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## The Mother's Day Offering was a gift from God



**Diane and Mike Dixon**

Dixons and threatened to overwhelm them financially. Mike, who had worked hard to support his family, was now unemployed. Diane also lost her job—and caring for Mike made it impossible to work. As the bills for his care grew, they watched their life savings fade away.

Life took a devastating turn for Mike Dixon, his wife Diane, and their two daughters when he was diagnosed with aggressive brain cancer. Mike came to Wake Forest Baptist Health for surgery. Today, he fights hard to survive through expert medical care, a family's love and faith in the Lord.

Serious illness brought painful hardships to the

"I didn't know what we were going to do," Diane said. "The hospital bills came on top of all the emotional hardships. We've had so much to worry about."

In a trying valley of heartache and need, God eased their fears through the compassion of those who give to the Mother's Day Offering. The balance of his hospital bill was paid in the name of Jesus Christ and His love.

"We cannot say thank you enough for the Mother's Day Offering! This was a great blessing in the midst of our hardship!" Diane said through tears of gratitude.

"I've given to the Mother's Day Offering for years at my church. Now we know the tremendous difference this makes for our own family. The Offering helps ordinary folks like us who never thought we would be in this position. To have this burden lifted is huge."

Tears also filled Mike's eyes, reflecting on Diane's care and the support of North Carolina Baptists. "I'm so thankful to God."

**"This was a great blessing in the midst of our hardship!"**

## The LHA Initiative

# Breaking down barriers to better health care

Sometimes the best medical care does not begin with a visit to a physician or a trip to the hospital. Health care begins with knowledge, with understanding the relationship between lifestyle, habits and health. Sometimes, to quote an old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

This perspective undergirds the Latino Lay Health Advisors Program, a joint venture between Wake Forest Baptist Health’s Department of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Education and Wake Forest School of Medicine’s Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity. The Health Disparities Initiative of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund provides the necessary financial resources for the project.

Latinos are now the largest minority in the United States. Growing Latino communities can be found in almost every major city in the country. Winston-Salem is no exception. Rev. Francis Rivers Meza, a chaplain supervisor in the Department of Chaplaincy & Pastoral Education, is one of the persons involved in efforts to make health care more readily accessible to Latinos in Forsyth County.

Working with Rivers Meza on this project are Dr. Jorge Calles-Escandón, professor of endocrinology and metabolism at Wake Forest School of Medicine; Jaimie Hunter, a doctoral student in public health at the University

of North Carolina—Chapel Hill; Dr. Rita Pichardo, assistant professor of dermatology at Wake Forest School of Medicine; Sarah Langdon, associate project manager with the Maya Angelou Center; Winona Gilbert, administrative secretary and webmaster at the Center; and Jennifer Gastelum, a second-year student at Wake Forest School of Medicine. This team designed the project and has overseen its implementation.

“Language and cultural barriers, as well as high rates of poverty within some ethnic groups, can mean disparities in access to health care services,” Rivers Meza explained. “What we have attempted to do is find ways to overcome those obstacles. Engaging local Latino clergy is one way to do that.”

“Religious leaders were chosen because a significant percentage of the Latino population has an ingrained respect for religious figures,” Calles-Escandón explained, adding that pastors or staff from local congregations with a large Hispanic membership were asked to select potential candidates to be trained as lay health advisors (LHAs).

“Our team approached the leadership of Calvary Baptist Church, Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church, Misión Presbiterian—‘El Buen Pastor,’—Iglesia Pentecostal Nueva Vida and Green Street United Methodist Church,” said Langdon. “Each

of these churches was invited to propose candidates for the program.”

According to Calles-Escandón, this ecumenicity is one of the most noteworthy aspects of the project, which has brought together an “array of denominations—Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics and Presbyterians—in a collaborative effort to improve the health of the Latino Community.”

In the end, 10 LHAs were selected. A structured curriculum was created to educate and provide these candidates with the tools necessary to provide health education in the language and style most suitable to their communities.

The candidates received 60 hours of training over a three-month period. The focus areas of the curriculum were type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, hypertension and dyslipidemia. “The LHAs are now able to design and teach health education classes on the focus areas of the project in each of their congregations,” Langdon said. Moreover, as the LHAs implement their classes and discover additional needs in the community, the project team stands ready to provide additional training.

Carmen Vasquez, a lay health advisor from Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, is excited about the new horizons the program has offered her:



(L-R) Dr. Jorge Calles-Escandón (Program Director), Laura Zavala, Jonorys Beriquete, María Clara O'Neill, Francis Rivers-Meza (Program Co-Director), Carmen Vázquez, Andrés Miranda, Raul Andriano. Not Pictured: Guillermo Arellano, Aurora Partida, Teresa Colón.

