

FORGING CONNECTIONS: MODELING HOPE

Since our founding in 1974, IPM has prided itself on remaining nonpartisan while continuing to offer light to the world. But, as the father of a newborn son, who is a child of both Kenya and Cleveland (not dissimilar from one of our recent presidential candidates!), I would be lying if I said my spouse and I did not have a strong feeling about this most recent election. Most importantly, however, we saw this election as an opportunity for hope. Not only in Barack Obama's historic victory, but in the gracious dignity of John McCain's concession, a genuine spirit of hope seemed alive and possible.



IPM Student Volunteer, Meran Chang (a graduate of Cleveland's Shaw High School and current student at the Mandel Center for Nonprofit Organizations of Case Western Reserve University), Bennie Hughes, and students from the Fatima Family Center who Meran will accompany on an Immersion Experience to Tanzania in February 2009.

The moving words of both of these men on election night serve as a reminder of what it is to be a leader and role model, igniting in millions the drive to rally and act, question and believe. As John McCain said on November 4, "I call on all Americans, as I have often in this campaign, to not despair of our present difficulties but to believe always in the promise and greatness of America, because nothing is inevitable here."

President-elect Obama's words moved us also, pushing us to believe in hope in a way that we as a nation and world have not done before. He challenged us to move our context for belief and hope out of the clouds, and into the reality of life as it is today. "It's the answer that led those who have been told for so long by so many to be cynical, and fearful, and doubtful of what we can achieve to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day." Like so many of our Project Partners, the message he carried that night is one of genuine and profound promise.

As young people from around the USA rallied and voted—many for their first time—we were reminded as a nation of our bitter history of racism, and as a global community of what Martin Luther King called the "Strength to Love": "Hatred and bitterness can never cure the disease of fear; only love can do that. Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illumines it." When I consider love, I am invariably drawn to the recent birth of our son. When I think of hope, I am reminded of the youth with whom IPM lives out our mission. As you will read in this issue of *Connections*, young people from El Salvador to Uganda, from Nicaragua to the USA, are, with IPM's partnership, empowering themselves with the character, skills, and resources they need to become beacons of hope for this world as we move into the future.

In all of our work with youth, there stand behind them a role model or two, pushing and encouraging, inspiring and motivating. As I sat listening at our 6th Annual Cleveland Luncheon held on December 10, 2008, I was struck by the great power of those individuals honored to serve as role models, not only for our youth, but for each one of us.

Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe, Project Coordinator for *St. Monica's Girls Tailoring Center* (see page 7), a safe house and school for child mothers and former girl soldiers, held those gathered on December 10th for IPM's 6th Annual Luncheon attentive and left them inspired. She spoke eloquently and honestly about her work, confronting "evil itself" in the physical and emotional trauma inflicted on these young women. Her ability to draw out of these young women confidence, hope, joy, and



Joseph Jacob Amani Cistone (born April 30, 2008) and his older sister, Francesca, at IPM's 6th Annual Luncheon.

love is something at which I stand in awe. An incredible role model for me personally, she also serves as a role model for these young women acting with selfless love in care for the human person.

Just as in past years, our honorees at the Luncheon also serve as examples and role models. Mary Ellen & Wayne Carney have been dedicated volunteers and supporters of IPM's work in Northeast Ohio and around the world. I continue to marvel at their commitment to IPM, and, most importantly, our Project Partners. Mary Ellen spoke during the luncheon program about her 2007 Immersion Experience Program to Kenya, speaking movingly of the gift of hope that she both gave and received during her experience (see related article page 5). Mary Ellen & Wayne live out the call to bring hope to others, sharing stories from their Immersion Experiences, and remaining closely involved and invested in the lives of our Project Partners. They serve as a powerful example to us of individuals who humbly carry the gift of hope in their hearts, remaining grounded always in the practical reality of the world.

