

EVERY 14 SECONDS,  
A CHILD IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA  
LOSES A PARENT TO AIDS.

# OPERATION: AFRICA

CANISIUS ALUMNUS KEVIN M. DENNY '67, MD, HEADS A HUMANITARIAN EFFORT THAT PROVIDES A HOME FOR AIDS ORPHANS

WHEN TENGULA'S MOTHER AND FATHER DIED OF AIDS, the seven-year old and his two sisters were forced to live with their grandmother and four other orphaned grandchildren in a one-room hut. Unable to attend school because he didn't have a shirt, Tengula gathered firewood in the mornings. In the afternoons, he tried to catch small fish in a net for dinner. At night, the children huddled together for warmth because they didn't have a blanket.

Tengula's story is a glimpse of what life is like for the more than 11 million children who have been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic in Africa, including the 700,000 orphans, like Tengula, who live in Malawi, a small country in Southeast Africa. Because AIDS takes the lives of most of the men and women ages 20 - 40, it is the grandparents who now bear the burden of caring for the orphans.

**B**ut Canisius College alumnus **Kevin M. Denny '67, MD**, is working to provide a better life for thousands of AIDS orphans in Malawi. In 1996, the child psychiatrist from Canandaigua, NY, along with Chakunja Sibale, a Malawian hospital administrator, began Malawi Children's Village (MCV). A community-based orphan care project, MCV provides food, health care and education to 3,200 orphaned children from 36 villages in the Mangochi District of Malawi.

Denny first traveled to Malawi as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1964, following his junior year at Canisius. His affection for the country and its people drew him back there countless times. "The people of Malawi have a basic solidness and humanity," he said. "They don't have much going for them but they are honest, hard working and a very accepting group." Denny returned to Malawi to complete his medical rotation at Malindi Mission Hospital, and brought his children there in 1988.

It was during a visit to Malawi in 1991 that Denny met Sibale. Both men were committed to working on behalf of the Malawian community. Sibale was in the process of purchasing a 10-acre piece of land on Lake Malawi for that purpose. After Denny returned home, the two kept in contact. Five years later, with the AIDS pandemic raging, Denny suggested creating a project to care for AIDS orphans. That is how the idea for Malawi Children's Village was born.

The goal of the project is to help the villages become self-sufficient so MCV is managed by committed Malawians. Village headmen choose two adults from each village to oversee the care of the orphans in their village.

Another aspect of MCV is the project's payback system. "Children who learn a trade or receive an education through MCV, return to the villages to work on behalf of the community," explained Denny.

As the director of Malawi Children's Village, Sibale oversees the day-to-day operations. It is Denny's job to raise awareness and the funds needed to support the project financially. Denny has also recruited hundreds of his fellow Peace Corps volunteers, who served in Malawi during the 60s and 70s, to help with the project. Much like the payback concept of MCV, Denny and the volunteers believe they get much more from their time in Malawi than they give. "My life has completely changed and been enriched through my experiences in Malawi," said Denny.

Today, Malawi Children's Village includes a nutritional rehabilitation center, a clinic, library and vocational training center. The burden of orphan care is shared more widely within the village because MCV offers food to the orphans' caregivers. Denny notes that a mere \$28 supports an orphan for an entire year. The average number of orphans has dropped from 6.3 to 1.9 per household. And after years

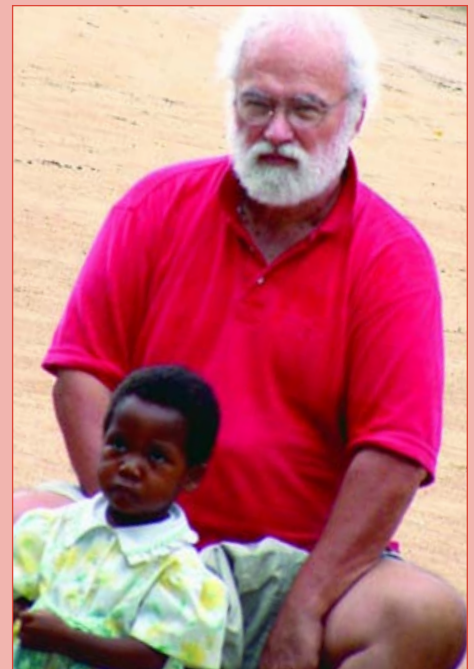
## KEVIN M. DENNY

BACHELOR OF ARTS in biology  
Canisius College (1967)

