CARE Celebrates
60 Years of Relief Work

In 1945, 22 American organizations came together to rush packages of supplies to European countries ravaged by World War II. In May of the next year, 60 years ago, the first 20,000 CARE packages were delivered to the battered port of Le Havre, France.

Some 100 million CARE packages reached people in need during the next two decades. They contained food supplies, such as corned beef, fruit preserves, milk powder and coffee, and later also included household items like carpentry tools, school supplies and medicines. They were marked “with love from Americans.”

The organization founded to send those first packages evolved into CARE International (CI), which now works in 70 countries in the developing world. The acronym CARE originally stood for “Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe,” but now stands for “Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.”

The first CARE packages were military surplus food parcels, which Americans (including US President Harry Truman) purchased for ten dollars and designated a recipient.

Sometime later, the surplus parcels ran out and the organization began assembling their own packages, using donations from food companies. Designations for recipients began to be less specific.

US President John F. Kennedy said, in 1962, “Every CARE package is a contribution to the world peace our nation seeks. It expresses America’s concern and friendship in a language all peoples can understand.”

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WASHINGTON, DC—After a heated and bitter debate—and an attempt earlier in the summer by Republican lawmakers to keep a minimum wage bill from coming to the floor—the US Congress has taken a first step toward raising minimum wages for the country’s poorest workers.

Just before Congress was set to adjourn for the summer, the House of Representatives voted to raise the minimum-wage level from its current rate of $5.15 an hour to $7.25 by the middle of 2009.

The measure, however, is tied to an unpopular plan to cut estate taxes (called “death taxes” by those who oppose them). Democrats argue that extending the estate tax cut would benefit a tiny but very wealthy portion of the US population. Republicans claim it would aid small businesses and farmers.

As the August recess loomed, House representatives compromised. In order to pass the most significant changes to pension laws in 30 years, the Republicans offered the Democrats a $2.10 hike in the minimum wage, coupled with a roll-back of the estate tax. They also agreed to remove a host of popular tax breaks from the pension bill.

The deal was pushed by moderate Republicans, many facing tough reelection fights this fall. Opponents charged that lawmakers had voted to increase their own salaries, but had not raised the minimum wage in nine years.

The pension bill aims to reform the employer pension system that is currently underfunded by some $450 billion, risking a federal bailout. Without congressional action, airlines Northwest and Delta said they would have to shut down their pension plans. The agreement requires more than 30,000 companies to boost payments to their pension plans, offers relief to airline companies on the verge of default, raises the contribution limits for IRAs and other 401(k) plans, and promotes charitable giving.

Critics say the House deal is aimed at two groups at opposite ends of the economic spectrum. The minimum wage hike will help some 6.6 million beneficiaries with an average dollar benefit of $1,200. The estate tax cut will benefit some 8,200 people with an average dollar benefit of $1.4 million, continued on page 7

As battlefields moved to different places around the world, CARE responded to needs in the Philippines, then Korea, Hungary, and Vietnam.

In 1954 the US Congress passed a law that enabled CARE to use large stockpiles of surplus American food in relief projects overseas. CARE trained the first Peace Corps volunteers in the early 1960s.

Finally, the CARE package was largely phased out in the late 1960s, as CI’s mission expanded to include development as well as relief. Nevertheless, the organization continued to send disaster relief kits to Niger, Chad, and Cambodia—and throughout the next few decades as hunger and genocide stalked various regions of Africa.

CI began, in the late 1960s, to work in partnership with host countries to break the cycle of poverty—in education, health care, water, food, housing, and income projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Today, most of the staff of more than 12,000 are citizens of the countries where the work is carried out.

In more recent years, work has expanded to the former Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, as well as US regions hit by hurricanes.

As CI’s 60th anniversary year began last January, CARE USA President Peter D. Bell said, “In the last several decades, we have reached beyond the simple brown box of the 1940s to address the long term issues of poverty.

The term CARE package has been a household word in the US since the 1940s. It has been used, however, in recent decades to refer to many different kinds of “relief” packages—including those sent to one’s offspring during college exams. Many Americans likely do not know the origin of the term. The Smithsonian Institution may help to change that. In 1996, the Smithsonian inducted a CARE package into its permanent collection.