David Westcott has been a dedicated volunteer to IPM for many years. Additionally, he serves on several other nonprofit Boards and Advisory Councils. His 57-year marriage to his wife, Gloria, remains an inspiring symbol of love and commitment to all those who meet them. In the 8 years since I began my work as Executive Director of IPM, David has been a mentor and confidant, an ally and friend. He has done everything at IPM from serving as Board Treasurer to collecting office supplies.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS – SAMMY MAYER

Sammy Mayer was honored on September 12, 2008 in St. Louis with the inaugural Mayer-Strege Award. Sammy is the spouse of the late Jim Mayer, who co-founded IPM with Paul Strege. Sammy was named as the first Emeritus Director of IPM along with Paul Strege.

Personal Background:

I was born in Aurora, IL, the youngest of seven children. My father, Paul Streufert, was the principal of a Lutheran Elementary School and my mother, Emma, was a farm girl from Addison, IL. She had little formal education, 7th grade, but a heart and compassion for people. She and my father were models for me in evangelical outreach. Our neighborhood was their mission field.

I attended Concordia Teachers' College, River Forest, Illinois for both high school and college. Earning a BS in education. It was there that I met Jim. As a seminary student he, too, was attending summer school classes. He needed a few crash courses in education to help prepare him for filling in as a substitute teacher during the war when there was a serious teacher shortage in church schools.

I soon learned that Jim had his heart set on serving as a foreign missionary; I'd always wanted to do that, too.

After my teaching in schools in Houston, Texas and La Grange, IL and Jim's graduation from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, we married and in the fall of 1949 sailed for India on the Dutch cargo ship, *Borneo*.

Jim's appointment in the early 1960s as Area Secretary for Southeast Asia necessitated our

return to the U.S. We returned in the summer of 1966. Prior to the formation of the new Lutheran church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), a new movement for women was formed called Women in Action for Mission. I served as its National Coordinator for ten years.

I have served on the boards of both Partners in Mission and International Partners in Mission and remain a member of the IPM Advisory Council in St. Louis

My Life Statement/Mission

Mission: a term meaning "to send" has always been at the heart of my spiritual and life's journey. I've felt called to make a difference in the lives of people, to bring them the good news of hope and the promise of "life abundant."

Skills/Interests I bring to IPM

I have a passion for people's welfare. I think my background and hands-on experience are helpful for IPM's work.

Uniqueness of IPM

Because of its philosophy of mission being a two-way street: "we are both givers and receivers." As generous, caring people, we love to give, but change for us is a challenge. IPM invites us to do both, by introducing us, not only to the world's/people's needs, but IPM opens the possibilities for us to learn from and engage with them in a personal life-changing way, through its communication tool *Connections* and the opportunities for on-site visits to the Projects around the world.

Where IPM should be heading

How great it would be to increase the number



Sammy Mayer with IPM Executive Director, Joe Cistone, at the First Annual St. Louis Award Luncheon in September 2008. IPM was proud to present the inaugural Mayer-Strege award to Sammy Mayer and Paul Strege, honoring Jim & Sammy Mayer and Paul & Vercile Strege as the co-founders of IPM.

of locations across the country where IPM could have a presence and a working Council.

Hope for IPM

That it would maintain its "family" dynamic. That often flies in the face of growth or development for which we hope. We need regularly to do a background check, as we move forward, to make sure that we haven't sacrificed our core and basic principles.

Family and hobbies

I was married to Jim for 36 years. He died in 1984. We had eight children, five are married, and I have 20 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. I love reading, particularly theological or political writings and mysteries. Baking is my kitchen passion – especially coffeecake and caramel rolls.

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He does it all in the true spirit of servant leadership that is testament not only to his extraordinary character, but also to his sincere belief in the innate hope and power of an individual as part of the global community.

It is hand in hand with these individuals and countless others that the mission of IPM is accomplished: pushing one another to be

better people, sharing our stories and giving others the space to do the same; and perhaps most importantly, inspiring and encouraging our youth, trusting that the lessons of their role models within the IPM family will carry our world into a brighter future. May you and the youth in your lives celebrate a loving, peaceful, and hope-filled new year.

Joseph F. Cistone
December 18, 2008
Cleveland, Ohio, USA

ON THE COVER: Youth from *St. Martin de Porres High School* (El Zaito, EL SALVADOR) cheering on their classmates, see related story on page 8.