

BLESSINGS
INTERNATIONAL

**MEDICINES
FOR MISSIONS**

+++++

THE NEWSLETTER OF BLESSINGS INTERNATIONAL

OCTOBER 2023

NOTABLE MILESTONES



Highest Number of People Reached in a Year!

In the last days of our fiscal year, we watched excitedly as final orders left the warehouse, each one with a calculated human treatment value.

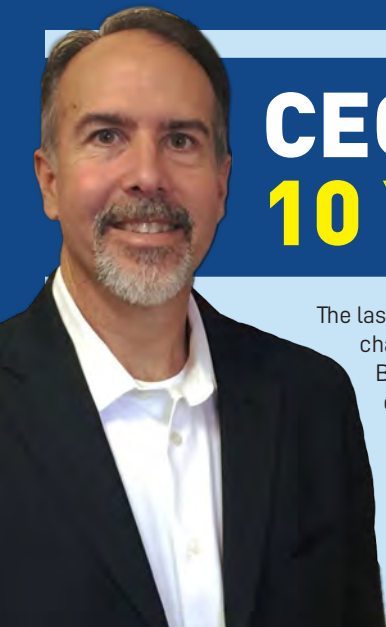
To our amazement, the year that we expected to be the last year of pandemic recovery proved to be a record-breaking year, marking the most lives reached in Blessings' history. When the last order for fiscal year 2023* went out the warehouse doors, an estimated **10,510,526 people in 95 nations** and territories had been—or would soon be—reached with Blessings International products.

We give all the honor to God for allowing us to break our own previous record of 8.7 million lives reached, which occurred in 2018.

It's thanks to everyone who partners, orders, goes, prays, supports, and believes in the mission of healing the hurting that each one of these 10.5 million people were impacted in one year. None of it would be possible without you. Thank you!

**Blessings International's fiscal year runs September 1 through August 31.*

10.5 MILLION LIVES



CEO BARRY EWY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS AT THE HELM

The last ten years have brought unprecedented challenges, changes, and breakthroughs for Blessings International under the leadership of Barry Ewy.

Having a background in pharmacy, law, and healthcare administration, Barry met all the components our board was looking for in a candidate to take over for our retiring founder, Dr. Harold Harder.

"In my time at Blessings," Barry said, "there have been a lot of mixed emotions because there have been some real challenges. But on the other hand, there's been some incredible moments that I've seen with Blessings."

One of the first things that fell under Barry's leadership—and one that would become a significant milestone in his tenure—was securing licensing and exemptions so that Blessings International could ship into 48 states.

"Licensing opens doors to serve," Barry says. "It protects us and the recipient. Their license is protected, and they know that they are getting medical shipments from a reputable source, and from a source that can legally send it to them."



The licensing pursuit required five years of deliberate, detailed effort. "I'm really proud of the amount of work that went into that and continues to go into that. It's continual."

Not long later, just after Blessings International celebrated its best month ever, reaching 1 million lives in January 2020 alone, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, proving to be one of the biggest challenges in Barry's tenure.

"Ninety-six percent of those we served at the time was short-term international medical missions," Barry said. "Overnight, that dropped to almost nothing, and it forced us to diversify in ways we hadn't had the need for before."

Some of those diversifications were increasing exports so those in people who were still hurting in developing nations could have some relief even though short-term medical mission teams were not coming. We also partnered with more US-based clinics and pregnancy resource centers as their need increased.

"I'm just extremely grateful to God that he carried us through that time. It opened doors and opportunities for us to be able to weather through. I'm really appreciative also of our board and our staff, working through some really hard times and having to make some really difficult decisions at times, but decisions that ultimately enabled us to survive."



