



Barbara May  
Foundation

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# Annual Report

for the year ended 30 June **2023**

# Who we are



## Honouring dignity through lifesaving maternal care

The Barbara May Foundation (BMF) was established in 2009 and since that time has developed trusted relationships, established and funded operations providing safe birth for thousands of women and babies every year across Africa.

The Foundation works to address entrenched disadvantage in childbirth, preventing and treating maternal fistula injuries. Our clear vision, integrity of leadership and history of extraordinary provision of care has meant flourishing relationships with financial supporters and generous partners. Now is the time to set more ambitious goals.

## The next 10 years

Over the next ten years we will remain faithful to our values, work with those we seek to serve, build on what we have learned and:

- Construct or partner with new hospitals in under-served parts of Africa, with a goal of ten BMF sponsored hospitals
- Create a pathway for safe birth for a further 150,000 women
- Relentlessly pursue and treat women with obstetric fistula

We will continue working relationally, employ our resources wisely and effectively, so that more women may experience the dignity of a safe birth and together further erase maternal fistula injury.



## Our values

### Compassion

Our hearts are moved in loving kindness to seek the best for others, placing their needs ahead of our own.

### Integrity

Remaining true to our roots, we are authentic, courageous, and accountable in our work. We act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly.

### Respect

Without bias we honour the dignity inherent within every person, reflected in our considerate and professional care.

# Our vision

A world where all women can face giving birth with dignity and confidence. We play our part in realising that vision by working compassionately to reduce death and injury in childbirth in Africa.

# Our mission

To eliminate maternal mortality, with a focus on the treatment and prevention of obstetric fistula.

To provide financial support and professional assistance for maternal healthcare including:

- Medical infrastructure and services
- Training, and
- Education

# Our motivation

***“We should do something about this!”***

Barbara May Browning, June 1999, while hosted by Valerie Browning in Asaita, the former capital of Afar, Ethiopia.

Being aware of needs beyond our own is one thing. Finding the energy to respond to them is another. This might be called compassion, where hearts are moved to act without prejudice or agenda in the best interests of another. This is the heart of our motivation.

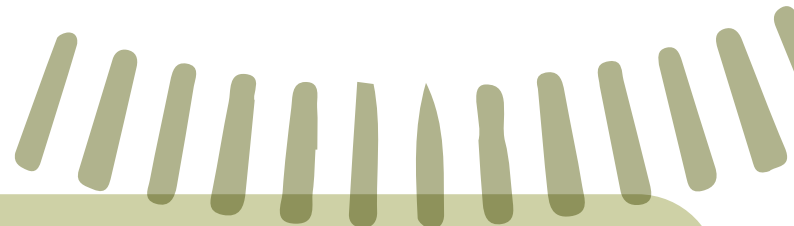
It is a heart called to be faithful to the loving kindness encountered in Christ Jesus.



# Our goal

To provide safe care for poor and vulnerable women in childbirth and to care for those who face any complications.

To serve whoever God puts before us with perseverance, hope, integrity and love.



# Our priorities

## Transforming the Lives of Women

- Bringing renewal and life through the provision of free services for childbirth and maternal health education for vulnerable communities in Africa.
- Enabling and facilitating a network of maternity hospitals that serve as a base for continuing work in providing safe births, fistula injury repair and the training of surgeons.
- Providing dignified, high value employment opportunities for the communities that our hospitals are located within.

## Strengthening our ability to serve

- Forming close partnerships with like-minded foundations, individuals and workplaces who support our mission to provide safe birth and prevent fistula.
- Providing faithful stewardship of resources and transparency to donors.
- Equipping ourselves with the resources and capability to meet the needs of the communities that we work with.

## Delivering enhanced Clinical Governance

- Continue to build our network of trained in-country medical professionals and provide steady oversight and support so that clinical standards are maintained at a high standard.

## Developing Strategic Partnerships

- Develop strategic partnerships with organisations that share our vision, acknowledge and respect our motivation, and align with our values, in order to strengthen in-country capacity.



