

Waging peace, fighting disease, building hope

Circle of Friends

A newsletter for supporters of The Carter Center



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Future of The Carter Center secure with strategic plan-of-action

From the powerful dream and unwavering commitment of two individuals, an organization was formed that has improved the lives of millions of people worldwide.

In less than two decades, former President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter have created a highly respected, international organization that has achieved unparalleled success in fighting disease and waging peace around the world.

Through the Center's efforts, people in oppressed countries have experienced the power of voting in free elections. Guinea worm is on the brink of becoming only the second disease ever to be eradicated. Ethiopia, a formerly starving nation, has turned its agricultural program around and now produces a food surplus. Forgotten, impoverished people can live without the disfigurement or blindness caused by onchocerciasis. Peace has become a real possibility in some warring areas. And, economically challenged countries are taking charge of their own development.

Over the last several years, President and Mrs. Carter, the Center's Board of Trustees, and valued friends and partners have created a plan to ensure that these extraordinary programs and achievements will continue well into the next century.

In 1996, the board formed a Strategic Planning Committee to solicit input from its members, Carter Center staff, and foundation and partnership leaders.

"The strategic plan that was created out of this process sets a clear course for continued success and long-term sustainability," says John Hardman, M.D., executive director of The Carter Center. "President and Mrs. Carter have laid the foundation for one of the most extraordinary institutions of the 20th century — a foundation we can build on for years to come."

The strategic plan recognizes that The Carter Center's continued success depends on adhering to its fundamental mission and values, while at the same time refining its activities and strengthening its partnerships and operating base. Plans include:

Communicating our mission

The Center adopted a new mission statement that better reflects its vision and goals. It reads, in part, "Guided by a fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering, The Carter Center seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and improve health."

Gift aids search for eminent persons

Now that a strategic plan for The Carter Center is in place, the search for eminent persons to provide leadership is under way. Helping to make this possible is a gift from Art Blank, Carter Center trustee and president and CEO of The Home Depot, Inc., who recently committed \$5 million.

"I have been concerned about the future of the Center, and the strategy to identify and retain eminent persons seems to be a way to address the critical issue of succession," says Mr. Blank. "Therefore, I have decided to help support the effort for leadership recruitment."

"I am pleased to provide the Center with a gift that signifies the respect that I have for President Carter and for the institution that he has created."

The donation will establish the Arthur M. Blank Leadership Fund at The Carter Center.

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Photo: Robert Grossman

▲ Ethiopian children can now enjoy a rich harvest, thanks to The Carter Center's agricultural program.

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The Center's new slogan is "Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope." It translates the mission statement into clear, easy-to-understand language that should improve institutional identity with partners, donors, and those the Center serves around the world.

Focusing programs and streamlining operations

In keeping with a cleaner, more concise mission statement, the Center has restructured its programs into two action areas where it has identified global needs, developed expertise and achieved significant success. These areas are "Peace Programs" and "Health Programs." Each area is managed by an internationally recognized expert in his or her field and is staffed by fellows and program directors who design and implement specific initiatives. Each program and activity incorporates the following principles:

- Emphasizes action and results
- Avoids duplication of others' efforts
- Recognizes that difficult problems have a risk of failure
- Serves as a neutral party in dispute resolution activities
- Fosters a belief that people can improve their lives when provided with the necessary skills, knowledge and access to resources.

Strengthening our academic base

The Center's Board of Trustees recognized that the developing relation-

ship with Emory University would become even more important in the long term. This is reflected in the current board structure, which includes 10 members appointed by the university and 10 appointed by The Carter Center. The executive director of The Carter Center reports to both the Center's board chairman and Emory University's president. Emory will continue to provide an academic and research base for the Center's activities. Existing and new faculty and staff at Emory are engaged with Center program activities, and the Center's intern program provides field experience for students. Research and theory conducted and created at the university can be tested and used in Carter Center initiatives.

"Emory University is an exceptionally strong institution today and will be even stronger in the future," says Dr. Hardman. "Although The Carter Center remains financially independent, we will increasingly draw on the best scholarship to inform our action programs."

Developing future leaders

Under President and Mrs. Carter's leadership, The Carter Center has a notable competitive advantage. Together, they command and generate public and media attention to a variety of issues and causes, and provide access to unprecedented resources. In addition, the Carters' practical problem-solving approach ensures that the Center's programs will attain results.

"Our goal is not to replace President and Mrs. Carter, because that is not possible," says Dr. Hardman. "But, because of their reputation and that of the Center, we can attract accomplished leaders to affiliate with the Center's programs. We are especially interested in those individuals who have access to a country or geographical area, as well as knowledge of a particular field."

With this in mind, Dr. David Hamburg, former head of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and a Carter Center trustee, is chairing a board sub-

committee to work with Carter Center staff in identifying qualified eminent persons. Candidates are currently being interviewed. Plans are to select one or two leaders this year so each can gain first-hand experience in working with the Carters and the Center staff.

"These will be outstanding leaders, such as a distinguished former member of Congress or former university president, who will be more deeply involved and more identified with the Center's work," says Dr. Hamburg. "They will be contributors to and ambassadors of The Carter Center."

