



# Center for Health & Hope Action Newsletter

Fall 2024

www.centerforhealthandhope.org

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## Justin Levy Named New Executive Director

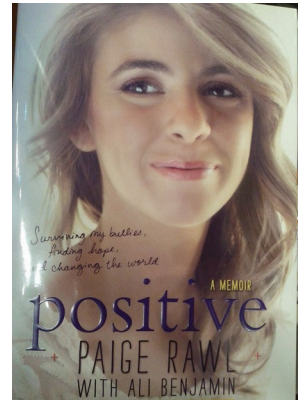
An experienced non-profit administrator with deep previous involvement in the Center's work, **Justin Levy** was chosen unanimously as the next Executive Director, starting October 28. "I couldn't be more excited to continue the amazing work that has been done. We're going to continue to make a difference in the lives of many." Levy has an MA in Nonprofit Management from Regis University & currently is Marketing Director, Newman Center, University of Denver. He serves as President of the Raphael Levy Memorial Foundation. He & his wife, Cari, M.D., traveled with the Center to Kenya & Rwanda in 2023. Dr. Don Messer will continue as President of the Board.

Connect with Justin at [centerforhealthandhope@gmail.com](mailto:centerforhealthandhope@gmail.com).



## December 1 World AIDS Day Speaker: "Surviving My Bullies, Finding Hope & Changing the World"

An inspirational speaker and author of a memoir called *Positive*, **Paige Rawl** will headline the community **World AIDS Day** observance and candlelight walk, starting at 6:00 pm, December 1<sup>st</sup>, at Park Hill United Methodist Church in Denver. This year's theme, **Remember and Commit**, is a reminder that AIDS is not over. Globally, 40 million people are living with HIV and over 600,000 died last year. Born with HIV, Rawl speaks of "surviving my bullies, finding hope, & changing the world." Rev. Dr. Valerie Jackson chairs the event.



## Period Poverty Threatens Young Women

Lack of access to menstrual products can result in 5 days of missed school per month, leading to lost educational opportunities. Quest for funds to purchase supplies can prompt sexual exploitation, even HIV. In September, 126 girls from Kaurine Primary School in Maua, Kenya, received reusable pads, along with appropriate training. Over 1,000 kits were made & distributed thanks to Center donors. A packet of sanitary pads costs \$1, but 36% of Kenyans live on less than \$1.95 per day. In fact, 65% of women & girls are unable to afford period products. For \$25, the Center helps a girl for two years. This includes not only products, but necessary educational seminars.



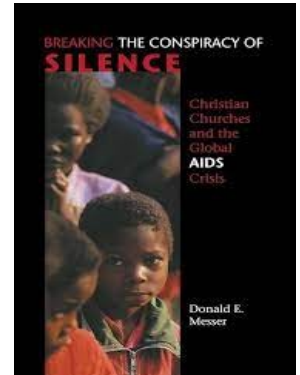
# Thanks For Going Above & Beyond

"Retirement" has been a word I have shunned. Thus, when my career in theological higher education ended in 2006, I felt compelled to start the Center for Health and Hope. I was privileged to serve as a college & seminary president for 29 years, so creating a non-profit and serving as an unpaid volunteer executive director was a chance to address an appalling global need for compassion and action.

In return for their helping me write a sermon on HIV in 1987, I had promised six gay men dying in a Denver hospital, that I would carry their message of hope that AIDS could be ended. In 1995, I united with my college friend N. M. Samuel, M.D., after being out of touch for decades. As students, we had volunteered to treat lepers in India. Now a medical professor, he expressed dismay that church people used to care for lepers, but they rejected persons living with HIV. Together, we decided to work to overcome stigma and discrimination. For the past 29 years we have done so!

As octogenarians, we now find it time for transition. Health has forced Dr. Samuel to relinquish his non-profit, and I requested the Board raise funds to secure an Executive Director. I'm thrilled that Justin Levy is taking over, and I will help as Chair of the Board. The "Above and Beyond Campaign," has raised \$483,000 of the \$500,000 goal we set! Thank you from the depth of my heart! For the past 20 years, my wife Bonnie, board members, staff, volunteers, international partners, and all the Center donors, have been going "above and beyond" helping me, volunteering time, and giving money. My soul echoes William Butler Yeats: "Think where one's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was I had such friends."

*Donald E. Messer, Chair of the Board*



*(Published 20 years ago—2004—Messer's book received acclaim and led to many lecture invitations.)*

## "A Miracle Prevention Tool" Announced at 25th International Aids Conference



Four Center delegates were among the 15,000 attending the **25th International AIDS Conference** in **Munich, Germany**, last July: **Chin Keong Tan, William Bradford, Don & Bonnie Messer**. The theme, "Putting People First," emphasized that unless persons, not pathogens, have priority, than stigma and discrimination will prohibit the goal of ending AIDS by 2030. "Put people first" also means reaching out to highly marginalized persons in society—such as sex-workers, persons using injecting drugs, transexual individuals, or men who have sex with men. These key population groups are particularly susceptible to infection, because they lack "safer sex" education or access to medical supplies like condoms, lubricants, or PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) medication.



"A miracle prevention tool" is how UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima described news that Gilead's twice-yearly injectable lenacapavir medication gave 100% protection against HIV infection to cisgender women in South Africa and Uganda during controlled trials. This scientific PrEP prevention breakthrough, which provides great hope globally, may flounder because its price tag of \$42,500 per patient for two shots per year in the USA; in the 120 countries with the highest HIV rates it may prevent people who need it from getting it. Gilead just announced it will allow six generic companies in Asia & Africa to sell in 120 countries with highest HIV rates. Long-time Center activist and HIV specialist, **Burt Golub, M.D.**, hailed the results as "amazing."



