July 2009 Newsletter

Treatment to Fight Parasitic Worms a Gateway to Health, Trust for Change

*Johnson & Johnson, Janssen-Cilag keep up fight against worms with donated medicine*

Parasitic worms have been a part of life for millions of children in developing and emerging nations worldwide. So too have been the resulting lethargy, inattention and poor performance in school that they have suffered through.

But all that – and more – is changing.

With medicines donated to INMED Partnerships for Children over more than 20 years, more than 5 million children in 15 countries have been freed from infection with multiple types of intestinal worms.

One of the current focus areas for INMED’s deworming program is Brazil, where in some locations more than four out of five children have tested positive for worms. Yet with medicine donated to INMED from Johnson & Johnson and its affiliate, Janssen-Cilag, children can expel the majority of these worms within days. From there, other dramatic differences soon unfold.

Suddenly, children possess a zest for life their parents and

Students: We Want Our Vegetables

*California Endowment-funded program brings parents, schools together for healthy food access*

Congress, kids do like their vegetables.

As congressional members consider the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act this year, they might want to hear what some 50 grade- and middle-school students in south Los Angeles County told INMED Partnerships for Children.

They want more healthy foods.

The students were part of focus groups at schools in the Compton Unified School District. The focus groups were organized by INMED’s Food for Thought program, designed to bring parents and the district together to address obesity among children and ensure access to healthy foods for their students.

"What we learned from the students,” said Joey Shanahan, the Food for Thought program manager, "is that they want to see fresh and delicious fruits and vegetables in their schools. Students want to be healthy.” The program is funded by a two-year, $400,000 grant from The California Endowment.

Food for thought, consider:

- All students participating in the focus groups said they enjoy fruits and vegetables and that they want a variety of foods offered to them. They are willing to try new foods.

- At one school, when asked what schools should serve at snack bars, the overwhelming majority said fruit, trail mix and water. Only a handful pointed to chips or other junk foods.

- At another school, about half the students said they bring their own fruit to school with them.

Furthermore, a majority of the students said they either
teachers rarely saw in them. And just as suddenly, for many communities, they understood: Their children weren’t under-achievers. They were sick.

This revelation, and the determination to prevent these devastating infections from happening again, opens the door for critical health, education and sanitation measures to combat the spread of intestinal worms and improve the overall health and well-being of the community.

In poor communities throughout Brazil with a high prevalence of intestinal parasites, INMED administers mebendazole, the deworming drug donated by Johnson & Johnson twice annually to children for a period of at least three years. In some communities, more than 80 percent of children are infected when INMED first arrives. That number generally drops to below 30 percent after two years.

The medicine’s effectiveness has also helped overcome widespread misinformation about and indifference toward the parasites. Seeing that something could be done about the worms, entire communities have stepped forward to combat what once seemed like a lost cause, from learning how the worms are contracted to developing community programs and school curricula centered on prevention.

“That’s when you can really address the underlying causes of a problem,” said INMED Brasil’s president, Joyce Capelli, “starting with the school children and working outward to involve the entire community to a point where eventually the medicine is no longer needed.”

“It really is a transformation,” she added.

And one not limited to worms. The success of the deworming program has laid the foundation for INMED to partner with communities to address other issues affecting their children’s well-being and long-term opportunities, such as literacy and basic education, violence prevention, hunger and nutrition, and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Working to both treat the problem and address the underlying causes with entire communities, such as Francisco Morato on the outskirts of São Paulo, the intestinal worms that were once a horrific problem are now under control. INMED has since been able to address broader health, hygiene and education issues in the community, with remarkably positive outcomes on all fronts.

“That, of course, is our ultimate goal,” INMED President and CEO Linda Pfeiffer affirmed. “We are working ourselves out of a job in Francisco Morato, and that’s a good thing. Our goal is to introduce programs that address health, education and safe communities for children and help communities become self-reliant to achieve the lasting change that will benefit today’s children and those of the future.”

While continuing the work in Brazil, INMED is also focusing on a major deworming campaign in the Amazon region of Peru, where Johnson & Johnson has donated more than 800,000 doses of mebendazole over the last two years.

“The medicine has been such an incredible entry point to introduce other types of long-term change,” Pfeiffer said. “It really is working.”

Opening Doors for Loudoun County’s Homeless

INMED Brings Healthy Futures
They are, in many cases invisible to the greater community. And therein lays the problem when talking about the homeless in Loudoun County, one of the richest communities in the nation, says Maria Elena Vasquez-Alvarez, director of Loudoun Programs with INMED Partnerships for Children.

“It is difficult to put a face on the homeless here. With the economic downturn, the traditional homeless are no longer the only group that needs help. Many times, you don’t know who they are, and if you do, you can’t find them. But they are here and they need help,” said Vasquez-Alvarez.

Who are they: Professionals who lost their jobs, abused women and their children, families bouncing from one relative’s home to another, or renting space in homes where they don’t know their neighbor in the next room, or sleeping in their cars, or the nearby woods. And, there are of course, families residing in shelters or transitional housing, but the limited number of beds at those facilities hardly reflect the magnitude of the problem.

“The waiting list for those beds is very long,” Vasquez-Alvarez said.

However, Vasquez-Alvarez and her Opening Doors team, working closely with the Loudoun County Department of Family Services, Volunteers of America and the Good Shepherd Alliance, hope a new $100,000 grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation will prove families can achieve independence – with help. Current grants for this program also include funds from the TD Charitable Foundation and the Gannett Foundation.

