

# the storycloth

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## *Building Service Networks for Healing and Basic Needs*

In 2005 the Center for Victims of Torture launched an ambitious project to bring healing to recent African refugees and immigrants now living in the Minneapolis suburbs of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center. Many of these newcomers endured torture or war trauma and local organizations were not experienced in working with survivors.

Recognizing this need, CVT developed the New Neighbors/Hidden Scars project by bringing together a network of schools, clinics, churches and social service organizations to help these new residents heal from their physical and emotional wounds. Meeting monthly, the network planned ways to help the newcomers receive their basic needs and rebuild their lives.

Initial activities included training sessions for the network members and other professionals, as well as for leaders of the refugee and immigrant community. As network participants learned about the effects of war trauma and how to

promote healing, they were better able to help these newcomers.

### **CREATING SYSTEM CHANGE**

Under CVT leadership the New Neighbors/Hidden Scars network developed new and sustainable programs and promoted referral relationships. Network members provided legal and health insurance information in apartment buildings where refugees live and created groups for seniors and youth for support and socializing. A local police department strengthened its relationship with the community through orientation classes for newcomers and supporting Liberian girls in a kickball league.

To help younger survivors of war trauma heal, CVT staff worked with schools and a family social service agency to develop support groups. As a result, students learned to identify and manage their emotions, recognize their personal strengths and develop leadership skills. Over 40 students participated

CVT social worker Alice Tindi spoke at the launch of the African Food Distribution Center.



PHOTOS BY C. C. STROM

Members of the New Neighbors/Hidden Scars network created the African Food Distribution Center to provide traditional foods to recent refugees.

in the groups and found the experience helped them adjust to their schools and new community.

“It was helpful to talk about what happened to us,” said one student. Another student said, “I learned how to control my anger.”

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*Our mission: To heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities, and to stop torture worldwide.*

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## Letter from the Executive Director



**Douglas A. Johnson**

It's only when we imagine for ourselves what it would be like to run from state terror, torture, rape, the destruction of our homes and families that we can understand how vital it would be to find a place that welcomed us and tried to heal our wounds.

— Emma Thompson, actress

Here at CVT, we continue to build such a place—helping torture survivors heal from their deep wounds and reclaim their lives. Thank you for being part of this healing community. Your moral and financial support makes this good work possible.

As we begin a new year, in the most challenging economic climate since the Great Depression, I am saddened to report that several of our partner centers have had to close their doors to the people who need them most. Here in the U.S., our colleagues in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Tucson, Arizona, couldn't raise the funds they needed in order to stay in business. In Greece, one of the oldest and most well-established centers in the world succumbed to the same fate. These are devastating losses for the thousands of torture survivors who'll no longer have access to care.

We expect 2009 to be a challenging year for CVT, too. But we have budgeted conservatively and are aggressively controlling costs. And we've worked hard to diversify our funding base. If we can retain the support of our generous individual donors, we'll be able to sustain our programs of care, capacity-building and advocacy during these difficult financial times.

In fact, this year we're expanding our programs of care and capacity-building. The Rift Valley Healing Initiative, a three-year project that began on January 1, will strengthen our ability to care for torture survivors in the Democratic Republic of Congo by enabling us to work in an additional community. The project will also enhance clinical capacity at four partner sites in Central and Eastern Africa, helping them build stronger programs of care.

In Jordan, where we've opened a healing center to care for Iraqi torture survivors, we have been hiring staff, conducting training, identifying partners for referrals for non-mental health services, and conducting community assessments in and around Amman where the majority of Iraqi refugees live. We began extending care to clients in December.

While 2009 will bring fresh and extended challenges at CVT, we enter this new year with cautious optimism as we draw hope, courage and inspiration from the support of friends like you. Thank you again for all you do, and for being part of the healing community that helps torture survivors rebuild their lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Douglas A. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Douglas A. Johnson

# Building Service Networks

From page 1

Through the groups these students learned to develop trust in each other and communicate their feelings.

Because religious communities play a significant role in the lives of many Africans a weekly support and education group of African immigrants and refugees was established through a local church. Initially led by a CVT social worker, the group is now coordinated by a volunteer health professional, local African leaders and the church. Each session includes a meal, information about living in a new country, the effects of war trauma, grief and healing, as well as spiritual sustenance for group members.

“There’s nothing that can stop me from going,” said local Liberian Cecil W. Bropleh, who co-leads the group and drives participants to the meetings. Bropleh is committed to helping people heal from their experiences. Group participants “have confidence in one another and can share their problems” in a safe and confidential setting, Bropleh said. He witnesses individuals in the group begin healing from their torture experiences,

rebuilding their careers, lives and relationships.

For those experiencing culture shock or the ongoing effects of torture, traditional foods can be comforting. But finding culturally-appropriate foods in a new country is difficult for refugees and immigrants. With CVT support, local African community leaders created the African Food Distribution Center (AFDC) to provide traditional foods at no cost. The AFDC now distributes familiar African foods such as fufu flour and Titus sardines to 150 families each month. At each distribution refugees who might have suffered war trauma or torture can also connect with health programs and social services.

