Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters
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ADRA joins commemoration of World AIDS Day

Agency offering online resources for December 1 promotion, education

29 Nov 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Christina Zaiback/ADRA/ANN

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is preparing to commemorate World AIDS Day on December 1, joining millions around the world in support of this year's theme, "Getting to Zero. Zero New HIV Infections. Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS Related Deaths."
It's estimated that more than 33 million people worldwide are infected with HIV/AIDS, like this woman in Zimbabwe. She left her children with her mother in a rural area and is seeking treatment in the city of Harare with an ADRA initiative in partnership with the World Food Programme. [photo: Matthew Herzel]

Through ADRA's interactive online resources, supporters of the cause are provided with ways to contribute toward the eradication of the disease, as well as educate and promote awareness to others.

The resources include a World AIDS Day Event Guide, which includes testimonies from people who are living with HIV/AIDS, important facts and information to nullify myths and stereotypes regarding HIV/AIDS, a newsletter and church bulletin insert, a pulpit announcement, and a poster that can be used to raise awareness of World AIDS Day in local churches, schools, community centers and businesses.

Supporters can also request a copy of ADRA's 2011 Really Useful Gift Catalog, which features a collection of development projects, including HIV and AIDS initiatives that individuals and institutions can support with their donations.

More than 33 million people worldwide are living with HIV. Of that number, an estimated 2.5 million are children under the age of 15.

World AIDS Day, which was first created by the World Health Organization and the United Nations General Assembly in 1988, has brought increased awareness about the disease, combating prejudices, and providing increased understanding worldwide.

ADRA is a global non-governmental organization providing sustainable community development and disaster relief without regard to political or religious association, age, gender, race or ethnicity.

For more information, visit adra.org.

25 years of medical outreach for Sydney Adventist Hospital volunteer team

Dozens of surgeries performed during recent 'Operation Open Heart' Fiji trip

29 Nov 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN

Four "harrowing" hours after undergoing complicated heart valve surgery, 12-year-old Ophelia is smiling again.
The enthusiasm in Dr. Neil Orford's blog post after Ophelia's recovery is palpable. The intensivist from a hospital outside of Melbourne is among a team of medical volunteers coordinated by Sydney Adventist Hospital that recently provided surgeries for dozens of underserved patients in Fiji.

"Even with my 20 years of intensive care experience, I can't help but feel amazed at what happens on the Operation Open Heart trips," says Orford.

Since its launch 25 years ago, Operation Open Heart volunteer teams have performed surgeries for more than 2,100 patients in 12 developing countries in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and Africa.

"It is quite special to be part of a team that can fly in, provide such complex surgery and care, and have such a wonderful reward as kids like Ophelia getting new heart valves and new life that she otherwise would not have received," says Orford.

Operation Open Heart patients would not survive long-term without cardiac care. Their families either cannot afford surgery or live in remote areas where specialized medical care is absent. Many are children born with heart defects, such as Ophelia.

The project began in 1986 after an intensive care nurse from Sydney Adventist Hospital visited Tonga and noticed a fundamental lack of cardiac treatment. She wondered whether patients could be flown to Australia for life-saving surgery. Flying in a volunteer medical team in turned out to be more affordable.

Since then, more than 1,500 medical professionals have volunteered their time and skills toward the project. They've also donated a combined $7.5 million over the years to assist with travel, accommodation and equipment expenses. A recent trip to Papua New Guinea required 15 pallets of supplies ranging from syringes to specialized surgical equipment. A single trip can cost as much as $200,000. In addition to private donations, the project benefits from dozens of corporate supporters.
In recent years, the project has expanded to include other often unavailable surgeries, ranging from cleft palate repair and burns reconstruction to, most recently, eye surgery. By training local medical staff in diagnosis and treatment, the volunteer team helps hospitals and clinics in host countries move toward self-sufficiency.

