

Spring 2024

www.centerfor
healthandhope.org

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Messer to Step Aside as Executive Director

The founder of the **Center for Health and Hope**, **Dr. Don Messer**, has chosen to step aside from the role of Executive Director to become Chair of the Board. "After 20 years of increasing responsibility," says Messer, "I believe this is the time for the Board to hire a new and younger Executive Director for future leadership."

Pointing to a "window of opportunity," Messer suggests that "while I'm still healthy at age 83, it is a good time to make a smooth transition." The Board of Directors will soon announce an appointment process. "No one will replicate the same unique experiences and contacts Don has accumulated over the years," noted Transition Chair, Claudia Svarstad, "but we expect the new leader will share similar vision, values, passion, and commitment regarding the Center's mission."



Above & Beyond \$500,000 Campaign Launched

Because of the volunteer work of Dr. Don Messer the past 20 years, the Center has never paid a salary or benefits for its Executive Director. A "listening tour" of more than 50 donors convinced the Board of Directors that people wanted the Center to continue. To ensure a qualified replacement for Messer, the Board has launched an **Above and Beyond**

Campaign to raise at least \$500,000. Gifts and pledges paid over 5 years will ensure a steady flow of income for necessary overhead. Donors, who give "above and beyond" what they normally might do, will ensure the current program is maintained, not decreased during this transition. William Bradford and Chin Keong Tan are Campaign Chairs.



**Above &
Beyond**

The \$500,000 goal is within reach! Almost \$100,000 is in savings; the 13-member Board together has offered a \$200,000 challenge of which \$80,000 has to date been matched. Donors are invited to go "above and beyond" and make gifts and pledges for up to 5 years! Thanks for reading enclosed flyer and returning pledge form or gift in envelope.

Mintu Shares His Story from Indian Orphanage



After describing being left at a Kolkata, India, orphanage at the age of 5 and his many years in a crowded communal home, 20-year-old Mintu Kumar spoke of "how wonderful life has been" and prompted audience tears as he played "Amazing Grace" on his violin.

Keynote speaker for the annual Spring is a Time for HOPE (Helping Orphans by Providing Essentials) brunch, Mintu had been supported by the Center at the Snehakunja Children's Home until he received a scholarship to study at Dordt University in Iowa in 2023. Nearly \$70,000 was raised at the brunch for vulnerable children in India and Kenya.

Jess Losoya Honored: From Addiction to Community Leader

Jess Losoya, whose autobiography chronicles an incredible comeback from a journey of addiction and imprisonment to a life of community leadership, was honored at the annual Red Concert in Tucson, Arizona, sponsored by the Center and the Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network (TIHAN). "Few men are able to turn their lives around, much less become vice-presidents of their non-profits and respected volunteer public servants in their city," said Dr. Don Messer in presenting the 2024 Leadership Award. In attendance, celebrating Losoya and the work of TIHAN and the Center, was Valerie Cavazos a well-known TV Tucson investigative reporter.



Hoping for a Legacy that Cares for the Stigmatized

People ask "how do I feel" about stepping away from being Executive Director of the Center for Health and Hope. Since it hasn't happened yet, it is hard to gauge. I know it is the right thing to do, but that doesn't mean that I don't sometimes experience ambivalence.

For years I just thought I would work until health and/or death forced a change. But then I began to think more responsibly and decided that now there was a unique "window of opportunity" for change. If I wanted to be sure that this unique HIV and AIDS ministry around the world was to continue, then I should help enable it to happen. I am healthy at age 83 and can continue working as a Board member without directing the day-to-day activities.

Heartening were the fifty plus conversations we held with donors. Overwhelmingly, they said the work must continue and they wanted to be a part of it. I asked for advice, and they started giving money! They understood we need to build the Center's capacity and start paying for an Executive Director.

Other than my family, I can't think of a greater legacy than to see the Center flourishing into the future, reaching out to the most stigmatized and marginalized of the world. Thank you for helping make this happen.

Donald E. Messer



HIV Escalating in the Philippines

Unlike many other parts of the world, rates of HIV infection are escalating in the Philippines. In the last several years there has been a 212% increase in daily detections of the disease. Center Executive Director, Dr. Don Messer, spoke at a three-in-one AIDS Conference during March at Wesleyan University—Philippines, Cabanatuan City. Three groups of 650 people—medical personnel, students, and church leaders—gathered for education and HIV testing. A Hub HIV testing center was dedicated on campus.

Join the Center's Swinging@AIDS

Tuesday, August 13, will find Center friends "Swinging@AIDS" for the 18th time in Denver. This yearly fund-raiser, headed by Bruce Berger, will once again mobilize golfers of every level at the City Park Course to compete for prizes and purchase Silent Auction items. The event will be dedicated in memory of a longtime golfer friend, Richard Marsh, Denver area attorney. To sign up as a sponsor, golfer, or donate Silent Auction items, check our website.





