

Rockford woman's passion is to help women worldwide

by Vicki Cassis

Rockford resident Mary Dailey Brown is like many who see the injustices of the world and feel anguish for the circumstances of others. She also is a person who decided to do something about it. Brown believes that every person can make a difference—even to people who live far away in cultures very unlike

our own. She was inspired to found SowHope to do what she can to help. SowHope was created to change the lives of women in third world countries.

SowHope is an organization that teaches women of third world countries to uphold a business that sustains their families and is headquartered here in Rockford. Brown is filled with compassion and passion for this cause. The non-profit organization with a board of directors and volunteers touches thousands of women across the world.

Brown shares sobering statistics—in third world countries, women live on less than two dollars a day. Some walk miles to get their water, no matter how muddied it is. As of May of this year, the two-year young



HELPING WOMEN AND FAMILIES—Mary Dailey Brown headquarters her non-profit organization SowHope from Rockford. Families in third world countries feel its reach.

organization has helped 3,750 women throughout the world.

Needs are tremendous. "SowHope is one of the only organizations meeting the basic needs of women internationally," said Brown who has 30 years experience in short-term mission work.

At SowHope headquarters the flame of hope is displayed on a poster along with the quote of Francis of Assisi, "Where there is despair let me sow hope." Also lining the walls are large pictures of women from different places around the world draped in glistening magenta and olive scarves. The women pictured are working, with beautiful smiles on their faces despite the everyday challenges they face. Some have

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FAITH IN ACTION—Brown's desire to help women live better lives has taken her around the globe and made a difference to thousands.

baskets or urns on their heads where they carry water, grains, or firewood, possibly a child on their backs as well.

Bonnie Conley gives her time and energy as board secretary and participates from the bottom up. She's been involved since the inception of the idea in 2005. She claims Mary's passion is infectious and she is designed for this purpose. "This is a God-size idea and I'm with you," she said to Mary when the idea was shared. "I was compelled to do something to make a difference."

In Egypt women learn about health and family planning. This involves an AIDS prevention and sex education training. In Bangladesh there is an economic loan project. In India there is a literacy project. These projects serve another 5,050 women and will touch more lives as time goes on.

Economic inspiration is from the book, "Banker To The Poor" by Muhammad Unus, which gives the idea of micro-lending. SowHope partners with local leaders who have set up the infrastructure for banking and local leaders will match the goals to those with leadership skills and experience when the criteria is reviewed.

Some businesses are loans to buy sewing machines or looms to weave tablecloths. "My belief in God motivates me," says Brown.

Brown's love of people and the seed of Christianity is planted in her work although religion is not an issue. SowHope will help women regardless of their religion.

It's the plight of women that board member Tim Beals saw when he traveled with Brown to Nepal where, "Mary's heart stirred giving her a vision and SowHope was born," he says.

Needs are looked at seriously and funds are being raised continuously where the very best mileage is attained with the monies. It's exciting and empowering to change lives for Bonnie Conley while she asks, "What can I do next?"

SowHope will also have a booth at the 2009 Grand Rapids Women's Expo. SowHope is a 501© non-profit organization and donations are tax deductible. If your group is looking for a speaker about how "Lives of Women Improves the World," another presentation, or for more information, call 616-433-1575. Check out the website, www.sowhope.org; too.

SowHope's Vision is to build partner relationships that positively affects women's lives in measureable ways. The organization's mission is to inspire women around the world by promoting wellness, education, and economic opportunities.