

# blessings

OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL | APRIL 2017

## REVIVING HISTORY IN THE HOLY LAND

PAGE 12

A SHIELD FROM  
THE WIND

PAGE 6

CURSED NO MORE

PAGE 18

BILL'S BLOG:  
NO FLY ZONE

PAGE 20



Inside this issue

12

REVIVING HISTORY  
IN THE HOLY LAND



4

## HAPPENINGS

Catch up with the goings on at Operation Blessing!



6

## A SHIELD FROM THE WIND

A Georgia grandfather  
protects his family through  
a deadly tornado



10

## BITING BACK AGAINST MOSQUITOES

Learn how Operation Blessing is  
fighting mosquito-borne disease



18

## CURSED NO MORE

After living with the stigma of  
clubfoot, a teen girl is set free



20

## BILL'S BLOG

No Fly Zone: Tackling the untold  
suffering caused by common pests



[operationblessing.org](http://operationblessing.org)



P.O. Box 2636, Virginia Beach, VA 23450



(800) 730-2537





**1 GEORGIA, USA:** Operation Blessing volunteers gather to help residents in Albany, Ga., after a powerful EF3 tornado caused five deaths and massive destruction in the community.



**2 HAITI:** Children enjoy a spirited soccer match at Operation Blessing's Ecole Nouvelle Lac Azuei school. The game was part of a celebration commemorating the opening of a brand new school cafeteria.

**3 HONDURAS:** A boy soaks in the simple pleasure of abundant safe water, thanks to a new OBI water project in his village.



**4 KENYA:** Families line up for a food distribution in Kilifi County, Kenya. Operation Blessing passed out enough food to feed 400 people for an entire month!



**5 INDIA:** Rupasi steadies herself on a stool as she learns to walk. This little girl was born with clubfoot, but she received treatment through a partnership between Operation Blessing and MiracleFeet. She can now stand up on her own!

# OPERATION BLESSING HAPPENINGS





Eddie does not think of himself as a hero, but his actions during a deadly tornado that swept through his Albany, Ga., community may have saved the lives

of his elderly mother and 9-month-old granddaughter.

Hearing an ominous sound approaching, he sprang into action. Eddie rushed to pick up his granddaughter, who was crawling across the floor. Carrying her, he hurried to his mother and guided them to a secure wall in the house where he

knelled down, shielding them with his body from whatever might happen.

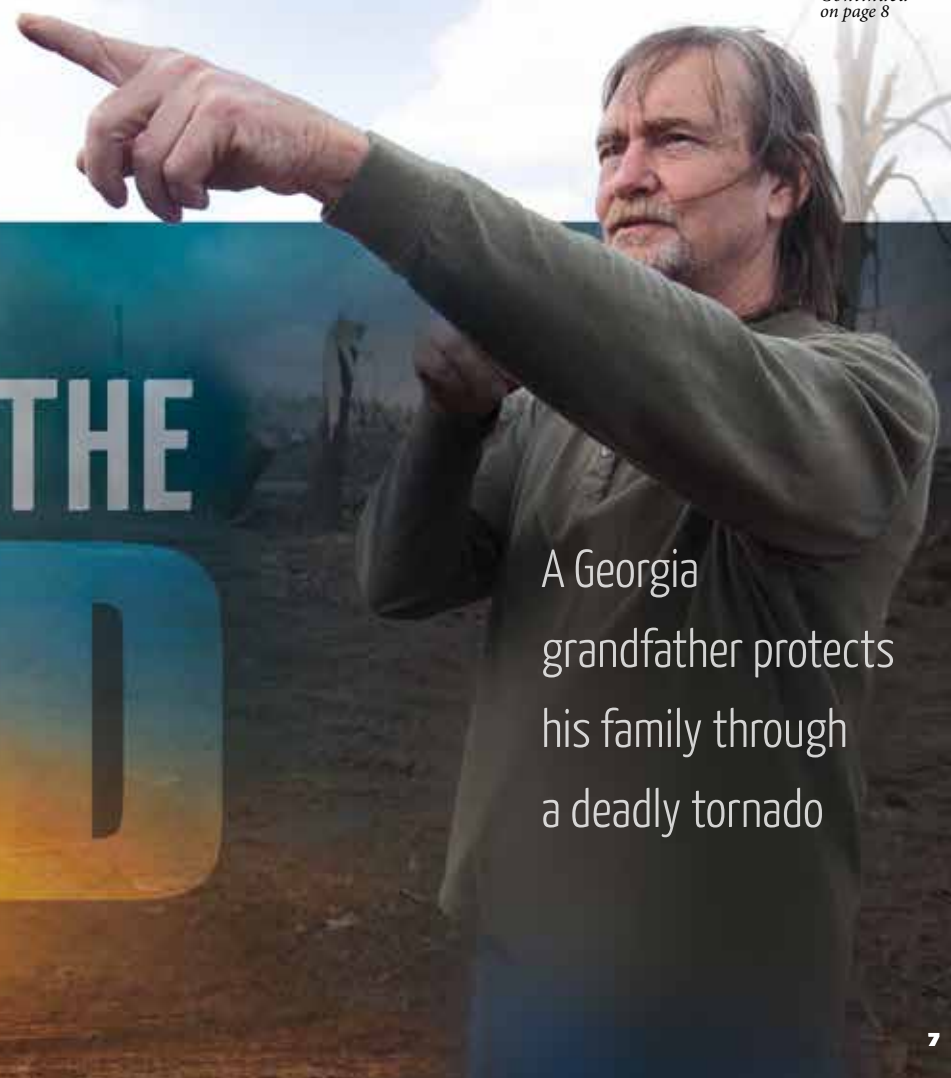
“And then all the debris started coming from one end of the house to the other,” Eddie said. “Doors were tearing loose and flying into us and all. And that was when I realized what was happening.”

