

Reflections From our Founder Michael Craig



Here in France right now, with my 60-minute police permit in my hand, I look at sidewalk cafes, non-essential stores, schools, parks, cathedrals and even cemeteries all closed. The Eiffel Tower is a desolate ghost, the Louvre is shuttered, the Arc De Triumph abandoned, and the Champs Elysées has weeds growing on the sidewalks. My life has changed, and the change has been unsettling.

Maybe, like me, you feel that you cannot wait for things to get back to the way they were. Even as I look for an end in the feelings of uncertainty that the pandemic has caused in me, I find myself questioning whether there is really a future in longing for the past. I have been thinking about the Irish writer Samuel Beckett and his renowned play *Waiting for Godot*.

The play was written in 1948 just after the two world wars. It came at a time of unbelievable chaos. Not altogether unlike our own. This existential play features two characters who engage in discussions while waiting for Godot. Godot never turns up. The play is all about the anticipation of Godot's

coming and, ultimately, it's about the futility of waiting. Waiting for a return to normal?

As Heraclitus said, *"You cannot put your foot in the same stream twice. The stream changes as does the world."* Past is past. Of course, past is also prologue (Shakespeare).

As we emerge from the global era's first real pandemic, there is a place and a need for hope in creating a new normal. We will bring our strengths, skills and history, but we should also challenge ourselves to do an inventory of our attitudes, values and philosophy-towards ourselves, those close to us, and the fellow human beings who share our world.

Even in our restricted physical and emotional space, we can remember the saying, "Two men looked out from prison bars, one saw the mud the other saw the stars." (Anonymous) I'm curious to see what the Covid-19 experience has taught us because this will certainly be an integral part of the new normal.

I would like to believe that our present craving for connectedness will not suddenly fade away when we are again allowed to carefully return to a life with others. That we will become not more mercenary but more compassionate. That we will become not more elite but more inclusive. Will we bring forward with us the conviction that all of us are truly created equal? If so, the future will be warm and bright, and it will be one in which we can take great comfort.

That is my hope.

Annual Fundraiser Canceled Due to COVID-19

As many of you know, our major annual fundraiser is the annual Michael's House Golf Tournament managed and sponsored by Hawkins Electric with the support of other generous businesses. In the past years, we have raised as much as \$15,000 for Michael's House through this one-day event! And we have had a lot of fun! The golf tournament has funded many wonderful projects such as cataract surgeries, construction of bicycle ambulances, solar lights, and of course general food and medical care for our destitute elderly. It has really been a blessing.



Unfortunately, this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are sorry to report that the golf tournament will be cancelled for 2020. We had hoped to postpone it from the spring to the fall, but due to so much uncertainty, it just will not happen.

We want to thank all those who have supported this event in the past years. We look forward to the next tournament in 2021!

Meanwhile, if you can find it in your heart and are able to donate a little extra towards our charitable work, we thank you. Unfortunately, hunger can not be put on "hold". And we at Michael's House will do our very best to continue to meet those needs in any way that we can.

You made it Happen! Maria and Jorge Have a New Home.

Last fall, Maria (64) and her grandson Jorge (8) were squatting in a lean-to shack by a polluted river without water or electricity. To survive, Maria, who has serious heart disease, went to garbage dumps to hunt for plastic and tin, but she was only able to sell what she collected for a meager amount. She made less than 50 cents a day. Maria had no other income to help her scrape by and provide for her grandson.

Renee, our care partner in Honduras, visited Maria and witnessed her deplorable living conditions. The rusty iron roof of the shack leaked onto the mattress that Maria and Jorge shared, food was sparse, and Maria was ill. Renee learned that Jorge had never gone to school.

Moved by what she had seen, Renee asked Michael's House if it would be possible to help Maria and Jorge.

We published their story in our Fall newsletter and THANKS TO YOUR GENEROSITY enough funds were raised to support Maria and Jorge for this year. They have moved to a modest new dwelling with electricity and water that is safe and clean. They now have a new, dry mattress, and Maria has a small stove that allows her to cook indoors. Because of your donations, a food basket is delivered once a week. The plastic and tin that Maria scrounged to sell was never enough for the food that she and Jorge needed. With decent food, Maria's health has begun to improve.

Top right: Maria and Jorge in their new efficiency apartment. Bottom right: Maria preparing dinner on her new stove



A Bittersweet Farewell to Masaka, Uganda

Michael's House began its support of the elderly in the Masaka, Uganda area in 2008. We began by funding fistula surgeries under the leadership of Dr. Maura Lynch. We then began providing medical care and food to the destitute elderly under our "Grannies" program, and we funded eye camps to restore sight by surgery and alleviate painful eye conditions through medical treatment--under the direction of Helen Delaney. Over the years, with your donations, we were able to bring hope and literally transform the lives of many destitute elderly. We restored continence to thousands of women afflicted with a medical condition that had made them outcasts and enabled those women to be accepted back into their communities, and we provided food, medical care, surgery and eye treatments to thousands more elderly.



Eye Camp Patient with Helen Delaney.

As you know, Michael's House usually works through care partners. Our care partner in Masaka, Uganda has been Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM). In Africa, religious partners like MMM are trustworthy and partnering with them has allowed our funds to be spent solely on care for the elderly without any overhead burden. MMM spends years establishing medical services and training local staff, and they were in Masaka for many, many years. This past April, MMM officially ended their long period of service in the Masaka area. While still active in Uganda, they have closed their Masaka programs and transferred responsibility to the local authorities so their service to the community will continue.

As we reflect on the end of our relationship with MMM in the Masaka area, we are grateful to them for their partnership with us that resulted in the accomplishment of so much good. We hope you will join with us in celebrating all of the hungry elderly in need of food whom we fed, the pain that was washed away, and the lives that were transformed by the restoration of continence and of eye sight. Thank you for the donations over the years that made this possible. As our efforts in Masaka through MMM come to an end, we look forward to the future and to the establishment of programs for the elderly poor in new locations as our funding allows.

Donate on the web (www.michaels-house.org) or make checks payable to:

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