Humanitarians of the Year: Jim & Joanie Calhoun

A lifetime of community and church service characterize Rev. Jim and Joanie Calhoun, Erie, Colorado. Named the Center's 2024 Humanitarians of the Year at the annual Spring Brunch, they were hailed for their anti-racist and pro-LGBTQ+ stances, helping build Kenya Methodist University, caring for AIDS orphans, and feeding the hungry. Over 130 persons gathered at the University of Denver to salute the Calhoun's. Justin Levy served as MC; music by Chloe Alexander and Daryl J. Walker. Clietta Terry chaired the event. Mark April 5, 2024 for next year!

Center Team Visits Projects and Sponsors Seminars in India

Despite having the second largest number of people living with HIV, India is often overlooked and the nation doesn't prioritize fighting AIDS. Those infected and affected are often among the most impoverished and marginalized. In January a Center team of William Bradford, Larry Sondgeroth, Don Messer, and Burt Golub, M.D., visited Center projects in Kolkata, Chennai, and Namakkal. Time was spent visiting an AIDS orphanage, meeting commercial sex workers, educating student nurses, exploring alternative income generating projects for persons living with HIV, distributing nutritional supplies to HIV positive families, and providing eyeglasses at a free HIV clinic for women and children.

Partnering with the National Council of Churches of India, the Center sponsored two days of conferences, focused on understanding sexual and gender diversity as well as preventing HIV. "India still suffers from AIDS and AFRAIDS," declared Dr. Don Messer, when speaking about persistent fear and stigmatization that curtails prevention, care, and treatment. Persons living with HIV shared their experiences and called on the church to "restart" its AIDS ministry after a COVID sabbatical.



Students Graduate in Rwanda & Kenya: Scholarships Needed



'Tis the season of graduations... In Kenya and Rwanda several of the AIDS orphans sponsored by the center recently have graduated from post-secondary colleges. For these young people graduation is not a routine family experience, but the capstone of life of struggle and achievement. Applications have now been received for a new generation of scholars. You can support a young person's dreams for a total of \$2,000 to \$6,000. Let Dr. Messer know of your willingness to provide a scholarship by contacting globalaids@gmail.com.

Celebrate Ann Fort's 100th Birthday

Lest we forget! The Center will celebrate the tremendous legacy of Ann Fort on Saturday morning, September 28, with friends and family at Hope UMC, Greenwood Village, CO. Timed with what would have been her 100th birthday, speakers and singers will salute her 19 trips to Kenya and how her estate gifts have continued to fund Kenya orphans to attend college. Plan on participating!



Mountain Sky Conference Recognition for Messer

Following the recent United Methodist General Conference in Charlotte, NC, Dr. Don Messer was "spotlighted" as "amazing" in the media of the Mountain Sky Area with a photo and commentary. His "passion for advocating for people dealing with HIV/AIDS" over the decades was cited as an "integral thread" in his life and work. It noted that since 1984 he "has been the biggest advocate for United Methodist involvement in the HIV/AIDS crisis" and how he was engaged forty years later in Charlotte speaking and amending legislation.



Kenya "Harambee Celebrations" in Denver

Dr. Catherine Mutua and Presiding Bishop Isaiah Deye of the Methodist Church of Kenya visited the Denver area in early May. In "Harambee" (or "together") Celebrations, dinners hosting almost 40 people were held at the home of Ruth Ann Russell & Bruce Berger and the home of Bonnie and Don Messer. Most had visited Kenya; all had donated to projects.



Mutua was welcomed at Long's Peak UMC, where she thanked the people for supporting a social worker for AIDS orphans. Deye symbolically dedicated two "grandmother houses" for AIDS orphans at Central UMC in Colorado Springs, one of which was for a young 16-year-old Colorado teenager who tragically died from an overdose.

Kenya Partnering With the Denver Free Community

Forging a new partnership, Dr. Catherine Mutua, Director of the Methodist Drug Treatment Center in Meru, Kenya, met with Rev. Ryan Canady and other leaders of the Denver Free Community. Together they explored after-care and the spiritual needs of persons recovering from addiction.

Four To Attend 25th International AIDS Conference in Munich

When the 25th International AIDS Conference convenes in Munich, Germany, during July of 2025, the Center for Health and Hope will be represented by William Bradford, Chin Keong Tan, Bonnie and Don Messer. This year's theme emphasizes using an evidenced-based approach to HIV education, prevention, care, & treatment that "Puts People First."

Justin Levy Joins Center Board of Directors

New to the Center's Board of Director is Justin Levy, Denver, the Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications, Newman Center, University of Denver. Levy and his wife Cari, M.D., visited Center projects in Kenya and Rwanda in 2023. For Justin, philanthropy is a family tradition, as he is President of the Raphael Levy Memorial Foundation.



Dr. Sue Hamm Elected Vice-Chair; Rev. Megan Burg Resigns

Dr. Sue Hamm, retired Denver child psychologist, has been elected Vice-Chair of the Center's Board, replacing Rev. Megan Burg who resigned due to increased family and church responsibilities.



Thank You So Much!
We raised \$352,338 in 2023

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