—story by Katie Cook. Sources: CARE Australia, CARE UK, CARE USA, “Handle with Care” by Rita Braver, CBS News. Special thanks to Don Foster of CARE UK for the CARE package photo.
May 25 marked the 20th anniversary of what some call the largest public demonstration in US history. In 1985, entertainment lawyer Ken Kragen had organized the USA for Africa event (people will remember best the popular “We Are the World” song, performed by a large group of well-known artists) to raise awareness about famine in Ethiopia and other parts of Africa.

The USA for Africa organization, that same year, began an effort to bring US hunger issues to the public eye. They decided to do this in May 1986 with a human chain that stretched from New York City’s Battery Park to a pier in Long Beach, California. They called it Hands Across America (HAA).

Some seven million people—disabled teenagers, nursing home residents, babies and people over 100, prison inmates, hundreds of lawmakers, governors, corporate sponsors, and celebrities—held hands for 4,152 miles on that Sunday afternoon, as radios across the country simultaneously broadcasted the theme song.

After having responded initially to the effort with a challenging statement (“There is no Ethiopia here”), US President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy joined the line on May 25, holding hands with children across the White House portico. Across the mall at the Capitol, Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill represented the other side of the political aisle. In Little Rock, Arkansas, Governor Bill Clinton stood in the line.

Baseball teams held hands with fans across stadiums in New York. Catholic sisters joined hands with members of Hell’s Angels in Pittsburgh. A couple was married on the line in New Jersey. A chain of migrant workers stretched out for 51 miles in Texas.

Navajo and Hopi people held a special pow-wow in New Mexico.

Don Novello, as Father Guido Sarducci from Saturday Night Live, was the unlikely host for a stretch of highway between the towns of Decatur and Bowie, in the Texas prairie. A billboard near Decatur, boasting the HAA logo and the words “Welcome, Father Sarducci,” stayed up for months.

The line also went through the Crystal Cathedral in California. In fact, around 1,000 churches participated—including the one I was serving as associate pastor in Shamrock, Texas.

I’ll have to admit that I was skeptical about this event. I didn’t understand what good it would do for people to stand in a line and sing. It was difficult, where I lived, to get people to talk about food security and economic justice issues, and I expected them to totally reject this event.

For some reason, however, people jumped at the chance to participate in Hands Across America. The line for our group was 55 miles south, on Highway 287, near Childress. It was a smallish group, including the pastor and myself, some elderly women, some children from low-income families, and a few non-church-type people from the community who wanted to join us. But there we were.

I don’t remember much about the exact moment of the singing. I do remember being amazed at the diversity of our group, as well as the folks we joined on the highway. I remember one of the group remarking that we were taking part in history.

But I also remember what Hands Across America seems to have accomplished. The event netted $20 million dollars, which was distributed to 1,700 organizations in 50 states. It also seemed to raise the conscience of the country. Shortly after HAA, $800 million dollars, previously held up by Congress, was released to the Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) nutrition program. The issue of hungry people in the US was no longer so easily dismissed.

For many young people, including those of our church, USA for Africa and Hands Across America represented their first involvement with social issues.

Some critics felt that HAA’s celebratory nature was inappropriate, given the harshness of life experienced by the people in poverty for whom the event was organized. However, HAA’s enormity, its wild diversity, the feeling that limits were meaningless—all of those things were part of a cultural phenomenon that might do us some good right now.

To commemorate HAA’s 20th anniversary, the organizers re-released a documentary, “The Story of Hands Across America,” this time on DVD. They also made a special announcement, once again calling for action in the US on behalf of the country’s poor.

—story by Katie Cook. For more information about the anniversary, go to www.USAforAfrica.org.
Power of the People: Bottom-Up Solutions to Hunger

The Twenty-Third Annual World Food Day Teleconference
October 16, 2006

This year’s World Food Day Teleconference will examine the unique and potentially powerful role played by hundreds of grassroots-based movements working for a world free of hunger. The discussion will be a follow-up of the 2005 program, in which Frances Moore Lappé framed the issue of hunger as a shortage of democracy. Three international leaders with hands-on experience and knowledge about these “home-grown” endeavors will share information:

Dr. Makanjuola Olaseinde Arigbede of Nigeria, a full time development activist who trained as a doctor of medicine;

Eva Clayton (former congresswoman from North Carolina) who has just retired as Associate Director-General and director of the International Alliance Against Hunger for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN; and

Dr. Deepa Narayan, of India, senior adviser in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management of the World Bank, and author and team leader of the Voices of the Poor initiative.

