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*Celebrating the lives of women*

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*Susie Vernon,  
Hiremark*

**JULY 2006**



Imagine you are pregnant and living in a developing country. You have received little prenatal education and don't know what to expect about giving birth. When you arrive at the hospital in labor, you are taken away from your family and put in a room alone, or with other laboring

conditions and safety in Turkey and in other countries. From that search, Kybele was founded.

And the name couldn't be more fitting. Kybele was known as the Mother goddess in 7000 B.C. in Anatolia, Turkey, a developing agricultural and community center. Hundreds of small clay Kybele figurines have been found throughout contemporary Turkey in archeological excavations. The statuettes depict the fertility goddess as a plump woman sitting on a throne, giving birth, flanked by leopards.

Today, Kybele once again symbolizes hope for the future – a future that offers every mother the opportunity to experience childbirth in a compassionate, respectful and supportive environment.

According to Dr. Owen, insufficient training of health care providers contributes to needless death and disability of mothers and newborns in emerging countries. "Physicians in

## Delivering a Basic Human Right

women who are strangers. You are afraid and in tremendous pain. There is little privacy. You are in labor for a day without any medication to relieve the pain. Your body is exhausted. When you finally give birth, your baby doesn't cry. Everyone looks around wondering what to do. The nurse slaps the baby in hopes it will cry but it doesn't. Your baby becomes limp and turns blue. You are terrified.

Sadly, this is the reality for many women in the world today. Safe childbirth is a basic human right. Yet, the joy of childbirth is often overshadowed by the fear of pain and possibility of death during delivery. In some countries, a woman's chance of death during childbirth is one in seven. Worldwide, there are 1,600 maternal deaths each day. Most of these deaths could be prevented.

Furthermore, one in 10 newborns will require resuscitation at birth. Each year, millions of babies are poorly resuscitated, leading to lifelong disability or death. Simple training to assist a baby in breathing at birth could help prevent this.

In the effort to improve childbirth conditions worldwide, the non-profit 501(c) humanitarian organization, Kybele, was born.

Kybele (*pronounced Key-bell-a*) organizes in-country programs to improve essential treatment, technology and training of health care workers to make childbirth safer and less painful. The program was founded by Winston-Salem's Dr. Medge Owen, associate professor of obstetric anesthesia at Wake Forest University.

In 1997 Dr. Owen received a Fulbright Scholarship to teach at Uludag University in Bursa, Turkey. During her teaching assignment, she successfully implemented programs in obstetric anesthesia and newborn resuscitation which have continued today. After returning home, Dr. Owen began searching for ways to continue to improve childbirth



many countries are keen to educate themselves in the techniques that are routine in the western world," she explained. "We have seen firsthand how expanding basic education with hands-on training can dramatically change physician practice patterns, improve safety and enhance childbirth for many women."

As a result, Kybele developed an educational model that includes:

- International diversity – Kybele volunteers have come from the US, Canada, UK, Europe, and Australia.
- Multidisciplinary teamwork – Kybele has anesthesiologists, obstetricians, nurses, midwives, neonatologists, and internists...all working together toward improving childbirth safety.
- On-site training – Kybele team members work alongside doctors and nurses within a country for one to two weeks, providing didactic and hands-on training in modern childbirth techniques.
- Cost efficiency – Kybele's services work within a country's

existing infrastructure of medications and supplies. The host hospital also agrees to bear some of the program's cost.

- Leadership development – Kybele identifies and builds healthcare leaders within a country. These individuals are then included in outreach efforts with other countries.

Kybele also sponsors physicians abroad to visit U.S. hospitals to observe childbirth as conducted in this country. "These interactions have led to deepening relationships between academic institutions worldwide," said Dr. Owen.

In Turkey, this novel program made national headlines and led to the first televised cesarean section of an awake,



"Most developing countries have no health insurance. It's cash and carry," explains Kybele board member Shelby Turley. "If you deliver your child in the hospital and do not have the money to pay the bill, the hospital keeps the baby until you can pay. They stack the babies on pallets - at least 15 at one time - while the insurance bills increase daily. The mothers who cannot afford these bills must come to the hospital to

feed their little offspring. We, in America, can not imagine such things," she says. Turley adds that Kybele often chips in to help these mothers pay the cost of child delivery, which surprisingly, often averages only \$80.

Safe and affordable childbirth makes a difference in the lives

## Local Program Helps Make a Difference for Women Around the World

elighted mother with spinal anesthesia. Most women in Turkey receive general anesthesia for cesarean deliveries and are unconscious. This increases their health risks and denies them the memory of their child's birth.

And many hospitals improve patient care after a Kybele visit. For example, Dr. Damir Zalic from Croatia wrote, "Your visit to our hospital has left a deep mark. You have inspired many expert discussions by your remarks and suggestions, some of which have already produced results. The procurement of equipment has begun, which will render it possible to monitor patients during delivery, operative interventions and postoperative care."

Aside from safer child birthing techniques, Kybele also helps families in developing countries pay their mounting health insurance bills.



of mothers, babies and families around the world. And a tax-deductible gift to Kybele can make a tremendous difference as well. Dr. Owen and her team are seeking donations to Kybele that will allow a healthcare team to visit a country to educate local practitioners

in modern childbirth techniques and healthcare. Once trained, physicians pass the techniques on to their colleagues, upgrading healthcare significantly in their homeland.

To make a donation, please make checks payable to Kybele, Inc. and send to 131 Wing Haven Circle, Winston-Salem, NC 27106. For credit card contributions, please call Kybele directly at 336-718-8278. More information on Kybele will soon be available at [www.kybeleworldwide.org](http://www.kybeleworldwide.org).

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