Message from  
**Michael Sharpe AO**  
Chairman

**I am filled with gratitude as I reflect on the impact the Barbara May Foundation has had this financial year supporting vital medical work, preventing fistula injuries, and empowering communities. Guided by the love of our Lord Jesus Christ and encouraged by the generosity of our donors, I am excited by the prospect of this impact expanding in line with our strategic vision.**

More than a century ago Dr. Albert Schweitzer asked us to reflect on the fact that millions and millions in Africa live without help and without hope. They endure terrible sufferings, although medical science could avert them. Schweitzer said we ought to see the work that needs to be done for people suffering wherever they are, not as mere good works but as a duty that must not be shirked.

Every day 830 women die trying to have a baby. Seventy percent of these deaths occur in Sub Saharan Africa, the vast majority of which are avoidable. For every woman who dies, about 20 others get an injury, of which an obstetric fistula is the most feared. Left untreated a woman suffering with a fistula will live a life of shame, ostracism and nearly half consider or attempt suicide. We have a duty today to use our God given skills and money to reduce this suffering and restore hope to these women and their families.

The Barbara May Foundation was started in 2009 to support Dr. Andrew Browning and his aunt, Valerie Browning, to prevent African women dying in childbirth, treat fistula patients and, more importantly, prevent fistula injury. In this time, we have helped organisations in Africa create hospitals, utilise volunteers, train doctors and midwives, educate communities in medical matters including family planning, and even provide food to desperate pregnant women suffering in times of civil war and famine. The joy that these efforts have brought to thousands of women around Africa each year has been a blessing to all stakeholders in the Barbara May Foundation.

This year we paused to consider our strategy for the next ten years. We recognise that the need remains great. Encouraged by the performance of the organisations we support and the continued support of our donors, we plan to expand our footprint. Details of our strategic decisions are set out in this Annual Report.

During this financial year two of our leaders, Alice Achan (founder and Executive Director of the Te-Kworo Foundation Uganda) and Valerie Browning (serving the Afar people in Ethiopia) visited Australia. I am sure anyone who had the pleasure of meeting these humble women would acknowledge that they are inspirational.

Many thanks to Andrew Browning, whose workload in both Africa and Australia continues to be massive.

Thanks also to all who work for the organisations we support to serve our cause, doctors, midwives, medical attendants, ambulances drivers and many more.

Jo Crowley, our General Manager for the last ten years, resigned in July 2023. We thank Jo for her contribution to our growth and success during this period and we wish her well.

Finally thanks to our Australian supporters, donors, ambassadors, volunteers, directors, prayer partners and so many more, without whom thousands of African women would have suffered terribly.

My prayer is that we are responding appropriately to Jesus Christ's call to love and serve the poor.



## Message from **Dr Andrew Browning AM** Medical Director

**It has been a tremendous privilege to have worked another year alongside our outstanding and committed midwives and doctors, providing critical care to some of the world's most disadvantaged mothers and women helping give them hope and restoring their dignity.**

I've just returned to Australia from Tanzania, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Even though I've been working in Africa for 30 years, I remain astounded at the gap in health care, the luxury that we enjoy and demand in Australia, and the incredible bravery and fortitude that women show in Africa in the face of difficult labours.

Pregnancy and labour for mothers in Africa often occurs in areas with no or, at best, poorly resourced health facilities. The gratitude the women express after receiving any kind gesture warms my heart. What a privilege it is to care for these women who are so uncomplaining in their difficult circumstances.

We have been delighted to see our wonderful partners in Ethiopia and Tanzania safely deliver more than 14,000 babies during the last financial year. We have also treated 445 fistula patients, trained 138 midwives in clinical skills and 9 doctors in fistula surgery, provided over 37,000 clinic visits and educated many tens of thousands of community and school members about reproductive health. This has been provided through three of our maternity hospitals and a vast rural health network in the deserts of northern Ethiopia.

In April 2022, the BMF met to determine our strategy and future. We all agreed that, with God's help, we must see if we can help even more women deliver their babies safely, without the fear of death and injury, and of course to treat women already suffering from obstetric fistula.

Arising from that landmark meeting came the decision to support ten hospitals in total in ten years – perhaps at times in partnership with other organisations. With ten hospitals we hope to provide safe deliveries for another 20,000 women per year. These are lofty aims, but we have already been blessed to secure funding from donors for the building of two more hospitals, one in Tanzania and one in Uganda. The Ugandan hospital will be established with new partners – the Te-Kworo Foundation and the one planned for Tanzania is with our long term partner Maternity Africa, based in Arusha.

