Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters
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The ANN news bulletin is a weekly recap of stories published since the previous week’s bulletin. To see news, commentaries, photos and reader comments as they are published, visit news.adventist.org.

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**Brazil's health ministry commends Adventist blood donor campaign**

'Vida por Vidas' contributes to 3.5 million bags of donated blood per year

22 Jun 2011, Brasilia, Brazil
Felipe Lemos/ANN staff

A Seventh-day Adventist blood donation program active in eight South American countries was recognized by Brazil's health ministry last week for promoting blood donation in the country.
Elbert Kuhn, assistant to the president of the Adventist Church's South American Division, represented the program and accepted the certificate at a ceremony on World Blood Donor Day, June 14, at the Blood Center Foundation in Brasilia.

The program, Vida por Vidas ("Life for Lives") contributes to the estimated 3.5 million bags of blood donated annually in Brazil, said Alexandre Padilha, the country's health minister. Brazil's government used to pay people to donate blood before churches, clubs and other organizations began encouraging regular donation, he said.

Launched in southern Brazil in 2006, Vida por Vidas is overseen by young Brazilian Adventists.

After awarding Vida por Vidas a certificate of recognition, Padilha and Brazil's general coordinator for Blood and Blood Products, Guilherme Genovez, rolled up their sleeves and donated blood. This marked the first time a health minister had donated blood in the country, an advisor said.

"The Vida por Vidas project is of extreme importance for having contributed to the increase in numbers of voluntary donors who provide healthy blood with low risk of disease transmission," Genovez said. The health ministry supports the church's emphasis on the "social responsibility involved in the act of voluntary blood donation," he added.

Between 2003 and 2010, organ transplants in Brazil increased more than 65 percent, multiplying the need for blood transfusions in the country. World Health Organization guidelines suggest that 1.5 percent to 3 percent of a country's population should regularly donate blood to maintain an adequate supply.

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**In U.S., black members of Adventist Church defy health disparities, study shows**

*Physical, mental quality of life better than general population*

28 Jun 2011, Loma Linda, California, United States
Heather Reifsnyder/ANN

Health disparities between black Americans and the rest of the United States have been well documented in medical journals. But one study shows that blacks who identify as members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church actually report a better quality of life than the average American.
A Loma Linda University study shows that U.S. blacks who identify as members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church defy health disparities and report a better quality of life than the average American. Researchers point to certain lifestyle behaviors as a possible explanation for the difference.

Researchers point to certain lifestyle behaviors as a possible explanation for the difference. The research was conducted at Loma Linda University as part of the Adventist Religion and Health Study (ARHS), a study of nearly 11,000 Adventists, including more than 3,400 black Adventists.

The findings were drawn from an ARHS survey that included questions from SF-12v2 Physical and Mental Health composite scores, widely recognized among researchers to be accurate measures of quality of life. Examples of questions included are:

--"During the past four weeks, how much did pain interfere with your normal work?"

--"How much time during the past four weeks have you felt downhearted and depressed?"

ARHS results were then compared to results from a nationwide sample of people who took the SF-12v2 survey. Overall, black Adventist study participants reported better physical and mental quality of life than the U.S. norm, in some cases by as much as 4.5 percentage points.

"It is striking that, although in the general population blacks show poorer quality of life on a variety of measures, our results show that black Adventists have a significantly better quality of life than the average American," said Dr. Jerry Lee, principal investigator for ARHS.

"This difference is particularly pronounced in older age groups, who progressively demonstrate increased mental health -- lower depression, more energy, feeling more calm and peaceful -- relative to the general population," Lee said. "This could be a result of the healthy lifestyle choices that are built into the Adventist faith."

Compared to non-Adventist blacks and whites, rates of smoking, drinking, and meat consumption for Adventists were lower, and rates of vegetarianism and water consumption were higher. In addition, about 95 percent of the males and females in the black study cohort attended church weekly or more often, as compared to 30 percent of black males and 50 percent of black females in the General Social Survey -- a survey routinely conducted on a sample of the entire U.S. by the National Opinion Research Center.