He noted that the program will enlarge The Carter Center's network by fostering new relationships and adding benefits from other institutions where an eminent person is involved.

"In addition, such experienced people can help us think through long-term issues, such as how best to continue positioning the Center's programs to ensure future success."

Nurturing partnerships

Because it operates with limited resources, The Carter Center takes on major projects in partnership with a wide range of organizations and individuals. This allows the Center to leverage its resources without duplicating the efforts of others, and to create a greater positive impact on a problem or an issue. The Center will increasingly emphasize building and maintaining strong partnerships.

Increasing the endowment

A key ingredient to The Carter Center's current success is its ability to move quickly to seize new opportunities as they arise. Preserving this capacity and the Carter's legacy will require significant financial resources. The Center is working to increase its endowment to \$250 million to provide a secure foundation for its programs.

"The Carters stand for democratic and humanitarian values, and they have translated their vast knowledge and skills into action to help people everywhere. This is what The Carter Center has come to stand for," says Dr. Hamburg. "The spirit of the Carters' values will be a cornerstone of the Center's work forever." ♦

'Jimmy Carter pill' inspires gift

In a touching tribute to a Nigerian who recently lost his mother, colleagues of Eze Akuma at New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection gave \$100 to The Carter Center for its river blindness program.

The gift was a result of stories Akuma brought back to the U.S. after attending his mother's funeral in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. There, he noticed people waiting in long lines. He learned that the Nigerians were receiving the

"Jimmy Carter pill," as they called it. Actually, the drug is Mectizan®, donated by Carter Center partner, Merck & Co., Inc. Mectizan® is used to treat river blindness, a preventable disease. Those waiting for the medication told Akuma about the tremendous difference the treatment had made in their lives.

Consequently, Akuma's coworkers decided their donation would be a fitting tribute to his mother, Ogo, since it will help improve the health and quality of life in the region where Mrs. Akuma had lived. ♦

SmithKline Beecham grant tackles deadly tropical disease

Of all the diseases in the world, only six can be eradicated, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). But eliminating even those few would improve the quality of life for millions of people. Lymphatic filariasis is considered to be one of those diseases.

With major efforts under way to eradicate Guinea worm, The Carter Center has taken on lymphatic filariasis, a disabling tropical disease characterized by swollen limbs, that affects 120 million people in 73 countries. Helping to initiate the Center's program in Nigeria is a three-year grant totaling \$870,000 from SmithKline Beecham. The grant was a vote of confidence in the Center.

"We believe the disease is eradicable, but there's so much we still don't know about it, so we need to gather a lot of information," says Don Hopkins, M.D., associate executive director of The Carter Center. "SmithKline Beecham sees The Carter Center as a highly committed organization, able to conduct research in order to help people afflicted with this disease."

The Carter Center will help implement a new treatment program to break transmission of lymphatic filariasis in two states in Nigeria before taking it nationally. Nigeria was selected for the program launch because the disease is endemic and the Center already has successful community-based health networks operating for other health programs.

"You need to prove you can eliminate a disease first in a place where it's prevalent. You focus efforts on a small scale and then apply what you learn in a bigger way," Dr. Hopkins explains. "The learning process in Nigeria is valuable to a much larger campaign in which WHO, The Carter Center and numerous other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are involved worldwide."

Transmitted by the bite of a mosquito, lymphatic filariasis is a disabling and disfiguring disease.

"It's psychologically and emotionally damaging, and there are also great financial repercussions," explains Dr. Brian Bagnall, director of lymphatic filariasis for SmithKline Beecham. "What's more, it affects the poorest rural communities, and was regarded as a forgotten disease that was hopeless."

Then, new scientific research showed that two drugs — albendazole, which SmithKline Beecham produces, and Mectizan®, which is produced and donated by Merck & Co., Inc. to combat river blindness — could break transmission of lymphatic filariasis.

"The Carter Center also has a successful river blindness program in Nigeria, so it's natural to combine the treatments for both diseases," says Dr. Hopkins.

In addition to The Carter Center grant, SmithKline Beecham has donated an unlimited quantity of albendazole to mount a global cam-

paign to eradicate lymphatic filariasis. This amounts to roughly 4 to 5 billion tablets over 20 years in 73 countries with high at-risk populations. In addition, Merck & Co., Inc. has extended its Mectizan® donation program in Africa to include treatment of lymphatic filariasis.

"We developed the product, albendazole, and had a lot of experience with it," says Dr. Bagnall. "So, when we learned of a disease that could be potentially eliminated, we were excited to get involved. And, we can focus a lot of energy on the program because there's an end-point."

"One of SmithKline Beecham's missions is striving to make people's lives healthier through community programs in the developing world. We're grateful to The Carter Center because we can only succeed with a broad coalition of partners," says Dr. Bagnall. "As a result of these efforts, children will be able to grow up without the fear of this disfiguring and disabling disease — we can protect future generations. Essentially, after one treatment a year for four to six years, you then can forget about the disease for the rest of history."

For more information about the Center's health initiatives, contact Pam Wuichet at (404) 420-5115. ♦