As we plan these new services, we won't be rigid and potentially blinded by our goals and miss needs that



Dr Andrew at Selian Hospital

might be placed in front of us, but with your help, the life-saving and life-changing work of 10 hospitals could well become a reality.

None of this work can be done without the staff on the ground. Thank you for all of you, in particular our medical directors and matrons, Dr Omar in the Barbara May Memorial Hospital, Dr Birhanu and Sr Abeba in Vision Maternity Care, Dr Doreen, Michael and Sr Glory in Maternity Africa, Samuel, Eliana and Dr Joseph in Juba and Alice Achan, Milton Obua and David Heap in Pader, Uganda.

Lastly thank you to our volunteers and donors without whom none of this would happen.

# These mothers find hope in your generosity



Halima and Dr Omar

Diverse and culturally rich, Ethiopia and Tanzania host a multitude of ethnic groups and languages. In Ethiopia, there are 80 major ethnic groups and 86 major languages, while Tanzania is home to 130 tribes and languages.

Translators are often required to obtain medical history from a patient which may mean navigating two or three different languages. Added to this are the unique cultural beliefs of each tribe regarding pregnancy and childbirth.

Many of the women we see are fearful of hospital settings and require gentle reassurance, patience and respect to feel comfortable to accept medical care.

Critical outreach services run alongside the hospitals to identify women in need of maternal healthcare. A significant number of the women we meet through these programs may not have the education, social networks or financial means to otherwise seek assistance.

## Halima

Last November Halima was rushed to the Barbara May Memorial Hospital in the Afar desert of Ethiopia late in the night. She had been in labour for three days in her remote nomadic village but had not delivered. Carried by stretcher, barely alive on arrival, Dr Omar and the team acted quickly. An emergency operation found that Halima's uterus had ruptured. Her

baby was outside the uterus dead, she had significant internal bleeding, and her bladder was completely ruptured with a fistula and much tissue destroyed.

Fortunately, the operation saved her life, but two days later she came down with cerebral malaria and was unconscious for two days. Again, the team worked tirelessly and she recovered although she was also

leaking urine with a large, 10cm diameter fistula to her bladder.

The hospital staff brought her back to the fistula camp in June 2023 where she was operated on in 45 degree heat. She went home fully cured two weeks later.

## Rebecca

In 2020, after the birth of her second child by traditional birth attendants in her remote village in Tanzania, Rebecca found that she was leaking urine. She did not know what to do.

Neighbours told her about a free hospital in Arusha which was known for treating conditions like this. Rebecca and her husband came to Kivulini Maternity Centre where it was confirmed that she had sustained an obstetric fistula during the birth. Rebecca was operated on and returned home cured. She was advised to deliver future babies at the hospital.

In Massai culture where Rebecca is from, a husband decides whether his wife will give birth at home or at the hospital. In 2021 Rebecca delivered her third child at home without complication. But in 2022 during the birth of her fourth child at home, Rebecca sustained another obstetric fistula. Her husband brought her to the Fistula Camp at the Kivulini Maternity Centre in June 2023. After another successful operation Rebecca's fistula has been completely repaired.

Through the outreach program led by our social workers Grace and Margareth, Kivulini is teaching the Maasai about the safety benefits mothers receive when their babies are delivered at the hospital.



Rebecca and her baby

# Volunteer Snapshot: Dr Bianca at Vision Maternity Care Hospital

I first heard of the Barbara May Foundation about 15 years ago when I attended a lecture given by Dr Andrew Browning in The Netherlands. I initially trained as a tropical doctor, which is a specialist training in Holland that aims to equip doctors to work in resource poor areas, and then spent two years working in Uganda before I later qualified as an obstetrician.

In 2015 I volunteered for the first time at Vision Maternity Care Hospital (VMC) in Barhir Dar, working for one month in the old blue building. I was deeply impressed by the commitment of the staff, their eagerness for developing their skills as well as the wonderful Ethiopian culture.

I have now volunteered six times at VMC and hope to continue returning annually. It always feels like coming home, finding the same people working with such passion, conviction, and great sense of humour, who have become dear friends over the years. It is very rewarding to be part of the team and I am looking forward to working with them again in the near future!



