

# A Drop in the Bucket

**W**hen you know famine, starvation, illiteracy, and major health problems exist in the poorest areas of the world, how do you help?

If you care enough, like my good friend Mollie Colson, you start by putting your drop in the bucket!

Mollie is an example of what can be achieved if you care. A retired real estate agent living on Galiano, she cares deeply. She believes “charity begins at home,” but has many buckets on the go for the world’s poorest children! Her ambition is to fill them all!



*Fruit, cookies, and school supplies for Pursat orphanage, Cambodia*

If you visit the Island, you may find Mollie selling pepper jellies at the weekend market, organizing sales and raffles of her “designer” dolls and other items, sorting children’s clothes into cottons for India or Africa and warm woolens and toques for colder climates.

She may well be knitting Izzy dolls, but could just as easily be with the “Mollie’s Dollies” group, finishing small Izzy dolls for orphans and AIDS babies.

**Mollie is an example of what can be achieved if you care.**

Mollie is a director of ICROSS Canada (International Community for the Relief of Suffering & Starvation), a completely nonprofit society based on Vancouver Island. She works closely with ICROSS President Billy Willbond.

Having seen the ravages of AIDS’ children left to cope alone in the world, children who die because they are too poor to live—and knowing other children would die from AIDS without even a junior Aspirin to help them get some sleep or Vaseline to help their sores—Mollie raised funds to purchase three 40-foot containers. The first was sent to a hospital in Kenya, the second and third to Lilongwe, Malawi, Southern Africa, to support a clinic being established by struggling Canadian Doctor Chris Brooke.

With Billy’s enthusiasm and Irish blarney, plus the help of numerous

volunteers, the containers were filled to the brim with donated medicines, crutches, wheelchairs, bicycles, large cooking pots, clothing, hospital uniforms, 12 beds and linens for them, a fridge, and laboratory vials. Every nurse and assistant received a stethoscope.

In March of 2006, Mollie, Billy, and his wife Lynne travelled to Lilongwe, to meet the first container. Their luggage contained \$50,000 in medicines such as the antibiotics Dr. Chris requested, obtained from HPIC (Health Partners International in Canada) for the grand sum of \$5000, together with many “Izzy” comfort dolls.



*Famine rescue, Kenya, East Africa*



*Bath time in the Highlands, Ethiopia, East Africa*



*Apples (Huge treat) for students at Mollie's "Mollie Toul Watt" school. Pursat, Cambodia*

These lovely hand-knit dollies are sent to ICROSS from all over Canada, a lasting tribute to Mark Isfeld, a Canadian peacekeeper who died while clearing landmines in Croatia. Mark's Mum used to knit the tiny dollies for Izzy to hand out during his patrols, bringing a small measure of happiness to many desperately poor and traumatized children in that war-torn nation. ICROSS continues the tradition in Mark's memory, sending dollies to peacekeepers worldwide to this day.

Mollie has just completed what she terms a "booklet" about the dollies, which she passed on to ICROSS for printing and publishing. (Billy Willbond says he "loves it.") Any profits the book makes will be donated to ICROSS and used for projects to help the world's poorest children

During their visit, Dr. Chris told them of his "dream machine," a CD4 blood separator that would enable blood testing to be done at the clinic. The necessary cocktail of drugs could be administered immediately.

**Back home in Canada, a year of fundraising in every manner possible raised the US\$30,000 needed to buy the machine.**

Back home in Canada, a year of fundraising in every manner possible raised the US\$30,000 needed to buy the machine. March 2007 found Mollie and Billy back in Malawi, the cheque for the CD4 tucked firmly

in Billy's wallet. A second container followed close behind. Lives would be saved! One bucket was full!

Mollie has another very special bucket that she desperately wants filled for the N'Godzi clinic. Standing by the crib of a tiny sick baby girl, Faith, who had survived against all odds, Mollie watched sadly as Faith's mother died from TB. Faith's father had died 2 weeks earlier. A digital x-ray machine, small and mobile enough to be transported into the villages, would detect TB and treatment could start at once.

Many young babies like Faith wouldn't have to struggle to live, only to grow up orphaned and alone. Because of little Faith, this project is very close to Mollie's heart. Her next



*First "Toonie" library, Cambodia*



*Village Elders asking for a high school in Cambodia*



*Mollie was presented with the ICROSS Humanitarian of the Year Award in 2002 by Her Excellency The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, 27th Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.*

ambition is to get this machine up and running at N'Godzi. I'm sure every ICROSS volunteer—especially Mollie—will work hard to make this happen.

Before they left Lilongwe, a visit to a baby crisis centre sobered Mollie's mood for weeks. Children were brought to the centre in the last stages of starvation, and some were dumped outside as if they were garbage. ICROSS immediately helped with money for food and they continue their support.

With all the help she gives to ICROSS, you'd think Mollie wouldn't have time for anything else! Wrong! Mollie is also a supporter of Hope International Development Agency, a development agency based in New Westminster. She is proud that in April this year, Hope was listed in *The Vancouver Sun* as the best group for keeping admin costs down.