As they huddled together, they could hear the house breaking apart

*Continued  
on page 8*

# A SHIELD FROM THE WIND

A Georgia grandfather protects his family through a deadly tornado



around them as trees crashed through the roof. When the winds died down and trees stopped falling, Eddie stood up to see the home badly damaged, but his precious granddaughter and elderly mother were safe.

"We were spared," he said with tears in his eyes.

Eddie knew there were too many downed trees in the yard for him to get out with both his mother and granddaughter, so he called family to come get the baby.

"It took my brother and sister-in-law over an hour and a half to climb over the trees from two streets away to come

get my granddaughter," he said.

He and his mother were rescued later, and that was when people started calling him a hero. The wall Eddie had chosen to safeguard his mother and granddaughter was a load-bearing wall, and one of the safest places in his home.

"All these people were saying, 'You're a hero,'" he said. "And I was like, 'No, God did this.'"

He said he moved without thinking, not even realizing it was a tornado. He just knew he needed to protect his baby granddaughter and mother. And he likely saved their lives.



The yard was covered with trees, and the damage to the house extensive. The work was too much for him to accomplish alone, but a friend told him about Operation Blessing and the assistance being provided to tornado victims in Albany. He called Operation Blessing, and soon a team of volunteers arrived ready to help.

"All of a sudden these people, they act like family. They act like they've known me all my

life. They'll do anything to help me," he said. "It's the best feeling in the world."

Through a special partnership between Operation Blessing and Home Depot, volunteers helped him clean up and sort through the rubble of a building in his backyard where he had stored family mementos. In the debris, volunteers were even able to find precious family photos Eddie worried he had lost!

There is no way Eddie could have handled all of this on his own.

"Until somebody [shows] up, you feel alone. You feel helpless," he said. "They just come in and let us know we're not by ourselves. They're there for us. God bless each and every one of them." ♦

Jody Gettys, vice president of U.S. disaster relief and programs, prays with Eddie after the tornado.







## World Malaria Day: **BITING BACK AGAINST MOSQUITOES**



In a single year, more than 400,000 people may lose their lives to malaria — another 200 million will be infected.\* Dangerous mosquito-borne illnesses like malaria, chikungunya, dengue fever, Zika and more make mosquitoes one of the deadliest creatures on earth.

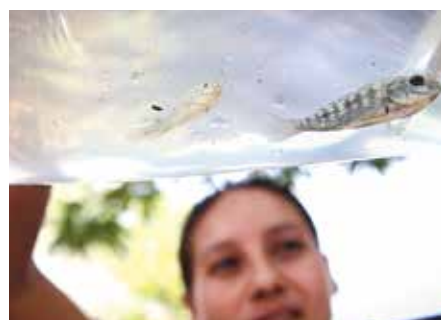
Operation Blessing has distributed treated bed nets and provided medical care in vulnerable areas. **But we have brought our efforts to another level by taking out the carrier of these dangerous diseases — the mosquito.**

We know that if a mosquito never lays eggs or those larvae never mature, they can't bite, thus we can stop the diseases before they spread.