Dr Bianca with the mother whose three babies she delivered



Dr Bianca and Sr Ameled

I returned to VMC for a month earlier this year with Dr Toenga from Belgium. We have been going as a team for some years now. Dr Toenga has been teaching Dr Birhanu obstetric ultrasound. I had a patient present who had had two previous caesarean deliveries at VMC. The patient recognised me straight away and it turned out that I had performed her previous two caesareans! I was able to perform her third caesarean and safely delivered her baby.

# Projects supported in Africa

## Barbara May Memorial Hospital (BMMH) The Afar Region, Mille, Ethiopia

Opened in September 2011, the BMMH provides access to free, safe, maternal healthcare services to the nomadic women of the Afar.

Sadly, the region was invaded by rebels and there was active warfare for much of 2021 and 2022, with the impact still being felt. Although a peace treaty was signed between the government of Ethiopia and the rebels in November 2022, the aftermath of the war continues. Sporadic fighting, loss of infrastructure, crippling inflation, food shortages and hunger are inflicting profound hardships in the Afar Region.

Thanks to your generosity, the BMMH and the Rural Maternity Health Network have continued, and many thousands of women and their families have received essential reproductive healthcare and emergency food relief during this time.

### Key activities:

BMMH	RURAL MATERNITY HEALTH
668 Deliveries	8,962 Deliveries
8,162 Clinic visits	45,315 Patients treated with other conditions
337 Gynaecological operations	
1 Doctor trained in fistula surgery	



Patients at BMMH



BMMH Staff

## Vision Maternity Care Hospital (VMC) Barhir Dar, Ethiopia

Opened in 2011 in partnership with the local Health Bureau, VMC provides maternal healthcare, HIV screenings and family planning advice. It is also a training centre for midwives.

The staff of VMC have become even busier this year. We have been able to welcome more staff to the team to meet these increasing needs. We hope to expand the hospital to include a dedicated fistula ward and maternity waiting rooms. Much preparatory work has been undertaken and we are now assessing the feasibility of the proposed work.

In recent times there has been renewed conflict in the area. Many women will find it difficult to access health care during this time making our work even more critical.

### Key activities:

2,752 Deliveries
18,207 Clinic visits
80+ Midwife students trained



VMC Staff



VMC Medical Records room



## Kivulini Maternity Centre – Maternity Africa (MA) Arusha, Tanzania

Opened in June 2018, MA is a well-equipped 48 bed maternity centre, a midwife training program and an obstetric fistula treatment unit.

There have been several comings and goings among employees this year. We farewelled Marianne Botenbal our midwife tutor from The Netherlands, who returned home, and Dr Mbise who has moved to a nearby university teaching hospital.

Michael Hynds was appointed as the hospital director during the year. Under his leadership, MA has seen exciting growth - the fistula program has expanded, a school reproductive health education program has started, and outreach work into the communities has expanded.

In 2024, God willing, we hope to start construction on the new satellite hospital in Chamwino.

### Key activities:

2,281	Deliveries
11,279	Clinic visits
386	Gynaecological operations
3,976	Family planning consultations
58	Midwives trained in clinical skills
5	Doctors trained in fistula surgery

## Reconciliation Hospital Referendum, South Sudan

Opened in 2018 in partnership with the Lutheran Church, Reconciliation Hospital is a fistula treatment centre and 10 bed maternity unit in the capital Juba.

This year we were fortunate to secure funding for the majority of the fistula work and we ran three very busy fistula camps. Dr Andrew was accompanied by Prof. Judith Goh on one camp. She provided invaluable assistance and is exploring ways to be more involved in fistula work. We hope this service will grow.

Missionary doctor, Marianna Santin is regularly visiting the hospital for training, and she continues to work in Wau, South Sudan.

### Key activities:

103	Obstetric fistula operations
3	Doctors trained in fistula surgery



Dr Andrew with staff at MA



Womens Health Class at MA



Prof. Goh in surgery at Reconciliation Hospital



Patient at Reconciliation Hospital

# Projects supported in Africa (cont.)

## Kworo Sonic Healthcare Foundation Hospital Agago District, Northern Uganda

The partnership formed last year between Barbara May Foundation and Te-Kworo Foundation to build a 42-bed maternity hospital in the impoverished Agago District of northern Uganda, has exceeded expectations.

Sonic Healthcare Foundation, the giving arm of global healthcare company Sonic Healthcare Ltd, have committed significant funding to support the completion of the hospital building, fit out and running costs which will provide safe births and prevention of obstetric fistula for thousands of northern Ugandan women.

