



Empowering Each Other  
To Serve The Destitute  
Elderly in the Developing World

April 2010

Michael's House is a grassroots organization that is a registered 501(c) (3) international non-profit charity whose mission is to aid the elderly poor who have fallen through the cracks. We provide a community day center, hot meals, hygiene facilities, supplies for handicrafts, basic medical care, overnight shelter for the infirm, pensions, surgeries, eyeglasses, working farms with crops and animals, and funds for special projects. Currently, we are in Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Thailand and Rwanda.

Please visit our website: [www. Michaels-house.org](http://www.Michaels-house.org)

*"Live simply so others may simply live"*

Elizabeth Seton

At last it is spring. The snow here in the North East is but a memory. We are now back in the cycle of hope with sunshine and flowers beckoning us to awaken to the fact that hope springs eternal. At Michael's House we are excited about the future. As we get known for our work, more demands are being made of us to respond in charity to requests from other places of need. In this newsletter we introduce two new projects, one in Thailand and one in Rwanda. These requests are coming from people who want to do something to help the needy in their milieu. This is exactly what we are about, namely that we are established to "empower one another to serve the needs of the poor aged".

We have no option but to fulfill our mandate. We must apply ourselves tirelessly in a spirit of hope and risk, and trust that if we respond the money will follow. Sometimes we forget that our work is not all about money, and definitely not about extravagance, but more about the quality of life of those we serve. Quality of life means different things to different people: a sewing machine, a loom, a pair of glasses, a thirty dollar cataract operation, a walking stick, a bottle of Tylenol, a bed, a meal a day, a \$10 monthly pension and a roof to protect from the elements. This is quality of life for many.

The elderly poor suffer disproportionately throughout the developing world. They receive no international aid. Even in cases where international food is distributed in large heavy sacks, the frail cannot compete with the younger or stronger and they just go hungry. They cannot quickly walk miles to a distribution center. They are a relatively small subset of the world's poor. They are the invisible people. But they are our people and we will do everything in our power to help them. Hope does indeed spring eternal.



*Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity. ~Horace Mann*

## **“Baan Mae Phon” a project of Michaels House in Thailand**

Tery Larose, a Canadian who has lived with his wife in Thailand for 15 years, is impressed and enthused by the work of Michael’s House and its unique and rare mission of helping each other to serve the poor elderly in the developing world.

He wrote to us saying, “My wife has had a lifelong dream, which I am trying to make come to fruition. I’m in hopes that Michael’s House may be able to make this happen. My wife, who was raised by her grand parents, lived in utter poverty. She watched as they aged and had no one to care for them. She has always remembered just how unhappy and destitute their final years were. Her dream is to make a very simple home for people who now find themselves in similar destitution. I am confident that once the project is on it’s way I can drum up corporate support (especially from German firms operating in Thailand my being in corporate management) to donate clothing and food for the aged, but that will not happen until the project shows signs of being real and tangible. We would like to operate under the umbrella of Michaels’ House”.

Tery says that they will begin, with our permission to start the project under the name of "Baan Mae Phon" a project of Michaels House. The name is in memory of his wife’s grandmother who is the genesis of the idea – literally Mama Phon House.

Tery says that “Essentially, what we aim to do is to provide reliable, safe and compassionate accommodation for the elderly in Surin province, one of Thailand’s poorest areas. Most elderly folks there suffer from neglect and are chronically penniless. This is not out of lack of compassion from their families, but more from the cycle of poverty: the elderly cannot work for themselves, their children have no money to give them, and there is no social safety net for them. Most of them end up relying on the kindness of the community for food and clothing” Following discussion with Tery, we have agreed to purchase a loom, which can be used for making silk. The one time cost is \$250. We will also send ten pensions of \$10 each monthly for the current ten members of the community. Would any of you like to provide the \$250 or a pension or one of these destitute women?



Tery, his wife, and one of the elderly poor women

### **Thai Currency and the value of a Michael’s House pension**

\$10 Pension– in Thai currency \$10 is roughly 300 baht give or take 5%. Some average costs of things the seniors would buy regularly:

Clean water -1 baht per liter

Packaged noodles - 5 baht (enough to feed 2 or 3 people depending on their appetite)

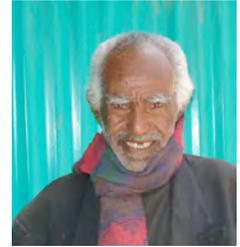
Blanket - 100 baht and up depending on quality

Towels - 10 baht and up.

Clothing - shirts roughly 30 baht, skirts about 50 baht

*Your dollars really make a difference!*

**We received this story from Terfa Dinka, our on site manager in Addis Ababa:**



Kebede Cherinet has been sleeping on the same street corner in Addis Ababa for as long as he can remember. It's outside Ras Desta Hospital where he begs for survival. One day he met some older people who are guests at Michael's House and they told him about Michael's House. They told him that they were once like him but now they are part of this community where old poor people are getting social support, such as food, clothing, medications, shelter and monthly cash for their essential needs. When he heard this he was amazed and decided to come to Michael's House. He was also very delighted because he never even dreamed that he would ever have the chance to leave the life on the street corner. Because he was so feeble, he was admitted to Ann's Shelter. Now all his needs are met and he has a new family. He was very emotional when he found that he had a bed of his own. On his first night he stood beside his bed, stretched out his arms to God in prayer, and joyfully and tearfully exclaimed loudly, "NOW I AM IN HEAVEN". He had never slept in a bed before.

## **MICHAEL'S HOUSE IN RWANDA**

Most of us remember the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994. We probably remember the horrific images of frantic people starving, dispossessed and frantically trying to get away from the mad violence. From April through June 1994, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were killed in the space of 100 days. A disproportionate number of the survivors are poor widows. Many of them are barely surviving. The 10 million population of Rwanda, whose capital city is Kigali, has a life expectancy of 50 years old for women and 48 for men. For a broader understanding of the conflict in Rwanda, you might want to see the movie "Hotel Rwanda".

At the request of Grace Umutesi (Michael's House Board Member and also a widow as a result of the conflict), we have launched an entrepreneurship program that will provide assistance to a group of these widows to help them in setting up their own enterprise. Grace is haunted by the memory of those less fortunate widows who were left behind and to whom she promised she would never forget when she arrived in the USA with her six children. The idea is that we will set up cooperatives of groups of widows (probably six to a group) to whom we will donate sewing machines. This is a very effective and proven way of enabling these women to earn a living. At this time, we are sending two sewing machines each costing approximately \$180. The donations will be made through an existing established charity. If you wish to donate the cost of a sewing machine we will be immensely grateful. This is indeed a gift that will keep on giving. We are empowering poor war widows through sewing for a living.

**Please keep in mind that Labor Day is a great opportunity to give ONE hour of your wages to the elderly poor at Michael's House.**



**Your continued support makes it all possible and secures one daily meal for the elderly poor. They have come to depend on the love and generosity from those of us more fortunate on the other side of the world. We cannot let them down!**

***Make Checks Payable to: Michael's House Inc, Post Office Box 856  
Burtonsville, Maryland, 2086***

**Visit us on the web at [www.michaels-house.org](http://www.michaels-house.org)**