Adventists, who advocate temperance, a plant-based diet, and setting aside Saturday for worship and family time, have received much coverage in recent years for their longevity and quality of life.

Loma Linda, California, a city with a high concentration of Adventists, was the only U.S. locale featured in the book The Blue Zones, by Dan Buettner. The book examined five areas of the world where life spans often noticeably exceed the norms. Loma Linda Adventist subjects of the book have been featured on many national TV spots, including a heart surgeon practicing at 94 years old, interviewed on The Oprah Winfrey Show, and a piano teacher giving lessons at 97, interviewed on CNN's Anderson Cooper 360.
ARHS is a sub-study of the Adventist Health Study-2 (AHS-2), a long-term health study of more than 96,000 Adventists, including 26,000 black Adventists, across the U.S. and Canada.

Research shows that lifestyle diseases disproportionately affect blacks. Part of AHS-2's goal has been to determine why this is the case by exploring the links between diet, lifestyle, and disease. Researchers at the study's outset said the results of ARHS would be an important step toward learning practices that may help eliminate health disparities between blacks and the general population.

As analysis of data continues, researchers say they expect more results that will have far-reaching implications for improving the health of the black community.

AHS-2 is conducted by researchers at Loma Linda University School of Public Health. For more information, visit www.adventisthealthstudy.org.

Click [HERE](#) for a PDF of a graph with more specific information from the study

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**Adventist health leaders welcome new U.S. cigarette warning labels**

*Nine graphic images must rotate through brands each year*

23 Jun 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Ansel Oliver/ANN

Seventh-day Adventist health leaders welcomed the United States' new policy requiring of cigarette manufacturers to add new graphic warning labels on cigarette packs and advertising by October of next year.

![New warning label](#)

The new warning as it would appear on a cigarette package. [photo courtesy FDA]
graphic images, including a sick smoker struggling to breathe with an oxygen mask or a mouth with stained teeth. The labels go beyond the small, text-only warnings, which were last adjusted in the 1980s.

The new graphic warnings must cover the top 50 percent of all cigarette packs and 20 percent of the top of each advertisement, officials from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services said.

The warning labels are part of a 2009 law that gave the Food and Drug Administration authority to regulate tobacco. Several tobacco companies subsequently sued the FDA, saying the labeling requirement violates their Constitutional right to free speech.

"It's precisely because we support freedom of speech that we welcome the use of pictures that are each worth a thousand words," said Dr. Allan Handysides, Health Ministries director of the Adventist world church. "The pictures will transmit a message that is both truthful and remedial in nature."

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable and premature death in the U.S. and is linked to some 5 million deaths worldwide each year, Handysides said. About one in five adults and teens in the U.S. smoke.

Major U.S. news agencies reported Wednesday that top tobacco makers declined to comment on the warning labels or said that they were "reviewing them."

About two dozen other countries require graphic warning images, including the U.S.'s northern neighbor, Canada, which in 2000 required no less than 60 percent of labels and advertising to carry warnings. That has significantly dropped the rate of smoking there, Handysides said.

Adventist Church Associate Health Ministries Director Dr. Peter Landless praised the move and urged the U.S. Government to do more.

"We affirm the U.S. Government for this courageous initiative and urge them to proceed with the next bold, logical and overdue step -- to ratify the World Framework Convention on Tobacco Control," he said, referring to a treaty adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2003. The U.S. is one of 22 nations that has not ratified the treaty, which sets universal standards stating the dangers of tobacco and limiting its use.

"Smoking and lung cancer are inextricably and causally related both in those who smoke and those exposed to second hand smoke," Landless said. "Every means must be employed to decrease the number of current smokers if the number of people dying from tobacco related deaths are to be decreased."

The Adventist Church, whose Five Day Stop Smoking Plan was one of the first smoking cessation programs, now largely partners with the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, the American Cancer Society and the American Heart and Lung Associations.

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**Zimbabwean couple's prison ministries see one-third of nation's offenders enrolled in Bible studies**

'Groundwork laid,' now a need for ongoing support: resources, chaplains

28 Jun 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN
Adopt a child. Adopt a pet. Why not adopt a prison?

In Luxon and Charity Zembe's native Zimbabwe, the idea is generating staggering results -- more than one-third of the country's prison population is enrolled in Bible studies and 500 prisoners joined the church last year, marking the first known time in Zimbabwean history prisoners have requested baptism.