Construction is expected to start in the last quarter of 2023 and be completed late in 2024, with an official opening in early 2025.

Women and babies will have access to a blood bank, birthing suite, specialised newborn baby unit, operating theatre as well as a well-equipped pathology facility,



Kworo Hospital ground breaking ceremony

designed and fitted out by Sonic Healthcare. Dr Browning will provide on-going oversight and training to ensure the high quality of the new facilities.

The hospital will provide support for a mobile clinic operating in remote villages across four large districts of northern Uganda, as well as nursing and midwifery training for disadvantaged girls coming through Te-Kworo's scholarship program at the two Kworo High Schools.



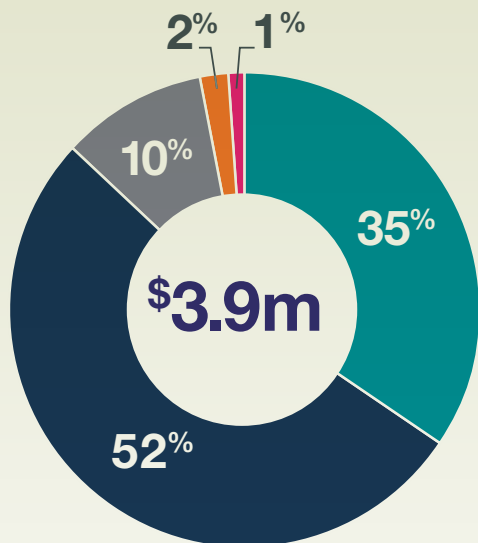
## Our wishlist

- 1 One or more funding partners to support the running of the Vision Maternity Care Hospital. An additional AUD\$400,000 is required annually to fund the essential maternity healthcare services provided by this hospital.
- 2 A second or even third champion to support the day to day running costs of the Barbara May Memorial Hospital. An additional AUD\$300,000 is required annually to enable this hospital to operate at its full capacity.
- 3 One or more champions who could commit to supporting the running costs of the new Maternity Africa satellite hospital in Chamwino. We expect AUD\$850,000 will be required annually to run this 30-bed maternity hospital at its full potential. This will enable us to provide 1,500 – 2,000 deliveries, 12,000 clinic visits, 1,000 family planning consultations and 100 obstetric fistula repairs.

# Our Finances

Year ended 30 June 2023

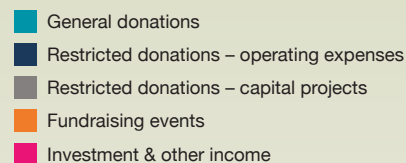
A full version of our audited Financial Statements can be found on our website.



## Where the money came from

Income from donations of \$3.9m exceeded budget, however decreased from 2022 (\$5.1m) largely due to significant donations received in 2022 from fundraising events held to raise funds for the construction of the new Kworo Sonic Healthcare Foundation Hospital in northern Uganda, which is expected to commence in late 2023.

\$2.5m (2022: \$3.8m) of donations received during the financial year have been requested to be directed towards certain programs or expenditure. The Foundation intends to honour these requests of donors.

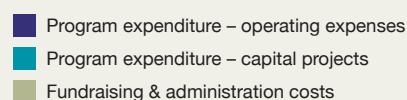
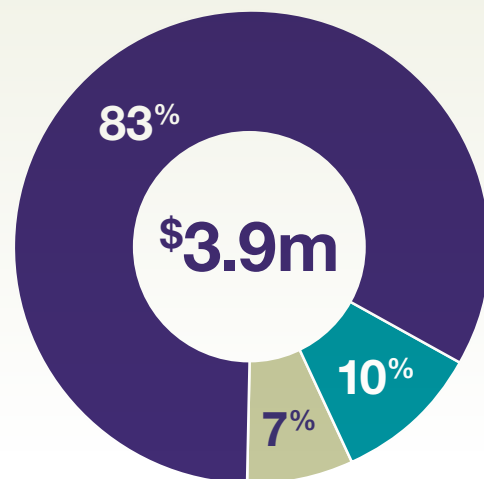


## Where the money was spent


The Foundation spent \$3.6m (2022: \$2.5m) on its various programs across East Africa. This increase from 2022 has been the result of a number of factors including:


- extreme levels of inflation continuing across East Africa significantly impacting the cost of supplies and salaries and wages,
- several items of essential equipment requiring replacement,
- funding of the South Sudan fistula camps and a significant portion of the Afar Rural Network previously funded directly by donors now funded by BMF,
- commencement of the midwife training program at the Kivulini Maternity Centre - Maternity Africa,
- increased travel costs for Dr Andrew Browning to travel to Africa due to increased air fare rates and Dr Browning making fewer trips in 2022 as a result of COVID restrictions,
- impacts of movements in foreign exchange rates.