## “The Latino Lay Health Advisors Program is a true blessing from God and will be a real ‘life changer’ for many Hispanics.”

“It has been a great blessing for me to be able to participate in the Lay Health Advisors’ training because it has broadened my health knowledge and given me the opportunity to learn about diseases affecting the Hispanic population in our community.” She added, “I have realized how important it is for our churches to approach the community and, as a ministry, provide the community with sound health support and education.”

It is also important to note that while the Department of Chaplaincy & Pastoral Education, the Maya Angelou Center, and local congregations are collaborating to train lay health advisors, the project also provides direct services. Health screenings took place earlier this year at each of the five participating congregations. Individuals identified as needing care received

assistance from the project team in locating health care providers and other resources.

An early and consistent advocate for the project, Dr. Larry Phillips, Hispanic coach and consultant on the multicultural ministry team of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, likes the progress he has seen to date. “I am grateful to Dr. Jorge Calles-Escandón, principal investigator, and his study team from Wake Forest Baptist Health for their vision and commitment to bring this ministry to life. The Latino Lay Health Advisors Program is a true blessing from God and will be a real ‘life changer’ for many Hispanics.”

Pleased but not satisfied, Phillips already envisions possible next steps. “My prayer is to see this Christ-centered ministry program serve as a model for others.”

## CareNet provides congregational resources for mental health awareness month

In observance of Mental Health Awareness Month during May, CareNet of North Carolina has developed a Congregational Mental Health Literacy Guide. The packet contains resources for congregations to use during each of the first four weeks of May. It includes scripture passages with resources for sermons, education, reflections on pastoral care, and spiritual practices.

Director of Center Development and Education Bryan Hatcher explained that the guide is user friendly and compatible with all congregations. “Our hope is to demystify mental health and help congregations engage in conversation about mental health and mental wellness,” Hatcher said. “We also want to help congregations consider ways to grow and strengthen their ministries of mental health and mental wellness.”

To request a copy of the Congregational Health Literacy Guide, contact Bryan Hatcher at [bhatcher@wakehealth.edu](mailto:bhatcher@wakehealth.edu) or call CareNet of North Carolina at 336-716-0858.

### Physicians listed in Best Doctors in America®

Wake Forest Baptist Health received national acclaim when 288 of its physicians were included in the prestigious 2011-2012 *Best Doctors in America*® database. The number represents a 34.5 percent increase from the 2009-2010 list.

*Best Doctors* has a database of more than 45,000 of the best physicians in America. The list represents the top 5% of physicians practicing in the U.S. Every two years, *Best Doctors* conducts a peer survey that is completed by physicians included in the *Best Doctors* database. Specialists complete ballots assessing other doctors in their own and related specialties. One of the survey questions is "If you or a loved one needed a doctor in your specialty, to whom would you refer them?"

"We are extremely proud of all our physicians," said Russell Howerton, chief medical officer of Wake Forest Baptist Health. "We are particularly appreciative that so many have been recognized by their colleagues as Best Doctors in America. The number of our physicians listed in this esteemed database continues to increase every year, highlighting our commitment to excellence."

### Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center opens

Wake Forest Baptist Health has opened a state-of-the-art Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center. This 3,800-square-foot facility offers comprehensive, interdisciplinary outpatient treatment using the most advanced wound care therapies, including hyperbaric oxygen.

The Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center provides specialized treatment for chronic or non-healing wounds, which are defined as sores or wounds that have not significantly improved from conventional treatments. Associated with inadequate circulation, poorly functioning veins, and immobility,

*continued on next page*

## Pediatric cardiologist at Brenner has young athlete back on court

As a former athlete, Roy Jones knew that something was wrong with his son Caleb. A solid basketball player, 15-year-old Caleb was in terrific shape and could still hit the shots, but had trouble keeping up with other high school players on the court. He seemed winded during games.

"I could just tell that something was not right," Roy said. "As a former athlete, I knew he should be able to keep up with his peers and he was struggling to breathe during games." Roy's observations and subsequent visits to Brenner Children's Hospital for testing may have saved Caleb's life.

After seeing a lung specialist who found that Caleb's lungs were clear, the high school sophomore was sent to Brenner Children's Hospital, part of Wake Forest Baptist Health. There he was seen by pediatric cardiologist, Dr. Wesley Covitz. Dr. Covitz suspected a heart defect called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and confirmed the diagnosis with a sonogram that showed a thickening of the wall between the left and right ventricles of the heart.

Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, the most common cause of sudden cardiac death among healthy athletes, is a genetic condition where the heart muscle has become thick making it difficult for the heart to pump blood. Symptoms of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy include passing out during strenuous exercise, shortness of breath and chest pain.



**Caleb Jones**

Often children who play sports aren't diagnosed with the condition until they reach an age where they begin to compete at a higher level. At Brenner Children's Hospital, pediatric experts are trained to diagnose and treat children with heart problems.

"It's important that parents seek the care of a pediatric expert when it comes to the care of their child," Dr. Covitz explained. "We are specifically trained in both cardiology and pediatrics to evaluate heart problems and treat them aggressively."

Last April, doctors at Wake Forest Baptist Health implanted a defibrillator in Caleb's chest as a backup in case his heart fails. He will be monitored by pediatric cardiologists every six months to ensure that his heart continues to function properly.

Though they are shocking, Dr. Covitz said that sudden cardiac deaths among young athletes are rare. He added that heart defects are more common in boys than in girls, and basketball seems to be the riskiest sport, because of the quick sprints. Although there is no central registry for these deaths, studies suggest that in the U.S. fewer than 70 young athletes die of sudden cardiac death each year. Dr. Covitz said the risk is minuscule.

“Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy accounts for half of these sudden deaths,” Dr. Covitz said. “The condition is inherited but often develops when the patient is in the late teens or early twenties. Some patients report an arrhythmic heartbeat or shortness of breath, but often there are no symptoms. We don’t know exactly why the defect leads to death, but we believe that under exertion blood can’t reach the vessels in the thickened wall and the heart stops.”

Routine health exams don’t pick up hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. In Italy, all athletes are screened with electro cardiograms or EKGs. According to Dr. Covitz, some medical experts have pressed for a similar requirement here, but EKGs miss many defects and produce so many false readings in children that in his view they create more confusion than answers.

Dr. Covitz does not believe it’s practical to screen all athletes playing youth sports with sonograms and CT scans. However, he does recommend screening children with symptoms, whether that’s chest pain or shortness of breath. He said children in families with a history of heart defects in children should also see a cardiologist, but added that heart disease in adult relatives generally is not a risk factor for heart defects among

children in the family. And certainly, any young athlete who collapses without warning should be screened for heart problems. He stressed that it is important that children and teenagers see a pediatric cardiologist, since they are trained to diagnose rare defects in children, often missed by routine physicals and tests run on adults.

Patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy can lead active lives, but the most strenuous sports still pose a danger. Caleb was fortunate that his parents recognized his difficulty on the basketball court and got him to a pediatric specialist immediately. Although Caleb can’t play competitive sports now and must take medications to slow his heart rate, he is not letting his diagnosis define him. Caleb still enjoys recreational sports and is using his singing voice to inspire others.



**Dr. Wesley Covitz is chief of pediatric cardiology and a professor of pediatrics at Wake Forest Baptist Health Brenner Children’s Hospital. He may be reached at [wcovitz@wakehealth.edu](mailto:wcovitz@wakehealth.edu).**

non-healing wounds occur most frequently in the elderly and in people with diabetes.

“This new service will benefit many patients, from those with difficult to manage diabetes to those with cancer-related conditions,” said Joseph A. Molnar, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and medical director of the Wound Care Center.

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is an adjunct treatment for some problematic wounds. During treatment, the patient breathes 100 percent oxygen inside a pressurized chamber. By increasing the concentration of oxygen in the blood, the therapy can reduce swelling, fight infection, build new blood vessels and produce healthy tissue.

**Chest Pain Center accredited**

Wake Forest Baptist Health has received Chest Pain Center accreditation from the Society of Chest Pain Centers, an international organization dedicated to eliminating heart disease as the number one cause of death worldwide.

Wake Forest Baptist Health’s accreditation comes after a rigorous evaluation of the institution’s ability to assess, diagnose and treat patients who may be experiencing a heart attack.

Chest Pain Center accreditation means the medical center has processes in place that meet strict criteria aimed at reducing the time from the start of symptoms to diagnosis and treatment, treating patients more quickly during the critical window of time when heart muscle can be preserved. The criteria also address monitoring patients when it is not certain that they are having a heart attack to ensure that they are not sent home too quickly or are needlessly admitted to the hospital.



# Life-changing hope

Paul Mullen  
Director, Church and Community Relations

## Hope is absolutely vital to living well.

In the Old Testament, hope connected God's children to the other side of distress. In times of turmoil, they cried out to the Lord for deliverance. Knowing their future was held by God, they kept returning in basic trust to His steadfast love (*Psalms 33: 18 – 22; Jeremiah 29: 11*).