## REPLICATING SUCCESS

Having transitioned the New Neighbors network to community leadership CVT continues building on this successful project by raising awareness of the effects of torture and working to improve services to recent refugees living in the St. Paul area. While many African and Hmong survivors of torture have resettled in St. Paul, it is also

home to newly arriving refugees from Myanmar (Burma) and Bhutan, whose languages, cultures and foods are unfamiliar to many



PHOTO BY ELLEN HINCHCLIFFE

*A public service announcement on local cable reassured torture survivors they are not alone and healing is possible. The announcement was part of a public education campaign for the New Neighbors/Hidden Scars project. CVT is now replicating the successful project in St. Paul.*

service providers.

Through community outreach, public education, and training, CVT will bring healing to refugees living in St. Paul who survived torture and war trauma. CVT psychologist Patricia Shannon and social workers Evelyn Lennon and Alice Tindi who led the New Neighbors/Hidden Scars project are now assessing needs, developing relationships and planning ways to expand the capabilities of local providers. With a new network to help torture and war trauma survivors access health care, food and other basic needs, CVT will continue the work of healing the wounds of torture and helping survivors rebuild their lives.

*Rev. Samuel Emmanuel Vansiea spoke on how faith promotes healing from torture during a workshop for religious and community leaders. CVT's New Neighbors/Hidden Scars project brought together religious leaders, educators, medical professionals and service providers to help heal the wounds of torture.*

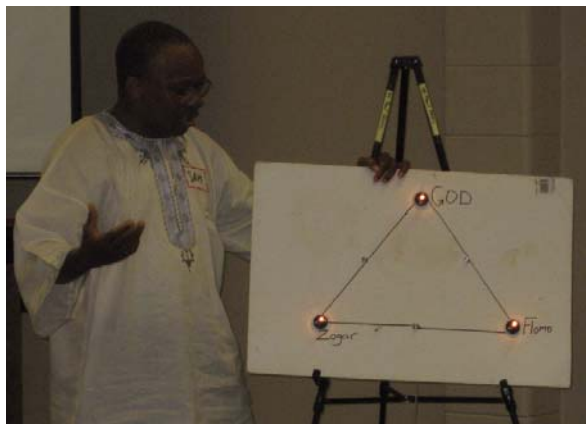


PHOTO BY C.C. STROM

## Boston Scientific Foundation:

# Committed to Healing the Wounds of Torture

CVT thanks the **Boston Scientific Foundation** for its generous \$10,000 grant to help provide healing services to survivors of torture in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

“We are proud and humbled to offer our support to CVT to help some of the most vulnerable members of our community,” said Robert Strand, an Employee Community Team Member with the Boston Scientific Foundation. “A fundamental component of the Boston Scientific Foundation

mission is to improve health and welfare of disadvantaged persons, and CVT’s holistic approach to healing the victims of torture supports this.”

Boston Scientific joins the following corporations in making significant contributions to CVT during 2008: **Ameriprise Financial, DLA Piper, Little & Company, Medica, Medtronic, Salesforce.com, and UCare Minnesota.**



Robert Strand (left) of Boston Scientific with Lori Stone and Pete Dross of CVT

## Annual Renewal Gifts Create Healing and Hope

At the beginning of each year, we ask CVT members to renew their annual support for our healing programs and advocacy efforts. Renewal gifts received early in the year have the greatest possible impact because we can leverage them throughout the year. Your renewed support helps underwrite CVT’s day-to-day operations ensuring that torture survivors have a voice in our society and a place to go to for help.

The downturn in the economy is impacting all of us—individuals and organizations alike. Yet we heard from so many of you at the end of the last year because you recognize the importance of individual giving for CVT. We are deeply grateful for your support and generosity.

Annual renewal gifts are a message of encouragement to CVT staff and volunteers. And for the torture survivors we serve, these gifts are truly a message of hope. Your renewal gift does not have to be large, but when it is pooled with gifts from other individuals it has a tremendous impact on CVT.

CVT clients were told by their torturers that they were alone, that no one cared about them. But more than twenty years of CVT’s services, made possible by financial contributions from you, are an eloquent witness to compassion and our inspiring healing community. When you receive your renewal request, please respond. If you wish to renew with a secure online contribution, visit [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org) and click on “*donate*.”

## Make a Difference in the Life of a Survivor

Your generous support brings healing to torture survivors worldwide. CVT welcomes all types of donations.

- **Monthly Sustainers** allow for on-going planning and delivery of healing services.
- **Planned Giving** continues your legacy of support.
- **Gifts of Stock** support survivors while offering tax benefits to donors.
- **In-Kind Donations** of specific items improve the lives of survivors.
- **Tribute Gifts** celebrate events or memorialize loved ones.

Donate online at [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org), send a check to 717 East River Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55455, or call 1-877-265-8775 for other ways to give. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.