In addition, there will be a live uplink with the World Food Prize laureate from ceremonies in Iowa. The program will be available in English, with simultaneous French and Spanish interpretation for worldwide audiences. Single reproducible copies of the teleconference Study/Action Packet are available now, and will be sent free of charge to registered sites in North America.

Continuing Education Credits for participation will be provided through Marywood University for clergy and social service professionals. CEUs are also available from the American Dietetic Association, as well as PDUs from the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. The program will be broadcast live from Washington, DC, Monday, October 16th, from noon to 3:00 p.m., Eastern Time. There are no restrictions on videotaping or re-broadcast.

—from Doctors Without Borders, Médecins Sans Frontières

A Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City

Guided by Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) aid workers, visitors to this outdoor educational exhibit are asked to imagine that they are among the millions of people fleeing violence and persecution in—for example—Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, North Korea, or Sudan.

An estimated 33 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes and live in temporary shelter, with nearly two-thirds of them displaced within their own countries. The exhibit is made up of materials used by MSF in its emergency medical work around the world, including emergency refugee housing, a food distribution tent, water pump, health clinic, vaccination tent, therapeutic feeding center, and a cholera treatment center.

A Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City addresses questions such as: Will I be safe? What will I eat? How do I find water? Can I get medical care? And where will I live?

Launched in France in 1995, A Refugee Camp has since appeared in Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Holland, Japan, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates, and is scheduled to appear in Italy, and Hong Kong. It first appeared in the US in 2000. Almost 20,000 people visited the exhibit in New York, New Jersey, and Los Angeles.

This fall, A Refugee Camp will be open in the following cities.

Central Park, New York City, NY—September 15-17
Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY—September 20-24
Piedmont Park, Atlanta, GA—September 27-October 1
Centennial Park, Nashville, TN—October 4-8

For more information, to schedule a school tour, or to visit an interactive educational web site about refugees, go to the MSF web site:

—from Doctors Without Borders, Médecins Sans Frontières
Third Volume of Lectionary Reflections Released

Meditations on Food and Justice for Year C Now Available

This summer, Bread for the World (BFW) released the third volume of Hunger for the Word: Lectionary Reflections on Food and Justice. Hunger for the Word, Year C, edited by Larry Hollar, provides weekly justice-oriented biblical reflections on lectionary readings. Year C will begin this year with Advent.

Writers from a wide variety of faith communities have contributed to the three-volume set, which includes earlier books for Years A and B of the lectionary cycle. All three books explore the scriptural witness with an openness to seeing how God’s Word can nourish us in the struggle to ensure that all God’s people are fed. Each is 240 pages. Contributors to the series include Bread for the World president David Beckmann, founder Art Simon, Jim Sundholm of Covenant World Relief (Evangelical Covenant Church), Elizabeth Vander Haagen of the Christian Reformed Church, and Glen Stassen of Fuller Theological Seminary, among others. Beckmann and Simon are Lutheran, and Stassen, a leading ethicist, is Baptist.

In addition to the biblical reflections, each weekly entry includes ideas for children’s sermons and appropriate musical selections related to the day’s themes. All three volumes are available at www.breadstore.org, or at www.asl.org.

Founded in 1974, BFW specializes in public policy, lobbying the legislative and executive branches of the United States government to address the root causes of hunger and poverty in the U.S. and overseas. BFW is a nonpartisan organization supported by 45 denominations and many theological perspectives.

Series editor Larry Hollar, an ordained Presbyterian elder, is the senior BFW regional organizer. Combining academic training in theological studies and law, he has had a varied career as a faith-based advocate, a Congressional staff member, and a government lawyer.

—sources: Bread for the World, a Prism E-pistle (Prism Magazine), Alternatives for Simple Living

Church World Service Issues Request for Disaster Kits

Because of growing needs stemming from the earthquake in Southern Asia in October 2005, and the hurricanes that affected the United States in the summer of 2005, Church World Service (CWS) recently issued an urgent request to help replenish their supply of Baby and School Kits, as well as Emergency Clean-up Buckets. Officials are trying to prepare for what is predicted to be another busy hurricane season.

School Kits cost around $13 to assemble, while Baby Kits come to $39 and Clean-up Buckets are $45. For instructions on assembling and shipping kits, go to www.churchworldservice.org/kits/index. Some participants choose to donate enough cash for a kit (and to help CWS defray shipping costs), rather than assembling one.