*Dr. Harold Harder and
Dr. Barry Ewy in September 2013*

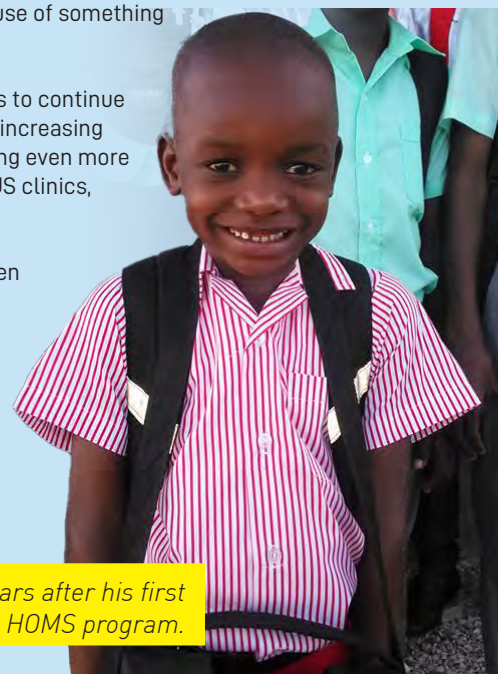
And those decisions were not in vain. "They allowed us to grow, and now here we are, just having finished fiscal year 2023, our biggest year ever. We expected it to be the last year of recovery before growing again, but God blessed our efforts so that it was a year well past recovery."

Some of the incredible moments Barry remembers over the years have been very impacting personally. Barry recalls the day when he saw a photo of an orphan in Haiti named Stanley. After Blessings International began the Haiti Orphanage Medical Support (HOMS) program in 2016, Stanley was one of the first groups of kids who were helped. Stanley was only four years old and severely malnourished.

He began treatment with the HOMS program. Then one day, Barry saw an updated photo showing Stanley's improvement. "I asked to confirm that it was even the same person," he said. "It was one of those incredible moments, realizing that here is someone who's growing into a young man that has a real chance because of something we helped to promote."

Looking forward, Barry hopes to continue along the current trajectory, increasing direct shipments and reaching even more short-term mission teams, US clinics, and animal health providers.

When considering the past ten years, Barry says, "I'm just grateful. Blessings is just a really unique and fantastic environment. And I'm just grateful to be a part of it for ten years."



*Stanley two years after his first
treatment with the HOMS program.*

MODELING CHRIST'S LOVE IN MAUI ... AND AROUND THE WORLD



Drs. Kirk and Kimberley Milhoan

"We may never be able to recover the bodies because it's like one large crematorium," says Dr. Kirk Milhoan about the August fires in Lahaina, Maui. "There were 80- to 100-mph winds, and the flames came in so fast. We don't have natural gas lines, so restaurants use propane tanks for their gas stoves and ovens. And so those started blowing up.... And then it started fire tornadoes that were going down the streets."

Dr. Kirk and his wife Dr. Kimberley Milhoan have a tri-fold ministry south of Lahaina, Maui. Dr. Kirk pastors Calvary Chapel South Maui,

out of which they operate a food pantry and For Heart and Souls Free Medical Clinic. They also travel internationally to perform pediatric cardiac surgeries. It's not difficult to see they have big hearts and full plates, especially in the wake of the fires.

"THE ISLAND WAS JUST GETTING BACK TO A RECOVERY STATE"

Now, following the fires, members of the Maui community are coming to the food pantry, asking for a doctor, and needing a dose of love just as much as they did during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

"We're coming off of a time when there was unprecedented discouragement," Dr. Kirk said, referring to the COVID-19 shutdowns. "The island was just getting back to a recovery state, and now this."

The island is facing what Dr. Kirk refers to as a double tragedy, as the main source of income—tourism—has evaporated. "We have a new population of the poorly insured [and] underinsured workforce that is no longer getting paid. Now I expect that our free medical clinic will be even more important to take care of, not necessarily people who have burn injuries, but people who have been displaced by the fires and people who have been impacted—the working poor, the working middle class, the people who are... living day-to-day, week-to-week, paycheck-to-paycheck."

That income has, quite literally, gone up in smoke, as it did for one family with a four-year-old daughter who was working hard to save for a house. When the fires came, their daughter was away in a safe place, but the husband and wife had to seek safety in the water, where they sheltered for three hours. They helped forty people get to shore, and they themselves were safe, but their house and \$40,000 of cash savings were lost in minutes. They came to the church, overwhelmed and completely at a loss for how to rebuild their lives and business, not only then but when their daughter came home.

Dr. Kirk listened to their story and offered donations from the church to provide daycare for this family while they rebuilt. Then, as the couple was walking out, a 78-year-old church member, who had never met them before, approached. "I've heard your story," he told them. "I'm giving you my car."

"He wasn't a rich person," Dr. Kirk told us. "He just said, 'I'm going down to the DMV and I'll sign over the title.' And they were shocked."

The man who had lost his home turned then and asked what most people do in the face of such unprecedented kindness: "Where do you see love like this?" And Dr. Kirk's answer is always, "In the presence of Christ."