The grant doubles the amount the foundation awarded to INMED last year to launch Opening Doors, designed to move families from the most severe of circumstances to stability in 2.5 years by focusing one-on-one case management on employment, health, education, childcare, parenting skills, and other factors that contribute to a family’s well-being. In all, 120 people will be served under the grant either through case management, we can be more successful and prove to the Loudoun community that with the right attention and

Though early in the program, Vasquez-Alvarez notes that it is already making a difference by helping families stay in transitional housing. The longer families stay in transitional housing, the greater the chances of achieving stability. Many families, however, do not make it that far because of limited funds for case management. The stability of transitional housing, through intensive case management, has helped families achieve major goals such as securing permanent jobs, returning to school and earning a teaching certificate, but most importantly, keeping their children from going into foster care.

“With greater awareness and resources invested in intensive case management, we can be more successful and prove to the Loudoun community that with the right attention and

In the Loudoun community that with the right attention and

INMED led Healthy Futures program after witnessing the great accomplishments so far amongst school children in

The new Monsanto Fund support is critical to our goal of bringing the community together for the sake of their children’s future,” said Linda Pfieffer, INMEd’s president and CEO. “The program is really a system that the community can adopt and even improve upon as needed to make sure their children are healthy and educated so that they, one day, will build upon that system.

“This is happening right before our eyes and it’s incredible to witness.”

She added that by establishing strong links with local partners through the program, a foundation has been set to maintain the school gardens and nutrition curriculum over the long term. Local governments are among those committed partners, critical for the program’s sustainability. The program has also engaged parents to be more active in their schools to ensure healthy foods for their children, such as volunteering to maintain the gardens.

“The Monsanto Fund is pleased to continue supporting the INMED led Healthy Futures program after witnessing the great accomplishments so far amongst school children in

Although preparing to turn over its nutrition program to nearly a dozen schools in this impoverished township just outside of Johannesburg, where malnutrition plagues thousands of children, INMED’s work here is far from done.

In fact, for some schools, thanks to a renewed commitment from the Monsanto Fund, which will extend its support of INMED’s programs in South Africa over five years, the work is just beginning.

Since 2006, INMED Partnerships for Children has worked with 11 schools to reduce hunger among 10,600 children by increasing the availability of nutritious produce through school gardens and delivering nutrition education for teachers, school food workers and families of school-age children. Funding for this first phase of the program was $600,000.

While those schools and their community members and local governments are preparing to take ownership of INMED’s Healthy Futures South Africa program, a new, two-year $406,000 grant from the Monsanto Fund will allow INMED to branch out the program to 15 more schools in Orange Farm – these in even more depressed areas of the township – and bring the total number of those reached either directly or indirectly through the entire program to roughly 150,000 people, or 40 percent of the Orange Farm population, including students, their families, teachers and community leaders, businesses and residents. With the expansion, the program will now be in all primary schools in the township.
help families can move from a place of hopelessness to one of self-reliance,” Vasquez-Alvarez said. “The chance to provide better services to the homeless depends on funding and how many beds there are in the county.”

The need for more beds and increased access to services is in direct response to the rise of homelessness in the area.

According to the 2008 Point in Time count in the Washington Metropolitan Region, the number of homeless in Loudoun increased 83 percent between 2005 and 2008. Locally, 71 percent of the homeless are families, and more than half of these families have at least one employed adult, highlighting the lack of affordable housing as a key contributor to homelessness.

More recently, the Loudoun County 2009 PIT count, required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for federal funding, found 152 people were homeless as defined by HUD. That number included 30 families and 61 children. Although that number is down from 170 in the previous year, the county still had the highest increase in the metro D.C. area since 2005.

However, Vasquez-Alvarez maintains the Loudoun County number is low because HUD does not count families “doubling up” in a relative’s or friend’s home or who are staying in a hotel or motel. The difficulty of locating those who are not staying in shelters or transitional housing also distorts the count’s accuracy.

She also noted that numbers are expected to increase as more and more families, through job loss and mortgage foreclosures, find themselves “on the edge,” a phrase used by the DFS for those on the brink of homelessness, including those who live paycheck-to-paycheck and have recently missed rent or mortgage payments, had utilities turned off for delinquent accounts, or who face other, similar situations.

“Many more families must surely now find their housing status in the balance. The problem is going to get worse before it gets better. All the more reason an accurate count, and the funding that comes with it, is crucial,” Vasquez-Alvarez said, adding that she and others are also working on a program that will help families on the edge avoid becoming homeless.

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and self-sufficiency of local children and families, she added.

"Most importantly, families now see that there are possibilities to transform Orange Farm into greener pastures of hope for their children so that the next generation of children might never know that same poverty except through history," Pfeiffer said.

About The Monsanto Fund:

The Monsanto Fund is the philanthropic arm of the Monsanto Company. Incorporated in 1964, the Fund’s primary objective is to improve the lives of people by bridging the gap between their needs and their resources. The Monsanto Fund is focused on grant-making in four main areas: nutritional improvement through agriculture; science education, primarily on professional development for teachers; healthy environment, which includes conservation, protection of biodiversity, clean water and restoration of wildlife habitat; and improving the quality of life in communities where Monsanto employees live and work. Visit the Monsanto Fund at http://www.monsantofund.org/asp/welcome.asp.

About INMED Partnerships for Children

Since 1986, INMED Partnerships for Children has worked around the world to prevent irreversible harm to children, whether through disease, neglect or lack of education or opportunity, helping them develop the skills they need to succeed and empowering them and their communities to create hope and opportunity for themselves and generations to come.

For more information or to submit questions and comments, please contact Director of Development Mary-Lynne Lasco at contact@inmed.org.