The amount of funds spent on fundraising and administration represents 7% of total income for the financial year.



## How far does a donation go?\*

 **\$AUD 70** Will pay for the transport of a woman with a fistula to hospital

 **\$AUD 165** Will pay for 65 delivery kits for local birth attendants in remote regions

 **\$AUD 280** Will pay for a safe delivery in hospital including a caesarean section if required plus all pre and post-natal checkups

 **\$AUD 700** Will pay for a life changing obstetric fistula repair operation

\*This is an average cost calculated across the various East African countries in which our supported projects operate.

The Barbara May Foundation wishes to acknowledge and thank all our generous partners, donors, ambassadors and supporters. Your compassion, expressed in this way, is making a real difference to the lives of people that need and deserve our love. You have continued to bring hope and restore dignity to the most disadvantaged women in Africa.

## The BMF Board

Chair: Michael Sharpe AO

Deputy Chair: Dr Samantha Hargreaves

Treasurer: Matthew Pendleton

David Browning OAM

Richard Browning

Rowena Hubble

Prof. Jonathan Morris AM

Julie Toma

Philippa Tyndale

## The BMF Management Team

Dr Andrew Browning AM, *Medical Director*

Valerie Browning AM, *Project Director of the Afar Pastoralists Development Association*

Michael Hynds, *International Donor Relations*

Joanna Shaw, *PA to Dr Andrew Browning*

Nicole Shinfield, *Company Secretary*

## Ambassadors

The Foundation is also assisted by the Board appointment of Honorary Ambassadors:

Brad Baker

Kirsty Neilson

Dr Geoff Kelsey

Sr Kareena Shaw

Patrick Kennedy

Atlanta Zwar

Elisa McDonald

## Volunteers

We are extremely thankful for all volunteer doctors, midwives and architects whose dedicated service leaves a lasting impact on the women and mothers they assist.

## Our Major Project Partners & Supporters

We are grateful for the support of:

Anglican Aid

Calvin Edwards Foundation USA

DAK Foundation

Excellence in Giving USA

Hamlin Fistula Australia

Hebert Smith Freehills

Impact UK

King Baudouin USA

Lutheran Churches of USA and South Sudan

Terry & Laurie Ledbetter

Tony McLellan

Morris Family Foundation

My Sister's Baby

Planet Wheeler Foundation

PwC

Regal Foundation

Ripple Foundation

Sonic Healthcare Foundation

South Western Sydney Local Health District

Sydney Local Health District

The Talbot Family

Twice the Doctor

Other partners from the UK, USA, Switzerland and Australia who prefer to remain anonymous

## How can you help?

Donating to the Barbara May Foundation will allow us to fund the construction and operation of maternal healthcare facilities, maintain and increase our outreach programs, provide vital medical supplies, support volunteer doctors and midwives, train healthcare workers and educate communities. Every donation received is appreciated and will help us deliver care to the many women who need it.

### You can donate:

♥ **Online:** [www.barbaramayfoundation.com](http://www.barbaramayfoundation.com)

♥ **By cheque or money order:**

c/- The Barbara May Foundation  
PO Box 2371  
Bowral NSW 2576

*Please include your contact details so we can issue a receipt.*

♥ **By Direct Deposit:\***

BSB: 032716 (Westpac)  
Account: 403741

### Other Ways to Support:

There are many other ways to help BMF deliver lasting change including workplace giving, fundraising, bequests, and regular giving.

To find out more, visit:

[barbaramayfoundation.com/how-can-i-help](http://barbaramayfoundation.com/how-can-i-help)

\*Please advise us of your direct deposit so that we can issue you a tax deductible receipt by emailing: [david.browning@barbaramayfoundation.com](mailto:david.browning@barbaramayfoundation.com)