—from Church World Service’ PO Box 968; Elkhart, IN 46515; Phone: 800/297-1516; Web: www.churchworldservice.org.
Humanitarian Aid Beginning in Lebanon Despite Lack of Security

TYRE, LEBANON—Just before press time, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delivered a much-needed load of food aid to southern Lebanon, but workers say that thousands of Lebanese people are still stranded without running water or electricity. In addition, thousands of Libyans and Palestinians are said to be stranded in Beirut.

According to Ali Naji, head of the Committee for the Aid of Refugees, (CAR), some 925 Lebanese families have sought refuge in the impoverished al-Bas Palestinian camp in central Tyre since Israel’s air attacks against Lebanon began on July 12.

Meanwhile, Hakim Khalji, the field coordinator of Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) for Tyre, says Israel would not guarantee MSF safe passage to south Lebanon until at least the end of the first week of August. “I have never faced such a problem with supply,” says Khalji. “We have no security here.”

Khalji says MSF has delivered five truckloads of medical supplies to Tyre over the past two days. This should last a week, he says, but he would rather bring a truckload.

Returning to Lebanon after a ten-year absence, MSF opened a clinic in Bashour Hospital in central Tyre on July 27. Khalji says the surgery has received 50 patients and is expecting hundreds more.

—from IRINnews.org (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, from Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières

New NGO Pledges to End Starvation in Congo

NAIROBI, KENYA—At press time, on the eve of the first multi-party elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 1960, an international nongovernment organization (NGO) launched a campaign to end starvation in that country.

Called “The Campaign to End Starvation in the Congo,” the organization aims at creating awareness within the DRC government, as well as the international community, about food security issues. John Sauer, a development and communications officer, said that a major goal is to bring about change in the country’s infrastructure.

The Campaign will focus on curbing malnutrition and developing water and sanitation projects. They plan to work on drinking water supplies, set up water committees, and train personnel in emergency response measures and cholera prevention.

The Campaign will also involve food security programs: the distribution of seeds, tools, and fishing kits; farmer-to-farmer training; and projects to increase farming productivity.

NGOs have estimated that 1,200 people die each day in the Congo due to starvation, lack of clean drinking water, and poor health care, according to Sauer. He said many of the refugees and internally displaced people are returning to homes and fields that have been looted and destroyed.

“They are in immediate need of care for their malnourished children, assistance in replacing lost agriculture and fishing materials, and clean water,” he added.

In the past 10 years, the northeastern district of Ituri, Orientale Province and North and South Kivu provinces have been especially distressed by violence, a poor health-care system and a shattered economy.

Sauer said Action Against Hunger had programs supporting 400,000 people nationwide and was concentrating its work in the Kivus and Katanga province.

“With greater stability, we will be able to expand our efforts to provide sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation and basic health care,” said Thierry Laurent-Badin, the charity’s country director in eastern Congo.

—www.irannews.org (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

University of Arizona Launches Pilot Advocacy Program

TUCSON, ARIZONA—A group of University of Arizona (UA) law students are helping to improve the health and long-term wellbeing of low-income families in Tucson. The Tucson Family Advocacy Program, the only one of its kind in Arizona, helps people to maneuver through the maze of bureaucracy.

The program put medical and legal services under one roof at the University of Arizona College of Medicine’s Department of Family and Community Medicine clinic. Law students conduct legal research and interview clients, who may not even know they are eligible for state or federal assistance. With their help, hundreds of clients have obtained resources they would normally be without.

Program director Anne Ryan said that most of the clients have never had legal help with their problems. The program helps to appeal decisions by the federal government, such as rejected applications for Social Security Disability Insurance.

The endeavor is a pilot project, modeled after one begun by Boston pediatrician Barry Zuckerman to help low-income children in 1993. Frustrated by his attempts to berate landlords to provide heat for low-income families and rid their apartments of roaches—which aggravate
asthma in children—he created a legal advocacy program at the Boston University School of Medicine’s Boston Medical Center.

Support for the Tucson program comes from University Physicians Healthcare and the UA Department of Family and Community Medicine. Money also comes from the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education, funded by members of the Arizona Bar Association.

—from a story by Sheryl Kornman, the Tucson Citizen

**Doctors Without Borders**

**Frustrated by Closed Doors in China**

BEIJING/BRUSSELS—After four years of seeking permission to bring HIV/AIDS treatment to China’s Henan province, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has found the door firmly shut by provincial authorities. Henan is particularly hard hit by the HIV virus; between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s many poor farmers got infected in a poorly run commercial program for blood donation and transfusion.

