

Cooperative Humanitarian Project 7450 & 7430



Members of District 7430 were contacted in November by Eric Balcavage of the Concordville-Chadds Ford Rotary and his mother Carol at LVHC. Eric's older brother LTCMark Balcavage was stationed in Iraq where his troops came across a small four year old boy in need of help. This little boy, Mohammed Kareem, was born with a birth defect that required him to have a colostomy soon after birth. Further surgery to make life more normal for Mohammed is not possible in Iraq and previous attempts to get the child to the United States were unsuccessful. Our DG sent an appeal to all the clubs to assist in getting Mohammed here this time.



With the promise of assistance by the staff at Lehigh Valley Hospital and cooperation by several local groups, the child arrived in the Valley on Sunday December 16, at JFK. Eric's parents and the host mother drove there (in all that weather) to meet the child and his escort. Dawn Costello, a long-time friend of the Balcavages, from Allentown-West is coordinating the local Rotary efforts. The LV Muslim Assoc. through Dr. Waseem Akhter, has provided a local host mother, Amel Yahya with the help of Shehnaz Tahir also of that group. Others involved include: Cindy Hornaman from the Emmaus Rotary, the LV Dialogue Center, the United Muslim Foundation, the Lehigh Valley Physician Group-Pediatrics, and the Pediatric Surgeons of LVH.



Rotary District 7450 provided the early coordination and cost of transporting Mohammed and his cousin Kitba to Baghdad, and Amman for visas. The flight to the United States was donated by RI Past President Bill Boyd. Donations of clothing and other costs locally have come from the district and local rotarians.

Mohammed will be here up to six months preparing for and receiving surgery and follow up. The hospital is donating medical and surgical care coordinated by Dr. Michael Consuelos, Asst. Chair of Pediatrics, the Pediatric Surgeons, and Carol Balcavage, R.N. Dir. Of Wound Care.