

Sister goes to Brazil to help villagers

By PRISCILLA VANDERWEELE

It's a long way from Kansas to Brazil, from English to Portuguese, from a farm near Leoville to a poverty-stricken village in a strange country.

However, when the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia decided to start a mission in Brazil, Sister Rose Marie, the former Dorothy Dwyer, answered the call.

That was in 1964, and she's still there working with the poor.

Sr. Rose Marie was born west of New Almelo to John and Florence Dwyer. She has nine brothers and sisters including Dennis Dwyer of Norcatar.

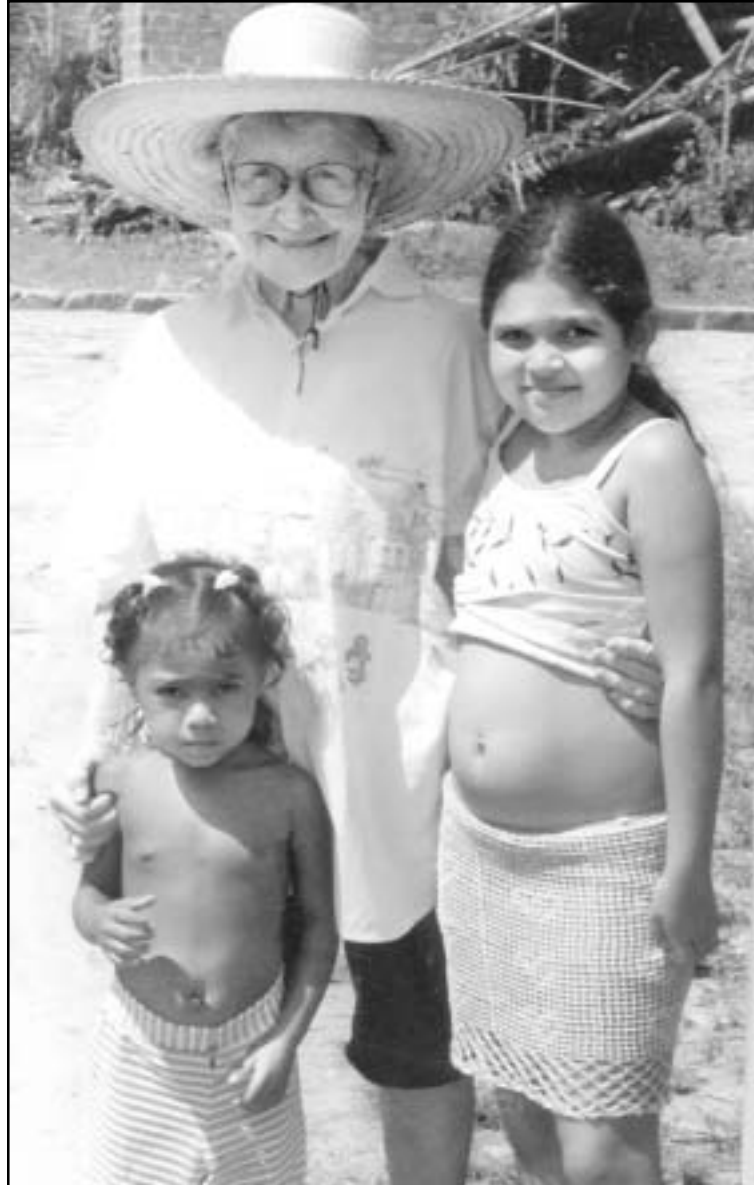
After attending grade school in New Almelo and graduating from the Catholic high school in Leoville she joined the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia in 1951.

She taught school there and around Salina for many years before accepting the call to Brazil.

Sr. Rose Marie has spent the past six years in a small town, an hour's drive from Teresina, called Piaui.

Piaui has many big cattle farms, some of which practice illegal slave labor. Often peasants came from the Northeast hoping to find a better life but instead were stripped of their documents and held at gun point, forced to work off debts they didn't owe.

It wasn't until the CPT land pastoral, a religious organization in Brazil, received word of the slavery that the federal police were informed and were able to investigate. The farmers were then forced to pay and release their slaves and allow them to return to their native state.