In Honduras, Operation Blessing has launched a pilot program to wipe out mosquitoes with a combination of education, safe water solutions and biological soldiers such as turtles, fish and tiny crustaceans called copepods that eat mosquito larvae.

This is only a snapshot of Operation Blessing's efforts. To learn more, visit [ob.org/mosquito](http://ob.org/mosquito)

\*WHO Malaria Fact Sheet





REVIVING HISTORY

# IN THE HOLY LAND



**ISRAEL** – For those who follow the Christian faith, there's nowhere on earth as sacred and revered as the biblical land of Israel. Iconic locations like Jerusalem, Galilee and Bethlehem are the settings for some of the most central and beloved stories in scripture. But much has changed in the Holy Land since Jesus worked as a carpenter, and taught His disciples to be “fishers of men” on the Sea of Galilee. The trades once plied by the earliest Christians are now in danger of being lost forever to the sands of time. **BUT OPERATION BLESSING IS ON A MISSION TO SAVE THEM.**

*Continued on page 14**Continued on page 14*





## THE LAST FISHERMAN

Many of the traditional trades mentioned in the New Testament, like woodworking and fishing, are fading away in modern times. In fact, on the Sea of Galilee, there's only one fisherman left plying the waters.

His name is Manashe, and he's 60 years old. For the past ten years the fishing industry on the Sea of Galilee has been waning. This decline culminated when the Israeli government banned all commercial fishing in the area. All, that is, except for Manashe. He is now the only authorized commercial fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. Even with this special privilege, life on the sea is hard.

With slim profit margins and a family to support, Manashe had little money left over to repair his worn and tattered nets. The nets broke frequently, costing Manashe time and income. When Operation Blessing learned about the struggles of the last fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, it was clear what needed to be done. Soon, Manashe was casting brand new nets to pull his catch from Galilee's waters.

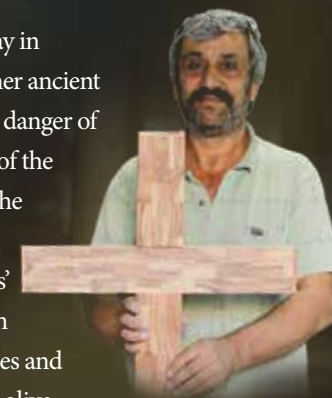
In addition to providing new nets for Manashe, Operation Blessing is partnering with the fisherman so that he can take teenagers out on his boat once a month. On these trips, young people will learn how to fish the waters where disciples Peter, Andrew, James and John once did the same.

*Continued on page 17*



## A CARPENTER NAMED JOSEPH

A short distance away in Bethlehem, another ancient tradition is also in danger of being lost. After the Church of the Nativity was constructed in the fourth century, on what is believed to be the site of Jesus' birth, Christian monks began teaching locals to carve crosses and other creations out of native olive wood. Over the centuries the art was refined and handed down from one generation to the next. Today, a small number of olive wood craftsmen still use traditional techniques to carve olive wood into crosses, cookware and other items.



Joseph is one of these few remaining artisans, but with three children in school and mounting expenses, he faced a major dilemma. "Currently, I am not able to accept any orders since I don't have the means to pay for the raw materials or tools," he said. With no funds to purchase olive wood, he was unable to keep making goods to sell.

Seeing his need, OB Israel responded with a supply of raw olive wood as well as new tools for Joseph and his fellow craftsmen to work with. Operation Blessing is also helping Joseph and other olive wood artists bring their work to a larger market in order to grow their businesses.

"Operation Blessing has allowed us to shift our focus from simply surviving financially to expanding the foundations of success," Joseph said. ♦



# CURSED NO MORE



After living with the stigma of clubfoot, a teen girl is set free

**A**n hour outside the city of Mumbai, India, lies the small village of Kalwa. There, in a dimly lit hut accessible only by a series of dark, narrow alleyways, live Sangeeta and her brother Pawan.

Sixteen-year-old Sangeeta was born with clubfoot, a congenital defect that causes her foot to be twisted out of the proper shape and position. For most of her life, her family believed that nothing could be done to fix this condition. To make matters worse, in the rural villages of India incredible stigma and prejudice surround children

with clubfoot, which caused many to believe that Sangeeta's family was cursed!

Then one day her brother, Pawan, heard about the clubfoot treatment available through Operation Blessing and partner, MiracleFeet, at a hospital in Mumbai. When a neighbor suggested the clinic to him, Pawan was ecstatic to find a solution for his sister.

