

# Eight humanitarians reach out to Kenyan villages

by **KELLY JACKSON**  
*Reporter*

Michele Sprada traveled solo to a Kenyan village on Lake Victoria in 2000 through the nonprofit organization, Future In Our Hands-Kenya.

She wanted to help people.

When Sprada returned home to Kenmore, she immediately began informing friends and family of her African experience and the observations she made about the living conditions.

Very quickly, it was not only Sprada who wanted to do more for the humanitarian efforts in alleviating poverty.

Sprada's aunt, Sister Linda Glaeser, a Josephite nun, joined her niece on these exhibitions to Africa with FIOH-Kenya.

FIOH, an international humanitarian and environmental action organization, was inspired by a book written by a Norwegian engineer, Erik Dammann, in 1974.

Although the FIOH movement had networks worldwide, it lacked an American chapter.

With the volunteering of a University at Buffalo law student, Glaeser and Sprada founded Future In Our Hands-USA in 2006 as a tax-exempt, nonprofit, run by a volunteer board consisting of eight local women.

Between Sprada's first visit to Kenya and the time that elapsed until the official birth of the USA sister organization of FIOH-Kenya, the women continued to support the fight against poverty.

A major breakthrough occurred in 2003 when an anonymous caller contacted Glaeser after reading an article in a Catholic newsletter, wanting to finance a well water system for a Kenyan village. Since then, a total of 17 wells have been donated

through the FIOH-USA efforts, which have cut back drastically on waterborne diseases such as cholera.

The women have also raised money to start micro-loan programs for Kenyans to borrow between \$50 and \$350 at a time to be paid back within six months. The need for revolving loans was something Kenyan women had expressed personally to FIOH-USA through e-mails and letters.

"They have the ideas. They're very hardworking, but they don't have the capital," said FIOH-USA board member Mary Ellen Dye, of Williamsville.

Dye, who has volunteered with the organization for five years, made her first visit to Kenya in 2007.

As many of the volunteers with FIOH-USA do, Dye had been sponsoring a student to attend high school, donating \$350 yearly.

When she visited, she had the opportunity to meet the individual whose education she was financing.

"I think one of the things that makes this so successful is that we know who the money is going to," said Dye.

FIOH-USA also funds the transportation for 25 HIV-positive patients a month to get to and from the hospital for treatment, education about the virus, medical equipment and supplies.

The organization has raised more than \$100,000 to benefit Kenya and will continue to contribute.

From 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, Sept. 11, FIOH-USA will host an evening at Sonoma Grille with live music, theme baskets, hors d'oeuvres and beverages. Tickets cost \$20. For more information, contact Glaeser at 837-4898.

To learn more on FIOH-USA, visit [www.futureinourhandsusa.org](http://www.futureinourhandsusa.org).