LIVING OUT A MODEL OF LOVE

With the amount of need now on Maui, it's tempting to become overwhelmed. But the Milhoans and their ministries are convicted to live out a ministry model that focuses on the person in front of them.

"We make sure that we minister like Jesus ministered, and he was always one person at a time," Dr. Kirk said. "So, what we're trying to do is have that focus... 'Who does Jesus have before us now? And how can we love them to the best of our abilities with the resources that God has given us?' And let Him be glorified. That's our prayer."

Dr. Kirk tells the story of an "auntie" (a term of respect in the Hawaiian and Filipino culture for an older woman) who had been in her house alone during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Alone and needing food, she eventually came to the food pantry, where one of the volunteers could tell she needed physical contact as much as sustenance. She asked her if she wanted a hug. Immediately, the woman began to cry. "I'd love a hug," she said. The auntie held onto that hug for ten minutes. No one had touched her in weeks.

"God calls us to go to places that aren't necessarily safe...[with] people who aren't necessarily safe. And those simple acts of love have great impact."

INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

Going to unsafe places is what much of the Milhoan's work centers around.

With a mission to serve the least of these, For Hearts and Souls has served children in some very hard-to-reach places. Dr. Kirk is a pediatric cardiologist and a former Air Force flight surgeon, and Dr. Kimberley is a pediatric cardiac anesthesiologist. Together they assemble teams that perform surgeries on children in places like Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Africa, and the Middle East.

"What's interesting," Dr. Kirk said, "is even as an unapologetically Christian organization, we've been invited into Fallujah, Iraq...Karbala, Iraq...Kurdish, Iraq. ...I've been invited into Sudan...and Yemen...because I'm willing to take care of children. And so it has opened up opportunities for me to bring in the presence of the Holy Spirit into these places."

"The question," he continued, "almost always comes up: 'Why are you here?' and 'Why would you do this for free?' And so then I can share my faith."



Serving in Kurdistan



CONTINUED...

MODELING CHRIST'S LOVE IN MAUI, CONTINUED

A SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP

The Milhouns and their ministries are a unique Blessings International partner in that their reach extends internationally and domestically. And thanks to donors of the Medicines for Nations general fund, we are able to diversify gifts in times of need so people like the Milhouns can receive discounts for special circumstances.

"What Blessings does for me is it allows me to buy wonderful medicine at a very affordable price for me, so I can dispense them for free," Dr. Kirk said. "It is a very important piece of our ministry here."

When you support Blessings International, you are helping us equip clinics like For Hearts and Souls Free Medical Clinic in Maui...and all over the world. When you give on a "where needed most" basis, your donation is applied to the Medicines for Nations fund, which helps domestically and internationally.

MEDICINES FOR NATIONS: THE FUND MEETING THE MOST NEEDS

In recent days, earthquakes and widespread flooding have pummeled Northern Africa. As orders come in from response teams, we help them through our Emergency Disaster Relief fund.

Fortunately, we are equipped with disaster funding, thanks to our generous donors who have a heart for helping those facing turmoil and uncertainty.

Presently, we're specifically asking for donations for our general fund, Medicines for Nations, so we can help medical groups in as many ways as possible. The greatest needs we're supporting right now are United States clinics and pregnancy resource centers, orphans in Haiti, and of course, the many national and international disasters.

Senior Vice President and CFO Bernie Morris explains it well: "The Medicines for Nations fund replenishes our underfunded designated funds. For example, when a disaster arises and if our Emergency Disaster Relief fund is too low to help response teams, despite an influx of orders, we can turn to this general fund so we're always equipped to help those who are healing the hurting."

As always, 100% of donations are used to provide medicines, vitamins, and medical supplies to teams who are delivering them into the hands of the hurting locally and globally.



HOW TO GIVE

Your gift of \$200 will supply 6 months of medications for 28 people with chronic illness.



GIVE BY MAIL

Use enclosed donation card and envelope



GIVE ONLINE

Go to bit.ly/MedicinesForNations



GIVE BY MOBILE

Scan QR code with your cell phone's camera



Every Gift Makes a Difference!



BLESSINGS
INTERNATIONAL

Guidestar has awarded Blessings their highest rating of Platinum to reflect our level of accountability and transparency. We rank in the top 2% of all rated charities.



Blessings has been accredited by Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability since 1990.

Learn more at www.blessing.org