Mollie has fundraised to help build wells in Ethiopia. Lamentably, many Ethiopians have no choice but to drink dirty water as a necessity of life, which sickens their children. The infant death rate is very high. Hope International seeks out clean water sources and provides the funding to build wells for villages.

Galiano school children raised thousands of dollars toward clean water wells. Mollie encouraged them

by holding fundraising dinners to aid their projects. At present Mollie supports four children in Hope House in Addis Ababa, and an Ethiopian family in a rural area. She recently asked retired musician/choirmaster Peter Dent, now living on Galiano, if he would hold two concerts, which he was more than happy to do. All funds raised were donated to Hope House.

Mollie has supported the Pursat orphanage in Cambodia for some time, helping to provide food, medicine, and school supplies.

**Galiano school children raised thousands of dollars toward clean water wells.**

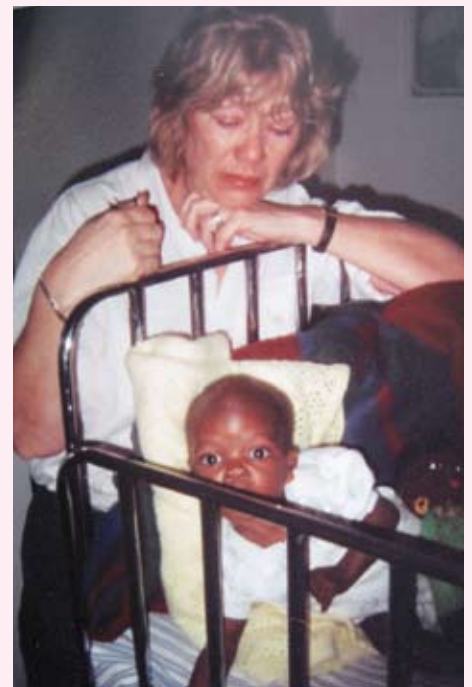
To date she feels her greatest achievement is building a school to serve two villages in Pursat, a very poor rural area. She raised the funds and Hope arranged for the school to be registered and built. A second school plus an extension to the first followed. Mollie is now funding an extension on the second school—and a high school.

While she was on a recent visit, the village Elders and a deputation of the schoolchildren's fathers asked Mollie point blank if she would give them a high school. None of them could afford the \$8 per month it costs to send their children to Phnom Penh, and they yearned for their kids to have a decent education.

She didn't have the heart to say No. (She later learned that others had turned them down.) Mollie does admit that her knees were trembling. Why? Sick children don't learn and nine clean water wells were needed.

The villagers were so grateful and excited, they started to clear the land set aside for the school as quickly as possible, even raising a little money to rent machinery.

Mollie's schools strive to fulfill the promise of a better life and are a wonderful achievement for this dedicated humanitarian. Several classrooms are now filled with healthy and happy children.



*Baby Faith and tears for a dying child in the next bed, Malawi, Southern Africa*

Mollie's bucket is getting close to full but she wants more!

During her latest visit to Cambodia, she came across a family who had lost two children to Dengue fever because they lacked the \$5 it costs to visit a clinic for help. Nothing could bring those children back, but another family close by was in similar straits, and the mother and daughter were taken to a private hospital at once. (Mollie says spending your money this way is so much better than buying shoes!)



*Famine victim, Kenya, East Africa*

## If members of her book club...each donated a Toonie, books could be purchased...

Since this event, Hope International has emergency loans set up for any family in desperate need of medical treatment.

My friend is a firm believer in education as the key to help alleviate problems in underdeveloped regions of any country.

She is as proud of what she calls “My Brilliant Idea” as any other achievement. During an earlier visit to her first school, she noticed the lack of books for leisure or study and questioned it. It seems books cost 88 cents each—beyond the pockets of the parents or teachers. Up to her ears buying rice and medicines, Mollie had to leave the books off her shopping list.

Back in Canada, she had the “brilliant flash.” If members of her book club, together with members of other clubs, each donated a Toonie, books could be purchased by Hope staff in-country. This quickly caught on and club members and her friends donated generously. Now three small libraries have been set up in the schools and apparently the villagers and their children use them constantly. Another bucketful!

## My friend is a firm believer in education as the key to help alleviate problems in underdeveloped regions of any country.

I’m sure this isn’t the last of her achievements. Mollie is so ambitious for the world’s poorest children, I bet she has more buckets lined up right now—and she’s ready to start filling them. ▲



**Ann** emigrated from London, England, in her 20s. She met her husband Ted in the Standard Building in downtown Vancouver. They have two children, Roger and Sarah. Ann loved being a legal secretary, preferring to stay at home in her later years. She met Mollie and started helping ICROSS by knitting “Izzy” dollies. Over the years, she has collected hundreds of Izzy dollies made by seniors in the Parkgate Seniors Centre. She also collects multitudes of sheets, towels, blankets, children’s clothing, shoes, and so on, for onward transmission to those in need.

wisey@shaw.ca

Mollie’s email: mrping1@mac.com

ICROSS

icross@icross.ca

www.icross-canada.com

HOPE

hope@hope-international.com

www.hope-international.com