serves. Photo galleries and a synopsis of the documentary project may be found in the Media section of www.KristusWay.org. Great appreciation is extended to our partners at Yagaum Lutheran Hospital, the ELC-PNG (especially Rev. Igorir Saul, Assistant to the Bishop, Office of Renewal and Dialogue), and the Marik clan/congregation for their invaluable assistance and support of this project. Appreciation is also extended to the documentary team - Graham Michael, Duane Saari, Joseph Booth, Andrew Garrahan, and Brian Grant. The near-impossible task of field production was accomplished by their team efforts and individual talents.

Many new volunteers joined the efforts and mission of the Kristus Center during 2005; they continue to lend their time, talents and energies in ways that are too numerous to document. Volunteers have formed core teams that are providing the impetus for the Kristus Center to move forward with various activities consistent with the 3-year Strategic Plan. A bio-sketch and photograph of all new volunteers may be found on the web site in the Team section. To date, approximately 40 volunteers from the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the US support the mission and ministry of the Kristus Center in unique and valuable ways. The interest and support of each volunteer is greatly appreciated and heart felt thanks expressed to all.

Funding

The majority of funding during 2005 continued to come from faith-based sources, including two Lutheran congregations in the Baltimore area; however, individual donations augmented this funding in important ways. Attempts to secure corporate grants have not yet been successful. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that future corporate support will be forthcoming.

Special gratitude

Special gratitude is extended to Christ Lutheran Church, Inner Harbor, Baltimore, for its continued financial support as part of a five-year grant to help our mission and ministry. Christ Church has always encouraged its members “to be good stewards of their time, talents and treasures in response to God’s love, to the church’s mission locally and throughout the world, and to human need” and we express our heartfelt thanks to be given the opportunity to extend Christ’s love and compassion to the communities we serve in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. As we approach our fifth and final year of funding from Christ Church, we renew our commitment to mission and service. Without the prayers and support entrusted to us by the members of Christ Church, our vision of mission may not have come to fruition. Although the road has been challenging, Christ Church has been our most ardent companion on our journey. Thank you Pastor Sabatelli and all the members of Christ Lutheran Church!

A look to 2006 and beyond

As we look forward, many opportunities and challenges lie ahead. With continued volunteer efforts and prayers, the internet-based Learning and Resource Centers at Yagaum and Abatan Hospitals will grow to become models of holistic health care in rural, underserved communities. They will hopefully become information and resource centers not just for health, but also for community development in ways that promote education, micro-enterprise development, environmental protection, and socio-economic well-being and justice. We are also continuing preliminary discussion with mission and development agencies in Cambodia where we soon hope to begin our third Learning and Resource Center at a rural hospital located in Ratanakiri Province. This project is consistent with our Strategic Plan and we look forward to establishing internet connectivity with our future partners in Cambodia. Lastly, we plan on registering our organization with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and, with the assistance of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, have started networking with the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, Switzerland (Asia Office) and the Lutheran Church in Bavaria (PNG, Pacific and East Asia Office).

Guided by the Holy Spirit

Guided by the Holy Spirit, our work carries on. In the words of St. Ignatius, “Teach us Lord to serve you; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do thy will.”