The New Testament uses "hope" 79 times. Because of God's unending love and power, no situation was hopeless. God could be trusted to work for good whatever the circumstances (*Romans 8: 28*). Peace came from trusting the present and future to the promises of Christ (*Romans 8: 35 – 39, Phil. 4: 7*).

**"Your daughter's hospital bill has been paid by compassionate and mission-minded North Carolina Baptists in the name of Jesus Christ and His love."**

"Gifts that Bring Hope" is the theme of the 2011 Mother's Day Offering. Patients suffering from severe illness and serious financial needs struggle to keep hope alive. They face constant pressures to survive financially—fearing they will lose everything as bills pile up high. When hospital bills arrive, the burdens are overwhelming.

Rev. Ed Tablazon and his family faced those fears when his daughter, Ingrid, was hospitalized. They had sacrificed security to plant a Filipino Baptist church in Winston-Salem. With a small congregation, their income is limited.

"When the hospital bills came we were so worried. It's difficult, because here you are obeying

the Lord, planting a church, and that requires a lot of sacrifice. We were so worried but trusting that God would provide," Ed stated.

Hope came through a letter saying, "Your daughter's hospital bill has been paid by compassionate and mission-minded North Carolina Baptists in the name of Jesus Christ and His love."

"There aren't enough words to thank those who helped us," Ed gratefully said. "They lifted a huge burden, freed us from worry, and allowed us to focus on our ministry."

"The Mother's Day Offering makes such a difference for families in need. This was a timely reminder that God keeps His promises—that He is a caring God who will never leave us or forsake us. This gift strengthened our faith that God is there to help us."

Your gifts to the Mother's Day Offering truly make a difference.

Please join hands with Baptists across North Carolina and give generously to the Mother's Day Offering. Together we can bring life changing hope in the name of Christ's love.

See the inspiring stories of this family and others by visiting [mothersdayoffering.org](http://mothersdayoffering.org).

Ingrid, Ed, Leah and Elizabeth Tablazon



# The Mother's Day Offering: changing fear into hope

"The Mother's Day Offering had a great impact on my life. It made me feel like there was hope for me," said Janet Martin, a cancer patient at Wake Forest Baptist Health. "This was God at work. I thank Him so much for the people that helped pay my hospital bill."

Janet and her husband found their normal lives thrown into disarray when she was diagnosed with lymphoma.



Janet Martin, her great-granddaughter, Naja, and granddaughter, Aniya

"I cried when the doctor told me. But I did not want to die from this," she said.

Janet began aggressive treatment with chemotherapy under the guidance of Dr. Susan Melin, her oncologist at Wake Forest Baptist Health. By God's grace, healing began to happen.

While Janet fought hard to recover, new burdens of distress came when her hospital bills arrived. She and her husband both work—but with limited income, they fell between the cracks of financial assistance. They had too much to qualify for government help or Wake Forest Baptist Health's charity care program, but not enough to provide for her medical care. They were burdened by hospital bills she had to pay—but could not pay. They were worried and alone on an island of need.

"I had all these bills and didn't have enough money to pay them. I did the best I could, and started paying \$25 a month. I kept trusting the Lord to make a way."

"This was a huge burden for them," Dr. Melin added. "Here you are diagnosed with cancer that is life-threatening. Then you go through all this treatment that has side effects. And then to have bills piling up. It's a tremendous stress for them. It takes a toll."

God saw Janet's distress and extended a gift of hope through the Mother's Day Offering. She received a letter from Wake Forest Baptist Health that said, "Your hospital bill has been paid by compassionate and mission-minded North Carolina Baptists in the name of Jesus Christ and His love."

"When I read that letter I was overjoyed and cried. People who didn't even know me showed this kind of love for me... This made a tremendous difference in my life. They helped me see God at work, and I'm so thankful for them!"

## The Mother's Day Offering: Frequently Asked Questions

### How is the Offering used?

Every dollar of every gift to this benevolent ministry helps patients pay their hospital bills in the name of Jesus Christ and His love.

### How are patients selected?

Serious financial need determines who receives help. These patients have too much to qualify for government assistance but not enough to pay their hospital bills. Financial counselors carefully screen every patient. With more needs than money available, the amount provided averages from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars per patient.

### How can I give to the Mother's Day Offering?

Many North Carolina Baptists give through their churches. Other people send checks directly to Church and Community Relations. Gifts can also be made online at: [mothersdayoffering.org](http://mothersdayoffering.org). Checks are made to Wake Forest Baptist Health and marked, "Mother's Day Offering."



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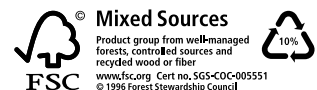
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