

Diocese supports outreach to Kenya, Tanzania

By Sister Linda Glaeser, SSJ

When I visited Kisumu Kenya with my niece in 2003 I never dreamed it would change my life so drastically. The poverty I saw was devastating, yet the people I met were strong, hard working, resilient and welcoming.

I felt called to respond to the injustice I witnessed. Readers' response to an article published in the *Western New York Catholic* in October 2003 resulted in the donation of our first two wells and the sponsorship of several Kenyan high school students. I was encouraged by the compassion of the people of Western New York and hoped that we could make an even greater difference if we could expand our efforts.

After consultation, trial and error and prayer, I co-founded Future in Our Hands – USA with my niece, Michele Sprada. This tax-exempt, 501c3 organization gives Western New Yorkers the opportunity to participate in the fight against poverty in Kenya and Tanzania through donations. It always amazes me how so little money can make the difference between life and death for the people we are serving.

FIOH – USA has an all-volunteer board of directors and maintains personal connections with the people we assist. Various

board members, using their own money, have returned to Kenya in 2005, 2007 and 2008 and witnessed the positive changes that have taken place.

I have been there three times and hope to go again in 2010. To date, FIOH–USA has raised more than \$100,000. In just five years we have funded 17 borehole wells providing safe water for thousands.

This year 30 students are sponsored for high school, college or vocational training. Twenty-five HIV/AIDS victims receive funding for transportation for medical care. Ten women's groups received seed money for a micro-loan program, which allows them to run small businesses. Our group also provided life-saving famine relief after the 2007 post-election violence in Kisumu, Kenya.

FIOH–USA is having its first major fund-raising event on Sept. 11, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Sonoma Grille in Williamsville. Come for an evening of fun with live music, theme baskets, door prizes, great food, beverages and a cash bar.

Tickets are \$20 per person. Your participation will make a difference in the lives of many people.

Contact FIOH-USA treasurer Sandra Warner, at 759-6345 for tickets and visit the Web site at futureinourhandsusa.org.