

# healing hands

AFRICA BURN RELIEF | NEWSLETTER  
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## 2009 ABR TEAM | MOST SUCCESSFUL YEAR-TO-DATE

In June 2009, three ABR team members joined with the Nkhoma Hospital staff to perform 18 surgeries, including 12 complex reconstruction cases. Dr. Bill Dougherty, Jenn Wall, PA-C, and Amber Tate RN spent a total of two weeks in Malawi this year treating the largest number of patients in 4 years and providing valuable education and training to the local team members. Together, ABR and the Malawian clinical staff were not only able to perform life changing operations for these 18 patients, but ABR was also able to finance the hospital stays for all the patients as well, giving them the best chance for a successful recovery.

40% of the patients evaluated for treatment were children less than 10 years old - all of whom sustained a burn injury that could have been prevented. The most common reason for a young child to suffer a burn in Malawi is flame burn. Because only 2% of Malawians have electricity in their households, they are dependant on open flames for heating and cooking. Children flock to the apron strings of their mothers and huddle near them as they cook over fire or entertain themselves by playing simple games near the fire, completely unaware of the risks of sustaining a life-altering burn.



**2009 Surgical Team:**  
*Back:* Daniel Chimutu, Dr. Bill Dougherty, Moffat Kachombo, Max Dougherty, Ms. Matula, Jenn Wall  
*Front:* Kennedy Mwale, Simion Chimphamba  
*Not pictured:* Andrew Mphedwa

*Special Thanks to...* to Max Dougherty, volunteer photographer and videographer.

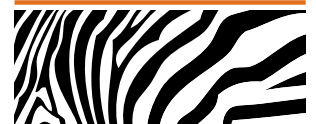
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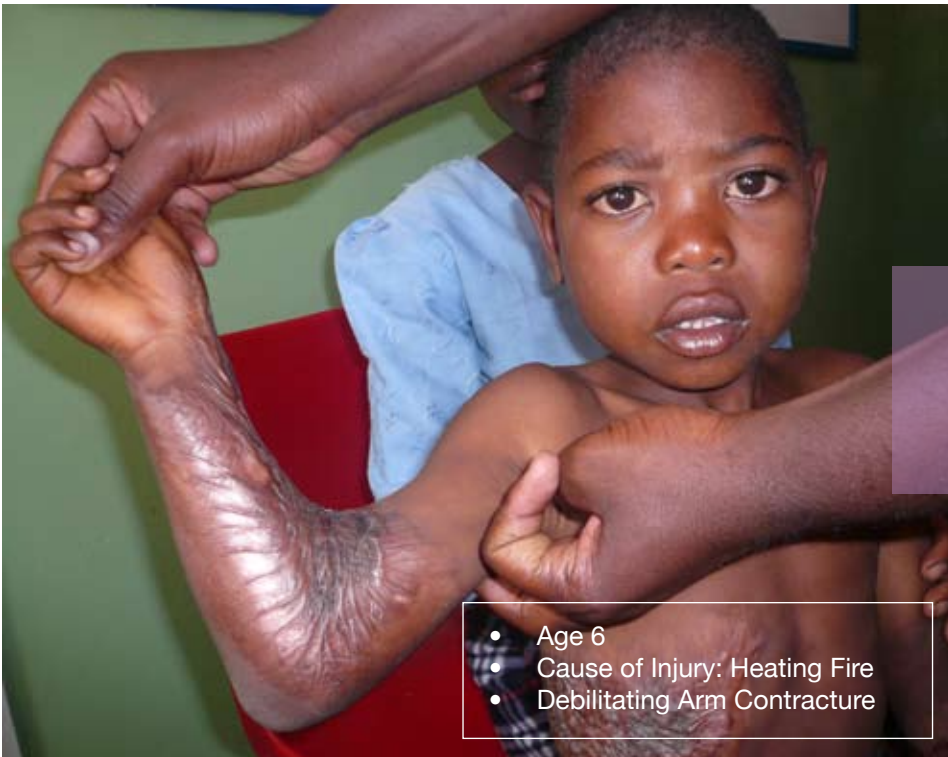
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- Age 6
- Cause of Injury: Heating Fire
- Debilitating Arm Contracture



above: surgical team  
below: post op



## FEATURED PATIENT: RUBEN’S STORY

Almost exactly one year ago, 5 year-old Ruben was running around an open fire with several other children near his family’s hut in Mnthawanthu village. Ruben has always been a curious and bold child, perhaps more strong- minded than his friends, but when his shirt became engulfed in flames that on that terrible day last June, he suffered a near fatal burn injury. With over 20% of his small body covered with 2nd and 3rd degree burns, he makes it to Nkhoma Hospital for surgery and initial wound care. Though ABR was fortunate enough to help Ruben’s family finance his initial hospital stay, the family simply could not make it back to the

hospital for his follow up care. Without proper physical therapy, Ruben developed abnormal scarring as his wounds healed that prevents him from extending his right arm.