“Since 2002 we have carried out six assessments in various districts of Henan,” outgoing MSF Head of Mission, Luc van Leemput, said.

“Even if the Henan government is trying hard to deal with the epidemic as part of China’s national AIDS response program, many challenges remain. There have been many repeated requests for support from patients, local administrators and local health officials.”

In Hubei province, bordering Henan to the south, the MSF team and the Center for Disease Control in the city of Xiangfan are providing integrated treatment and care for people living with HIV/AIDS. One-fifth of the patients in this project are from Henan and the demand from people in that province to be enrolled has been increasing significantly in recent months.

MSF continues to provide treatment and care in Xiangfan as well as in Nanning, in Guangxi province. The projects go far beyond a technical approach. Patients are not merely administered antiretroviral medication and drugs to fight opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis or pneumonia; rather, the MSF projects provide comprehensive care to the patients and the community, that also includes testing, individual counseling, setting up patient support groups, and providing information to patients’ families, health workers, and the wider community.

Earlier, the national health authorities praised the MSF approach as an example of the kind of care that should be made available for China’s population living with HIV/AIDS.

—from Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières

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**Minimum Wage, continued from page 2**

generated from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) in Washington.

Debate on the bill in the Senate was about to begin at press time, with pundits saying they do not expect the joint bill to pass there. The Senate bill includes the other tax cuts, which are estimated to cut about $310 billion in revenues over the next decade. Senate negotiators said that these cuts were key to passing the bill in the Senate. They include a popular research-and-development tax credit and a $4,000 tax deduction for college expenses.

As the Congressional debate and maneuvering heated up in June, the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) released a report stating that full-time jobs at low wages often do not provide enough to support a family. The report, “When Work Doesn’t Pay: What Every Policymaker Should Know,” that reveals that even though the government provides “work support” benefits to help minimum-wage and other low-wage workers provide for their children, the structure of these benefits causes families to end up in worse financial shape than before.

The Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR)—an independent, nonpartisan think tank—released a report at about the same time, saying that, in terms of buying power, the federal minimum wage is at its lowest point in 50 years. The CEPR said that the proposed hike would increase the annual earnings of the average full-time, full-year, minimum-wage worker by $1,520.

Another CEPR report—*How Good is the Economy at Creating Good Jobs*, released last November—found that 26.6 percent of the US workforce is in a job that pays poorly and offers neither health insurance nor a pension.

Raising the minimum wage is only the first step in helping families to make ends meet. The substantial share of minimum wage workers are adults making significant contributions to the total family income. In the early 2000s, fewer than one-in-five minimum wage workers was under the age of 20 and half were between ages 25 and 54.

Christ is not only a healer of individuals. He is also a prophet to the nations. While he walked the earth, Jesus delivered people from paralysis, insanity, leprosy, suppurring wounds, deformity, and muteness. But again and again in word and deed he returned to the plight of the poor, whose poverty, in true prophetic fashion, he considered no historical accident but the fruit of social injustice.

What would he say and do in our hard and uncertain times, in a world of thirteen million refugees, a world one-half of whose children never so much as open their mouths to say “aah” to a doctor, a world in which almost every country is robbing the poor to feed the military? And would he not pronounce our own nation a greedy disgrace? Whole cities could live on the garbage from our dumps, on the luxuries we consider necessities.

The world with its triumphs and despairs, its beauty and ugliness, has today moved next door to everyone of us. Only spiritual deafness can prevent our hearing the voice of God in the clamor of the cities. Only blindness of a willful sort can prevent our seeing the face of the Risen Lord in the faces of the suffering poor. The glory of God is the human race fully alive, and that means at least minimally fed, clothed, and housed.

—William Sloane Coffin, Credo

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

—Marion Wright Edelman

Manipulation has emerged as a positive value. Oddly enough, it’s kindness that seems far more memorable and remarkable...to be kind isn’t to be soft, but rather humane. Cold is simple... Kindness takes far more courage.

—Wendy Wasserstein

So, God, give us compassion that lasts. May we give whatever is within our power to overturn the tables of injustice and to pour out bags of rice for all those the world forgets to feed.

—Sharland Sledge, from “Hunger” in Prayers and Litanies for the Christian Seasons

art from the Hunger Site