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## God's Mysterious Ways

David and Mary Lee Bagwell of Kingsport, Tennessee are a team, not only in marriage but also in their efforts to bring help to the hearing impaired in Mexico. As members of Comcare International's Board of Directors and members of Rotary International, they have witnessed blessings unimagined when they followed God's call.

No strangers to Mexico, both Mary Lee, a licensed audiologist and David, a vital link in the design and assembly of ComCare's solar-powered hearing aids, have traveled there several times on mission trips. However, the year 2006 marked the beginning of a special ministry to the hearing impaired when they were invited by Central Baptist Church in Johnson City, Tennessee to travel to Piedras Negras as members of a medical mission team. They could not have foreseen the chain of events that would unfold.

Since both Mary Lee and David are Rotarians, they decided to find a Rotary Club to visit while in Mexico. Of the three clubs in Piedras Negras, by chance they chose the one whose members were attempting to help some hearing impaired children. When the president of the club realized why the Bagwells were in their city, she handed Mary Lee three audiograms

Please see *God's Mysterious Ways* on page 3

## YOU can give the gift of hearing

Due to some consistent and generous donations from associates of the organization, ComCare International has been able to increase its inventory of parts and supplies needed to produce the solar-rechargeable hearing aids. We have been able to send out more than 250 aids with individuals and organizations going into nations throughout the world in the past 18 months.

As you look over the world map shown on page 4, you will see those nations marked where we have sent the ComCare aids. If you will be traveling on any humanitarian or medical mission trips in 2009 where you might be able to distribute the ComCare aid, please contact us now to place an order for the aids and accessories. We have an order form that can be e-mailed or sent by postal delivery for you to complete and return. Please contact the organization by telephone at 210-317-9998 or by using the e-mail or postal address given in this newsletter.

Please see *Gift of Hearing* on page 3

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*"Your gift of \$125 will provide the gift of hearing to a hearing-impaired child or adult in a developing country somewhere in the world."*

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## The World Needs You! You Can Make a Difference!

Dr. James Smith, chairman of the Board of Directors of ComCare International, was honored at the American Academy of Otolaryngology 2008 annual meeting with the Distinguished Award for Humanitarian Efforts. Here are highlights of his address:

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*“ . . . , it makes one appreciate what we have and the opportunities we are blessed with.”*

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*I never thought of the opportunities I have been given as humanitarian, but rather opportunities to meet interesting people, see new cultures, work, and teach with other medical people, all for the purpose of helping patients. I tended to think of humanitarian activities as something where you had to suffer or give up your creature comforts, like going to Darfur, or with Doctors Without Borders, but what I've done has been fun. My goal is to try to get you excited about looking for an opportunity to serve internationally*

*Why would we want to share our knowledge in an international setting? I learned that it's a two-way street. No matter how poor, lacking in resources or what we might consider basic medical care a country is, I always learn something. In our country, we have so much, I think we have an obligation to share with others who have less in not only resources, but also opportunities. Things that we take for granted, such as being able to attend a meeting like this, is out of the reach of most physicians in less-developed countries. Finally, it makes one appreciate what we have and the opportunities we are blessed with.*

*I grew up as a farm boy in Iowa, and my exposure was to veterinary medicine. I graduated from Iowa State University and had a large animal veterinary medical practice for two years, but something always intrigued me about human medicine. One of my classmates from vet school had dropped out to go to medical school and when I visited him, he encouraged me to apply. In 1965, I graduated from the University of Iowa and started my internship at the University of Oregon. This was during the Vietnam War and every doctor in sight was being drafted. I applied to the U.S. Public Health Service and was assigned to be a physician for the Peace Corps volunteers in Kenya. [In the years since, Dr. Smith has also spent extended periods of time in Singapore, Cameroon, and Beijing.]*

*Why should you consider doing something international? There are myriad reasons. Helping others is not only worthwhile, but very fulfilling. All of us experience this in dealing with our patients and is the reason most of us went into the medical field. The core of most of the world's major religions— Buddhism , Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity—is the belief that we should help, care for, and protect those less fortunate than ourselves. I think teaching is the ultimate in helping others. It must be done with a spirit of sharing and exchange, not with the attitude that we are the best, or ours is the only correct way. In most countries, the doctors are eager to find out how we do things and really appreciate it when you show an interest in what they are doing. Every time I visited a new place, the doctors wanted to maintain a connection and have me return.*

Dr. Smith carries the ComCare hearing aids with him on most of his out of country trips, giving them to hearing impaired patients who are blessed with the gift of hearing. He says there is nothing more encouraging than seeing the eyes light up when a child or adult hears the human voice, maybe for the first time.