"[Sydney Adventist Hospital's] mission statement is 'Christianity in Action,' and I personally believe this is one of the greatest ways that we can actually show that, in this response and the donation of our time to do things for people who simply can't access this type of surgery," Michael Were, HealthCare Outreach manager for Sydney Adventist Hospital, recently told InFocus.

Several longtime volunteers have received national recognition for their efforts. Two volunteers to Fiji were awarded the "Order of Fiji" and eight more received Papua New Guinea's "Order of Longu" government award.

The next Operation Open Heart trip is scheduled for Myanmar early next year.

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**German Adventist youth win 'Gold Hope Prize' for community outreach**

*'Equal Opportunity Project' provides homework help, tutoring for disadvantaged kids*

29 Nov 2011, Berlin, German
EUD staff/ANN staff

A German Seventh-day Adventist youth group's work among disadvantaged children and teenagers earned national recognition last week.

Members of the Livingroom, an Adventist youth church in Mainz, won the Gold Hope Prize for their Equal Opportunity Project. In cooperation with three elementary and secondary schools and a local youth center, project volunteers offer homework help and tutoring to kids who face tough economic backgrounds or who have little to no parental support.

The Gold Hope Prize is presented by Germany's network of Christian churches, associations and communities. Founded by the German Evangelical Alliance, the network's Hope prizes recognize "exemplary commitment and witnessing in Christian charity."

"We thank God for this award. Over 90 percent of our work and mission is done by young people. God is blessing their commitment and faith," said Livingroom Pastor Ruben Grieco.
The Livingroom is designed to provide an environment where young people can feel at home and experience God's love and a sense of community, church leaders said. The church aims to make a positive impact on society.

"This award belongs to all the volunteers who use their free time to serve other people," said Equal Opportunities Project Director Jessica Dietrich.

The project is one of the Livingroom's numerous community outreach programs.

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**In Colombia, Adventist evangelism is urban focused**

*Community outreach in Bogota paves way for meetings by evangelist Bullon*

29 Nov 2011, Bogota, Columbia  
Marcela Pineros/IAD staff/ANN staff

A massive two-week evangelistic effort throughout South Colombia this month drew more than 1,500 new believers to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The series was the result of a joint effort by pastors and church members to share the Adventist hope with the region's burgeoning population, church leaders said. More than 25 million people live in South Colombia, which is home to some 130,000 Adventists.

Themed "Time for Hope," leaders organized evangelism efforts in each of Colombia's major southern cities. The efforts culminated in activities to commemorate 90 years of Adventist presence in the region.

"This was a great opportunity to show this part of Colombia that the church is alive in this region of the world and each member wants to spread the message of salvation," said Eliseo Bustamante, president of the Adventist Church in South Colombia.

In Bogota, a city with a population of more than 7 million, the church held a four-day televised series led by Robert Costa, It is Written speaker and associate ministerial secretary for the Adventist world church. More than 12,000 people gathered and some 520 were baptized as a result.
Hundreds of Adventists ran Bogota's International Half Marathon earlier this year. Community activities and outreach helped pave the way for the church's evangelism efforts in South Colombia this month. [photo: Karen Leon]

Earlier this year, Adventists organized outreach activities in Bogota leading up to the series. Adventist taxi cab drivers offered prayer for passengers and church members participated in Bogota's international half marathon, joined in a massive blood donation campaign and organized a health expo.

Elsewhere in the region, the church organized a series of meetings headlined by renowned evangelist Alejandro Bullon. The meetings covered the cities of Villavicencio, Cali, Pereira, Ibague and Sogamoso.

Nearly 35,000 people attended the evangelistic series in various centers and auditoriums and some 985 new believers joined the church, leaders reported.

"We saw so many people truly searching for hope," said Aicardo Arias, personal ministries director for the church in South Colombia.

Church leaders are already planning another major evangelism effort to reach five more cities in South Colombia next year.

The Adventist world church's current focus is outreach to the world's large urban centers.
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