Since launching Glenara District Prison Ministries, the Seventh-day Adventist couple has logged many firsts. Their ministry was the first such outreach program Zimbabwe had seen -- tough in a country where societal attitudes toward prisoners are enmeshed in fear and prejudice, often leaving former prisoners ostracized by family and friends and with little hope of rehabilitation.

The Zembes, along with 12 volunteers from their local church's Woman's Ministries department, began ministering to the Hwahwa Young Offenders Prison near Gweru, Zimbabwe, six years ago. Now, they're present in 43 of the nation's prisons -- all but Zimbabwe's two maximum-security prisons -- offering prisoners access to Hope Channel programming, Bible studies and a support network.

Still small, their team now benefits from fledgling partnerships with Adventist churches located near area prisons. Members can lend financial and spiritual support to prisoners without costly long-distance travel.

"When a church is close by and can 'adopt' a prison, this is a very good thing in terms of sustainability," Luxon says. In one such case, prison authorities were so impressed by the dedication of volunteers, they asked a local church to build an extension chapel within the prison complex.

Convincing members to participate is sometimes difficult, though. "Obviously not everybody buys into the idea of working with prisons," Charity says. "This is something you have to go out and do first. Then you come back and show people pictures and videos, tell them stories and say, 'This is the work that is happening within prisons.'"
Show and tell has preceded support from the beginning. When the Zembes first asked whether they could install Hope Channel in several prisons, officials were suspicious, wary the programming contained political messages, Charity said. After watching broadcasts for several months, officials gave permission. Soon afterward, several requested Bible studies, Charity says.

Since then, prison authorities have conducted research, independent of the Adventist Church, to measure the impact of the Zembes' ministry. "What they discovered is a very significant reduction in repeat offences for those prisoners engaged in the program -- who watch Hope Channel, who take Bible studies," Luxon says.

The Zembes have also observed attitudes changing toward prisoners in the country, thanks in part to a group of prisoners in Harare who formed a gospel choir and last year hit number two on Zimbabwe's music video charts.

"People all of a sudden think, 'Wow, prisoners singing hymns like that? Being involved in music like this?' So the perception is changing," Luxon says.

Previously, when prisoners were released, their families shunned them. "No one would have anything to do with them, but working through the system and with the volunteers, many of these offenders have been rehabilitated and reunited with their families," he says.

While the hit video did wonders for awareness -- the ministry is now known nationwide -- the Zembes struggle to support the growing scope of their ministry.

The couple -- both of whom are business people -- along with other zealous volunteers, have for years donated their own money to keep the ministry financially afloat. Luxon, who previously served as president of Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries for Zimbabwe, is able to secure some resources for television sets and required equipment for Hope Channel, as well as complimentary literature and resources. Twenty additional sets were recently donated by Hope Channel Africa.

Still, the challenge of sustainability persists, Luxon says. The Zimbabwe prison system recently invited the Adventist Church to provide full-time Adventist chaplains for each of the country's prisons. Enthusiasm runs high for the opportunity, but few ministers are available, he says.

"If you look at our pastors in Zimbabwe, you find that each pastor in town, they have got six to eight churches to look after, plus 10 companies. Those in the countryside? There, you find they have 20 churches per pastor. They are just struggling to service their own membership," Luxon says.

As awareness of the project spreads nationwide and beyond, the couple hopes missionaries and other volunteers
will show interest in accepting prison chaplaincy positions.

"What drives us into this whole ministry is to see souls being saved. It's unfortunate when groundwork is laid, but you see that you could end up losing that," Luxon says.

-- For CDs and DVDs of the choir, email your mailing address to charityzembe@zol.co.zw.

-- Look for an interview with Charity Zembe on Hope Channel later this year. The Adventist television network's forthcoming show, World of Hope, will feature the couple's ministry. Visit www.hopetv.org beginning in September for a broadcast schedule.