*God's Mysterious Ways from page 1*

of children in public schools that had a significant hearing loss. It seems that the club had been trying for nine months to have these children's hearing tested, and that very day she had received by fax the students' audiograms and she gratefully passed them along to Mary Lee asking if there was any way they could fit them with hearing aids. The club's president did not know who would provide hearing aids for the indigent children that so desperately needed to hear. The Bagwell's unexpected arrival seemed to be the solution to that dilemma.

Things began to happen. The children were rounded up and fitted with new hearing aids and shortly thereafter a teacher reported that she never knew one of these students was so intelligent because he had just been idly passing time in class because of his hearing loss.

This first year the Bagwells fit 13 ComCare hearing aids in Piedras Negras, a city of 200,000 with no audiologist to care for its citizens. Here, nearly 20% of the population is hearing impaired, compared to 10% in the United States. . The significant hearing loss is attributed to untreated medical conditions and harmful drugs that people take without realizing the danger to their hearing. The solar-powered ComCare hearing aids are priceless to these people who couldn't be helped any other way.

God's blessings continue to flow as the ministry expands. The Piedras Negras Rotary Club has become a partner in helping reach those who need help. In 2007 the club advertised the Bagwell's upcoming visit and provided interpreters, resulting in more hearing aids fitted on the first day than were fitted in the whole week the year before. A hasty call back home brought more hearing aids for the eager citizens.

The Piedras Negras Rotary club's dream is to establish a permanent hearing clinic in their city. With a sister club in San Antonio, TX, they applied for a grant from Rotary International, and, in June 2008, received \$20,500 to purchase hearing aids for people in Piedras Negras. Now there are volunteer audiologists who visit the city to test hearing and send the audiograms to Mary Lee in Tennessee. When she has accumulated 100 audiograms, she and David will again journey to Piedras Negras to make ear impressions and fit hearing aids for these needy people.