Especially alarming is that an adolescent girl or young woman acquires HIV every two minutes. During the first two years of COVID, millions of girls were not in school. Girls suffered increased sexual violence, and experienced higher rates of pregnancy. The number of people getting life-saving HIV treatment grew more slowly in recent years, and millions of the infected still cannot get life-saving medicine. Only 52% of children living with HIV have access to such medicine, compared to 76% of adults. All of this reminds us that the Center's work is not done!

*(L to R: Chin Tan, William Bradford, Bonnie Messer, Christopher Hucks-Ortiz, & Don Messer. Ms. Byanyima at top.)*

# Legacy Of Ann Fort: 40 Orphans In College



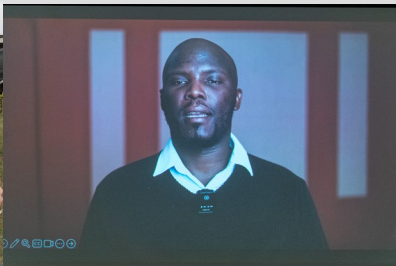
At the Center's annual Gathering to HEAL (Helping End AIDS in Our Lifetime) Breakfast September 28, the legacy of Ann Fort was recognized on what would have been her 100th birthday. A \$15,050 challenge grant was offered by Ann's family and friends (including \$50 from a teenage boy). Money from the Ann Fort Kenya Fund, and from other Center donors, helps 40 AIDS orphans achieve post-secondary education. Despite high unemployment, eight recent grads secured good jobs! Sponsor a student!



Photos (l to r), Kenya student, Ann Fort, speaker Silas Kaimenyi, Rick Fort, Chin Tan, Linda Brooks, & Bonnie Messer, MC (top).



Breakfast photos courtesy of Charles Ledbetter



## India's Noted Leprosy and AIDS Specialist Retires: N.M. Samuel, M.D.

Due to a stroke, the Center's long-time partner and advisor, N. M. Samuel, M.D., has retired in Coimbatore, India. He served as President of the AIDS Society of India, and represented his country at the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, when HIV and AIDS were debated. He organized five national HIV conferences and numerous Asian events. He and Dr. Don Messer had been college friends in the 1960's, working together at a volunteer leprosy clinic outside Chennai. They dreamed of initiating the Center for Health and Hope. Sam started a free clinic for women and children in Namakkal, reaching out especially to widows of truck drivers who had died of AIDS. Beloved by patients, he cared for the most ill.



## Required to Take RMDs?

Are you required to take RMD's (required minimum distributions) from your IRA in 2024? If you like saving money, especially money you would pay in taxes, then explore humanitarian options the Center provides around the world.

### REINVESTING YOUR RMDs

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...



Beware of penalties if you fail to meet requirements. Check out IRA rules with your accountant . The Center cannot give legal advice, but we encourage you to invest in projects that give life, love, & hope around the world. Give a child in Africa or Asia a helping hand!

Check with Justin Levy at [Centerforhealthandhope@gmail.com](mailto:Centerforhealthandhope@gmail.com)



## 2024 Murphy Award To Ruth Ann Russell

The annual Paul & Paula Murphy Award in Human Sexuality was awarded in 2024 to Ruth Ann Russell, Denver. "She epitomizes how human rights advocacy & acceptance can become normative in daily living," said Dr. Don Messer. "Whether focused on the stigmatized of Africa or America, she speaks forthrightly & acts affirmatively."

Photo: (L to R) Daryl J. Walker, Ruth Ann Russell, and Dr. Don Messer



## \$483,000 Raised of \$500,000 Goal

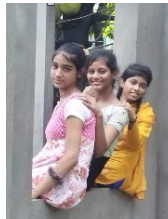
Thank you! The "Above & Beyond Campaign" is within \$17,000 of its goal of \$500,000. Help us go over the top!



Chairs: Chin Tan, William Bradford, Beekie Harkie, Claudia Svarstad, & U.S. Senator Tom Daschle.



## Kolkata Children's Home Expands Wing For Girls



Due to an increased number of AIDS orphans, the Children's Home in Kokota, India, had young girls sleeping on the floor. Alarmed, Center donors contributed to building an expansion & purchased new beds & mattresses.



## Center's New Mailing Address

After 18 years, the Center for Health and Hope has a new mailing address; no longer using the home of Don & Bonnie Messer. Mail and checks should be sent to this address:

**Center for Health and Hope**  
**P.O. Box 202977**  
**Denver, Colorado 80220**

Cover over old labels on the envelopes! If mail is sent to the old address, don't worry! They will be rerouted & checks will be deposited appropriately. Receipts and thank you notes will be forthcoming.

All donations are tax deductible (ID 20-4199173)



## 2024 "Swinging at AIDS" Golf Great Success

Despite a last minute change to Overland Golf Park Course, the 2024 "Swinging@AIDS" Golf Benefit was a great success. Thanks to many volunteers, generous sponsors, a vibrant silent auction, and 100 golfers, over \$50,000 was raised at the 18th Denver event! Funds are used to support the Center's work in India and to meet the daily costs of operating a non-profit (staff salaries, insurance, supplies, etc.). Hats off, especially to the chair, Bruce Berger!

