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Family Month



EDITORIAL

Rotary Family Health Days

In 1994, Marion Bunch lost her son to AIDS. It was early on in the U.S. AIDS epidemic, and the stigma surrounding the disease kept her from talking about her son's illness with anyone but family members.

"I never thought I'd do anything about it until one day, three years after his death, I felt a tap on the shoulder, and a voice in my ear said, 'Mom, get up and get going; you haven't done anything, and it's been three years,'" she recalls.

Within a year, Bunch, a member of the Rotary Club of Dunwoody, Georgia, USA, proposed an idea to her club, and through Rotary began connecting community and professional leaders who shared a passion for disease prevention. This was the start of Rotarians for Family Health and AIDS Prevention (RFHA), a Rotarian Action Group.

In May, the group held its third annual Family Health Days in Africa. Rotarians from 365 clubs fanned out across Uganda, Nigeria, and South Africa to help medical professionals and government workers provide free health services to 250,000 people. The event included polio and measles immunizations, dental and eye clinics, and family counseling and screening for HIV, diabetes, hypertension, breast cancer, and cervical cancer.

"The reach of this is so phenomenal because of the presence of Rotarians all across these countries who felt emotionally connected by working together as one force on one project," Bunch says.

In South Africa, 225 Rotary clubs participated at 160 sites; in Uganda, 65 clubs supported 120 sites; and across Lagos and Ogun states in southern Nigeria, 62 clubs supported 70 sites. Two Rotary Foundation Global Grants provided funding to send vocational training teams to Uganda and to pay for bed nets that will help prevent malaria in Nigeria.

"The heartbeat of the health care system must be prevention of disease and the promotion of health rather than [trying] to cure disease, to fix it after," says Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi, South Africa's minister of health.

Chris Pretorius, a member of the Rotary Club of Pretoria Sunrise, South Africa, was amazed by the turnout for the event. "One of the members of the health department said they had never been able to get so many children here on a day like this," he says. "That in itself is success."

The campaign illustrates how Rotary teams up with other organizations to expand its impact. Since 2011, RFHA has partnered with the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation, which contributed \$450,000 for this year's three-country event. Other partners were South Africa's Department of Health, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID, Delta Airlines, and Nampak.

"We are proud to have partnered with RFHA and the Department of Health in promoting access to health screening services," says Therese Gearhart, president of Coca-Cola South Africa. "At Coca-Cola, we invest in these initiatives because, together with our partners, we have a common vision of a South Africa that comprises healthy, strong, and thriving communities."

Leaders of the Rotarian Action Group hope to reach more African countries through the event each year.

"Rotary is the catalyst organization in this event because of the power and [political] neutrality of our brand and the respect we receive worldwide for our ability to mobilize communities into action," Bunch says. "This event represents the power of public/private partnerships. No one organization can do a massive event like this alone. Each partner has a defined role and set of responsibilities. and that's why it works."

UNCLE PAUL'S CHARITY EVENING WITH MONTAGU'S GIFT







Pat and DG Vyv, thanks
for joining us and helping
us to spoil 31 deserving
children.