Sister Rose Marie with her Brazilian friends.

Now Sister Rose Marie is a volunteer in Teresina, helping to make peasants of the small towns aware of the slavery many of their fellow farm workers have endured.

Sister Rose Marie lives in the same conditions as the villagers she helps. They live without running water or indoor plumbing. Their biggest hope is to raise enough money to build sturdy walls and roofs to replace their fragile huts.

She moved to Teresina in hopes of working with the local land pastoral to organize self-help projects

to assist the people there so that they wouldn't be forced to travel elsewhere.

In the time she's been there, she says things have begun to look brighter. Many young men and women nearby have encouraged her to organize meetings and continue teaching them to help one another. It will take some organizing before they can reach their goals, but progress is steady and Sister Rose Marie says the Lord is with them.

Sr. Rose Marie is hoping to come back to Kansas for a visit next year.

Immunizations important part of starting school

Kansas health regulations require children entering kindergarten must have current immunization records.

Jenda Jones, immunization coordinator for the Norton County Health Department said that with the Head Start program and Early Childhood Development program in Norton County, many children began getting their required shots at age 4.

Ms. Jones added that a new Kansas law requires children entering kindergarten to provide documentation that they have had chicken pox or have had the vaccine. She said that prior to starting kindergarten, children must have the Hepatitis B series.

Norton School Nurse Vicki Enfield will have the children's immunization records after classes starts and notify parents if their child needs additional immunization.

Immunizations are an important part of your child's well-being. The very short time your child is uncomfortable is well worth the protection from disease that immunizations provide.

An immunization contains either a dead or a weakened germ, or parts of it, for a particular disease. It allows your child's body to practice fighting the disease by making antibodies.

Then if your child is ever exposed to the actual disease, the antibodies are already in place and the body knows how to combat it. To better understand the benefits of vaccines, here are a few common myths and the facts that disprove them:

Myth: The immunization will give my child the disease the vaccine is supposed to prevent.

Fact: It is impossible to get the disease from any vaccine made with dead or partial bacteria or viruses. Only those immunizations made from weakened live viruses — such as chicken pox or measles, mumps and rubella vaccine — could possibly make a child develop a mild form of the disease. But it is typically much less severe than the illness that would occur if a person were infected with the disease-causing virus itself.

Myth: If all the other children in school are immunized, there's no harm in not immunizing my child.

Fact: Vaccines prevent 12 potentially deadly diseases. Each child who isn't immunized gives these highly contagious diseases one more chance to spread. In the days before immunizations, millions died from diseases like diphtheria, polio, measles and whooping cough. Studies show that they re-emerge when vaccine use decreases.

Myth: Immunizations will cause my child to have a bad reaction.

Fact: The most common reactions to vaccines are minor and can include fever, a rash, or redness and swelling where the shot was given. The possibility of an immunization triggering a more severe reaction is rare. In fact, it's much lower than the risk of catching the disease itself if a child is not immunized. Some unsubstantiated rumors have tried to link vaccines to multiple sclerosis, sudden infant death syndrome, autism and

other problems, but studies have failed to show any connection between immunizations and these conditions.

Myth: My child does not need to be immunized because the disease has been eliminated.

Fact: Diseases that are rare or nonexistent in the U.S., such as polio and measles, still flourish in other parts of the world. In our mobile, global community, it is easy to come into contact with these illnesses through travel.

Myth: My child does not need to be immunized if he's healthy, active and eating well.

Fact: Vaccinations are intended to help keep healthy children healthy. They work by protecting the body before disease strikes. If you wait until your child gets sick to immunize him, it will be too late for the vaccine to work.

As a reminder, be sure to take your child's pink immunization card with you when you visit the doctor. The clinic staff will be glad to update it for you. Know that the brief discomfort and anxiety your child may experience is definitely worth it. In fact, it may be one of the best things you ever do for their health.

August is National Immunization Awareness Month. Let's celebrate how fortunate we are to have access to immunizations so that we can avoid the deadly diseases of measles, mumps, rubella and polio, just to name a few.

For more information and print-out materials about childhood immunizations, go to: www.cdc.gov/nip/default.htm.

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