MASTER OF ARTS in anthropology,  
State University of New York at  
Buffalo (1968)

MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
University of North Carolina School  
of Public Health (1970)

MEDICAL DEGREE  
Case Western Reserve University  
(1980)





## MALAWI STATS :

POPULATION  
11,906,855

INFANT MORTALITY RATIO  
104.23 deaths per 1,000 live births

LIFE EXPECTANCY  
Men :: 37.08 years  
Women :: 37.88 years

LITERACY RATE FOR THOSE 15 & OVER  
Men :: 76.1 percent  
Women :: 49.8 percent

SOURCE: CIA WORLD FACTBOOK 2004



of work and a generous donation from Goulds Pumps in Seneca Falls, NY, Lake Malawi has an irrigation system. According to Denny, the irrigation program is helping to break the cycle of famine in Malawi and providing a source of income for the villagers.

Primary school attendance by MCV orphans has also vastly improved. Malawi Children's Village has sponsored \$160 scholarships for more than 100 orphans to attend secondary school. Four orphans are currently attending college in Malawi. Each has promised to return to serve the community.

To spread the word about the AIDS pandemic, Denny wrote *Juma's Story*, a fictional, educational video that features performances by the people of Malawi, in their own language. The video was produced by Malawi Children's Village and Buffalo's Full Circle Studios, which is co-owned by Canisius alumnus James A. Philips '66. *Juma's Story* premiered on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2004, at the American Embassy in Malawi, as part of Africa's AIDS Awareness Program. Canisius alumni Jerry MacKay '96 and Jason Holler '03, who work at Full Circle Studios, traveled to Africa to work on the project. Beth (Foley) MacKay '99 also traveled to Malawi to help with the video.

This past December, Holler was among those who returned to Malawi to produce a second video, *Martha's Story*. *Martha's Story* is a true story written by Malawian high school students about an orphaned girl who ran away from an abusive household and ended up at Malawi Children's Village. "The children wrote the story, composed the music for the video, sang the songs, selected the actors and even edited the film," said Denny, who also

returned to Malawi in December to work on the project. "*Martha's Story* sends an important message that, oftentimes, orphans are put into places where they are abused. They go to live with relatives and no one knows what happens there. There is a lot of abuse."

Denny's great work on behalf of Malawi Children's Village and the fight against AIDS has not gone unnoticed. In 2004, he won the Shriver Award for Humanitarian Service, the highest accolade given by the National Peace Corps Association.

Today, the orphans of Malawi are prospering, although Denny knows that they represent only a fraction of the children affected by the AIDS pandemic in Africa. With the number of AIDS orphans projected to double or triple in the region by 2010, those working on behalf of the children face a monumental task.

But Denny has a plan. With the overwhelming success of Malawi Children's Village, Denny and the board of MCV have recently expanded their operation. Orphan Support Africa (OSA) was formed in 2004 to further spread information about the plight of AIDS orphans and to expand the MCV model into 10 new communities in the next three years, which will meet the needs of an additional 30,000 orphans.

"Malawi Children's Village will serve as a model for other community-based programs," said Denny. "Orphan Support Africa will play a direct role in providing the training and resources necessary to begin these new programs and continue to expand care to the orphaned children of Africa."

OPPOSITE PAGE, CENTER: Kevin Denny with a Malawian child

Photos of Malawian children courtesy of Full Circle Studios, Buffalo, NY

For more information about Malawi Children's Village, visit [www.malawaichildrensivillage.org](http://www.malawaichildrensivillage.org)