Knowing that the stigma of her condition would weigh on Sangeeta for the rest of her life if she didn't receive help, Pawan took her to Mumbai by train — a long and expensive journey. A journey well worth the effort.

Sangeeta has now been treated with several rounds of casting using the non-surgical Ponseti Method, which is the safest treatment available and has recently been found to be effective in children as old as Sangeeta. The change has been remarkable. ♦





# NO FLY ZONE:

## Tackling the untold suffering caused by common pests



### Bill's Blog

by **Bill Horan**, President  
Operation Blessing International

Read more from Bill's Blog  
at [ob.org/bill](http://ob.org/bill)

In much of Latin America, low income families live in homes with open windows and no screens. In these tropical rural areas, people survive without reliable electricity or fans, so only the breeze provides relief from oppressive heat. Open windows and doors allow for maximum air flow, but mosquitoes, flies and rodents also enjoy easy access to homes.

Until a recent trip to Haiti that started specifically as a mosquito-control planning visit, I had no idea of the magnitude of suffering the poor are subjected to from diseases spread by common pests like house flies, mice and rats. OBI's long-time strategic ally, Dr. Claudia Riegel, opened my eyes to a myriad of under-the-radar health challenges from unrelenting attacks by disease-carrying pests.

Dr. Riegel serves as director of the New Orleans Mosquito, Termite and Rodent Control Board. We have worked together since our post-Hurricane Katrina mosquito-control efforts in 2006. A few weeks ago, I asked her to meet me in Haiti to inspect the campus of our home for abandoned children and to help us craft a strategy to turn Zanmi Beni into a "No Fly Zone." Dr. Riegel mentioned that while visiting, she would also inspect our site to see if there might

*Continued on page 22*

*Continued from page 21*

be other pest-related threats to the health of the kids. Fortunately, because Zanmi Beni is kept so meticulously clean, minimal tweaking was required to continue keeping the children safe. But Dr. Riegel's inspection protocol brought our attention to the pest-related dangers most poor families face.

Most Americans do not think of common pests as carriers of dangerous diseases — but in poor countries, they are a real and present danger. The link between mosquito bites and Zika is obvious, but it's harder to see the connection between flies and dysentery or tuberculosis, or the link between mice and salmonella or hemorrhagic fever. These links are real and cause untold suffering but remain under the community awareness radar. The links need to become well publicized and then broken.

Here are a couple examples of how common pests spread disease: House flies cannot chew solid food so they vomit saliva and digestive juices onto solid food in order to liquefy and slurp it up. Sound gross? It gets worse. Flies love to feed on decaying animals, garbage and raw sewage — then fly into homes, land on food then regurgitate saliva, thereby transferring pathogens that can cause a myriad of diseases. Rats and mice also spread diseases by defecating and urinating inside homes, especially near food. A single mouse drops as many as 70 fecal pellets every 24 hours. The animal's waste is very dangerous. Just breathing dust from dried out droppings spreads disease.

How can OBI help prevent pest-borne disease? Dr. Riegel explained it this way: "Conventional pest control involves 'big hammer' methods like spray programs or poison baits. These methods are immediately effective, but expensive, can be harmful to people, kill beneficial insects and worse — big hammer effects are short-lived and the pests are soon back." She explained that a better strategy is called "integrated pest management," which "utilizes lots of little hammers that pound pests into long-term oblivion." Weapons in the war against pests include reduction of pest habitats, biological controls and, most important of all, grass roots community education.



Awareness of the links between pests and disease opens eyes and stimulates change in cultural practices like garbage piles, open access to raw sewage and unprotected food. When we show a mother how she can prevent her child from getting sick, she pays attention. But until residents become aware of these links it's not possible to convince them why things need change. OBI is ideally suited to deliver these messages. Our community health workers are well respected and local leaders know that we are there to help because we have already proved the purity of our intent.

I'm excited to announce that in coming months, with cooperation from Dr. Riegel and her New Orleans team of specialists, we will roll out an integrated pest management curriculum that will begin with a teaching seminar for OBI community development managers from several countries.

Your support in helping us create "No Fly Zones" in Haiti and many other countries will alleviate suffering and demonstrate Christian compassion in action. ♦



*Dr. Riegel works with Operation Blessing in Haiti.*







# 2017

## ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

Children around the world desperately need food, water, and medicine. We want to do everything we can to meet the most critical needs of the poor.

**WE NEED YOUR URGENT  
SUPPORT TO KEEP  
THEIR HOPE ALIVE.**

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