When the 2009 ABR team arrives a year later to triage old and new patients, Ruben arrives at the hospital for his evaluation, scared and uncertain. This once carefree and stong-minded young boy is now considered disabled because he has lost all mobility in his right arm. Without surgical intervention, his arm bones will be stunted and he will never fully recover from the burn injury he sustained when he

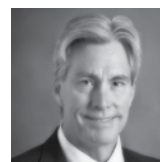
was 5. Fortunately, Ruben’s grandmother consents to surgery and agrees to stay in the hospital with him for the entire course of his reconstructive treatment.

Ruben undergoes a complex 3 hour operation to rearrange healthy tissue in the area of his arm that was once a thick, debilitating scar. His surgery was a success and, though he faces many more months of physical therapy, with the proper care he will be able to fully straighten his right arm before he turns 7 years old.

## ABR ANNOUNCES AZ-BASED BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Wall, PA-C  
 Dr. Steve Miller, MD  
 Dr. Kevin Foster, MD, MBA, FACS  
 Dr. Ruth Rimmer, PhD, CLCP  
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*Vice President*  
*Vice President*  
*Treasurer*  
*Secretary*



## EDUCATION SPARKS POTENTIAL MERGER BETWEEN ABR AND NEW HOSPITAL SITE

Though education and training is always an integral part of the ABR team's mission while in Nkhoma, Dr. Dougherty and Jenn Wall were fortunate this year to be invited to speak at Kamuzu Central Hospital, located about 1 hour from Nkhoma. With approximately 200 physicians, nurses, clinical officers, and nursing students in attendance, the new audience at Kamuzu was able to learn first hand about the training and education that ABR can provide to improve overall burn care for their

patients. Kamuzu Central has invited ABR to partner with the hospital, possibly starting as early as 2010, to implement the same model of treatment, education, and training that has increased the survival rate of burn patients at Nkhoma Hospital.

The autonomy of the Nkhoma Hospital staff has increased significantly over the last four years and ABR continues to provide educational seminars and protocol updates for skill maintenance.



Team member Amber Tate, AZ Burn Center nurse, took the lead in providing continuing education lectures with the nursing students and patient attendants.

Elizabeth reads "Benjamin Bear" to a captive audience of children in her village of Nkhoma



## PREVENTION: EASIER SAID (I MEAN READ) THAN DONE

Preventing burn injuries before they occur has been a constant struggle since ABR's inaugural trip to Malawi in 2006. Obstacles include language barriers, cultural differences, and large sprawling distances from village to village. But with the aid of children's writer, Dr. Ruth Rimmer, and a generous grant from the PA Foundation, 500 colorful, Chichewa-

translated burn education books have started to reach the surrounding villages of Nkhoma. Benjamena Beya (Benjamin Bear) Visits the Burn Center is now distributed to each child burn patient and copies are provided to parents and hospital staff to read the book to children in their villages.

Benjamena Beya is a tremendous step forward in raising awareness of the dangers associated with open fires, the seriousness of burn injuries, and the simple things parents and children alike can do to prevent an injury from occurring.

# AFRICA BURN RELIEF



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*Thank you for your continued support!*

A big thank you to all of you who participated in the 2009 ABR Fundraiser Event! It was a successful, entertaining night with loads of compliments for our musicians, The Tyler and James Band and Dan Pfeiffer who graciously donated their time. These monies make success stories like Ruben's possible each year.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Africa Burn Relief Program was awarded official 501(c)(3) non-profit status in May of 2009. Our deepest gratitude is extended to AZ-based, Foundation for Burns and Trauma and the Marticopa Health Foundation for allowing our program to develop successfully over these last four years with their guidance and support.

## AFRICA BURN RELIEF GAINS NON-PROFIT STATUS

## OUR VISION

To eradicate sub-standard burn care by developing and implementing a sustainable model of treatment, prevention, and education that can be replicated across Sub-Saharan Africa.

## OUR MISSION