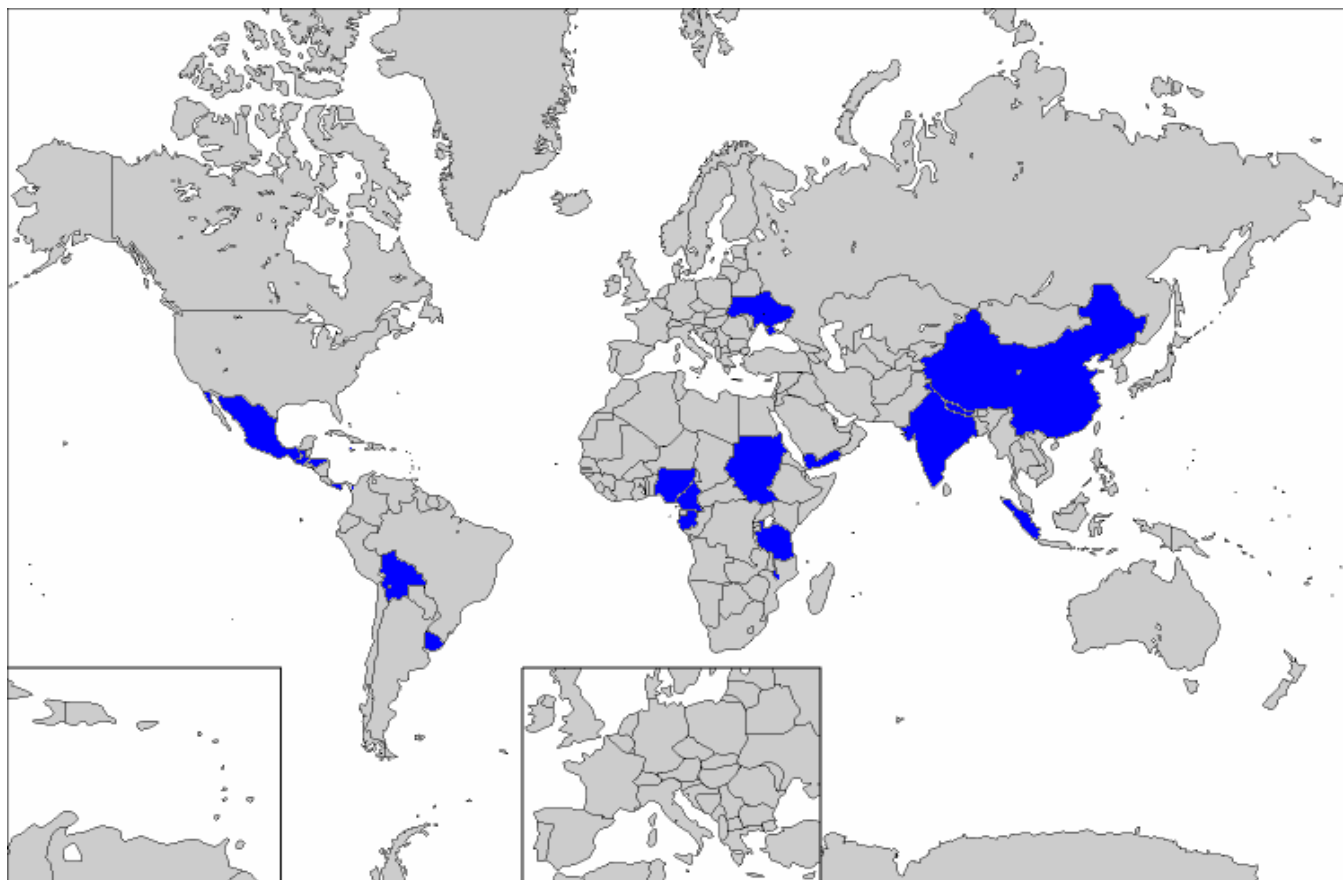
While the satisfaction of doing God's will is the primary purpose the Bagwells cite as their reason for going to Mexico, they were honored publicly by the Sertoma Club of Kingsport, Tennessee, in November of 2007 when the club surprised them with its Service to Mankind award. Recognition may be nice, but the real reward for Mary Lee and David is the grin on a child's face when he hears his mother's voice clearly for the first time.

*Gift of Hearing from page 1*

Your cost per aid is \$125. You may purchase extra accessories such as cords, mushroom tips, and receivers. Please remember that these aids may not be sold to the recipient—they must be given free-of-charge to the hearing impaired individuals.

ComCare International has a mission to enable the 250 million hearing impaired in developing countries around the world to improve their hearing and communication to the glory of God. From the outset, the ComCare Board found the chief obstacle for helping disadvantaged hearing impaired children and adults is the inaccessibility of conventional hearing aids. A majority of the world live in poor and rugged environments which are not friendly to delicate and expensive hearing aids. The ongoing need for batteries can seldom be met in remote parts of the world plus their disposal is not environmentally friendly. The ComCare solar-rechargeable aid fits this need and changes lives. **WON'T YOU HELP?**





The nations marked on this world map show the places where the ComCare Hearing Aid has been given to individuals who were hearing impaired. A gift of a \$125 aid can help someone else change the life of someone in one of these countries—or **YOU** can purchase the CCI aid to take with you on your next mission trip overseas. If you wish to order our hearing aids, please contact us at the addresses below or call the Com Care office. We will be glad to assist you with your order.

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Members of CCI Board of Directors attending annual meeting in Joliet, IL in Sept. 2008: Dr. James Smith, Chairman (OR); Dr. David Parsons(SC); Scotta Williams, Executive Director (TX); Dr. Sam Girgis(IL); Mary Lee Bagwell(TN); David Bagwell(TN).