

Gifts that give:

Paging Dr. Empathy, paging Dr. Empathy

Behind door number 1: A box of the unwanted gifts that you will either give or receive this year. Behind door number 2: Your contribution to helping solve or alleviate some of the problems and suffering in this world. If you picked door number 2, then read on.

This year, choose to give the gift that keeps on giving: a donation to a charity or a selection from their gift list.

Below are some worthwhile registered charities that are involved in medical- and health-related projects. The list is not definitive, but provides some good suggestions.

Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture: “Amnesty International estimates that over 90 countries in the world systematically practice torture. These traumatic experiences, compounded by their disorienting effects, produce severe physical and psychological damage.” Since 1983, CCVT has helped some 14 000 survivors from 136 countries, as well as supporting coalition organizations doing similar work abroad. Its Canadian program includes counselling and other mental health services, settlement services, and English language training. See www.ccv.org for information, to donate or to get involved.

Canadian Health Access Network To Soroti (CHANTS)/The Oversight Committee on Health (OCH): Alan Rock, Canada’s former ambassador to the UN, described the ongoing civil war in Uganda and its devastating impact on innocent people as “the most neglected humanitarian crisis in the world.” To alleviate the suffering, the OCH created, and now supports, a medical clinic in Soroti, Uganda, under the auspices of the Ugandan NGO, Learning Empowers Uganda. The clinic, staffed entirely by Ugandans, serves 30 000 internally displaced persons living in refugee camps. Visit www.chants.ca or email Marie_Morrissey@rogers.com

Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief: CPAR believes that “Health is created and sustained by the environmental,

physical and social conditions that affect people living in a particular community” (www.cpar.ca). CPAR staff, who are 95% African, support the economies of the countries in which they work: Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania. You can donate to specific programs, including sexual and reproductive health in Tanzania, malaria prevention and treatment in Ethiopia, and maternal health in Uganda. CPAR also offers study tours.

Canadian Red Cross: The Red Cross emblem — the red cross on a white background — was adopted in 1864 as an “internationally recognized symbol to mark the volunteer medical personnel and facilities of all countries to protect them from attack in times of armed conflict.” Since then, the Red Cross has been doing valuable work in peacetime and wartime. The Canadian Red Cross works in Canadian communities and abroad, from primary health care to disaster and emergency relief, to water sanitation, and more (www.redcross.ca). One option is to “shop ‘n donate”; 5% of every purchase with Amazon.ca goes to the Red Cross.

CANGIVE.ca: Launched in 2003, CANGIVE is a unique Web site that caters to

all of your shopping needs while giving to worthwhile charities. Shop online through www.cangive.ca to access 150 different stores, including Barnes and Noble, Canadian Tire and Lush. At no extra cost to you, up to 15% of each purchase will be donated to the Canadian charity of your choice, including Muscular Dystrophy Canada, Youth Without Shelter and the Breast Cancer Society of Canada.

CARE Canada: Established in 1946, CARE International works in more than 70 countries worldwide, responding to emergencies, and implementing lasting solutions to end poverty. CARE offers alternative ways to give, including purchasing coffee from small-holder farmers in the Honduras or Bill Bryson’s book, *African Diary* (www.care.ca).

Foster Parents Plan: Can’t think of a suitable gift for cousin Jo? How about donating a goat to a family in Albania on her behalf! The purchase of specific items, ranging from animals, to a household latrine, to books for a school, is just one way that you can support FPP. Other possibilities include donating toward specific projects, such as Clean Water, HIV/AIDS, and Children of War. Check out www.fosterparentsplan.ca for information and online goat purchases.



Evelyn Hockstien/CARE Canada

NGOs provide aid to those in severe crisis, such as this child in an internally displaced persons camp in Darfur, Western Sudan.

Help Lesotho: HL supports locally initiated, championed and managed projects for AIDS orphans, vulnerable children and youth in the Kingdom of Lesotho, in Southern Africa. Lesotho has the world's 3rd highest incidence of HIV/AIDS, and more than 30% of children are AIDS orphans. HL provides HIV/AIDS prevention, awareness, counselling and testing, school support, child sponsorship and youth leadership training in gender equity, income generating and HIV/AIDS. More than 6000 children (over half of whom are orphans) and hundreds of adults benefit from their programs (www.helplesotho.ca).

Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders: MSF won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999 for their valuable work providing emergency relief to people in need of medical care because of natural disasters, disease epidemics, armed conflict and insurmountable barriers to accessing health services. They also act as an important voice in the international community, raising awareness about the human rights violations, health and medical needs, and other issues facing those in the more than 70 countries MSF works in. Volunteers for exciting and rewarding field missions are in great demand, as are financial donations (www.msf.ca).

Keep A Child Alive: "Less than 5% of Africans with AIDS have access to life-saving anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) ... contributing to the almost 8000 AIDS-related deaths that occur daily." KACA's (www.keepachildalive.org) main objective is to provide ARV treatment and support to children and their families with HIV/AIDS in Africa. They do this both through direct donations and an innovative dollar-a-day campaign, guaranteeing 100% of this donation goes directly to the cause.

OHAfrica: A joint project of The Change Foundation and the Ontario Hospital Association, the OHAfrica team of Canadian health care professionals works with the Lesotho Ministry of Health and other health care providers to support Lesotho's National AIDS Strategy and a sustainable response to HIV/AIDS treatment. In addition to running the largest

HIV/AIDS clinic in Lesotho, OHAfrica is working with local primary care centres to support the roll-out of antiretroviral drug treatment at the community level. You can donate or enquire about current clinical positions (www.ohafrica.ca).

Oxfam Canada: Give a gift that kicks — a donkey (\$120) or goat (\$58) — and help communities in the developing world become self-reliant and sustainable (www.oxfam.ca).

Save the Children Canada: Dedicated to children's rights, its areas of expertise include sexual exploitation of children, child labour, child trafficking, street children, gender discrimination and the promotion of the girl child, food security, education and emergencies (www.savethechildren.ca).

UNICEF Canada: You can buy that shawl for Aunt Dot, but this one will help the world's poorest children in 156 countries and territories worldwide through UNICEF's many programs and projects (www.unicef.ca). Gifts range from seasonal cards to calendars, handbags to handcrafted ornaments (www.shopunicef.ca).

Medicine and medical supplies

Though many organizations do not accept donations of medicines and other medical supplies, there are many that do. Here are a few:

Canadian Food for the Hungry International: In 2005, this Christian charity shipped 34, 40-foot containers of medical equipment to health facilities in the developing world, including \$150 000 worth of urgently needed medical equipment to health facilities in Afghanistan; and equipment to a hospital in Goma Democratic Republic of Congo, which treats, amongst others, women in need of fistula surgery as a result of multiple rapes during the war. Hospitals in the developing world are in great need of stethoscopes, microscopes, and pulse oximeters. CFHI ensures donations of such equipment reach communities in greatest need. CFHI also appreciates contributions for shipping costs (www.cfh.ca).



Josh Estey/CARE Canada

Donations allowed CARE to build 1500 transitional shelters for Sri Lankan families after the December 2004 tsunami hit Southeast Asia.

Health Partners International Canada: Since 1990, HPIC has delivered donated medicines, vaccines, medical supplies and devices to over 100 countries. Last year, its project included Tsunami relief in Sri Lanka, TB relief vaccines in Pakistan, and HIV/AIDS initiatives in Africa. Individual donations go toward things such as assessing needs, staying informed about pharmacological developments and operating the distribution centre. They also have opportunities for short-term medical missions (www.hpica.ca or call 800 627-1787).

Not Just Tourists: For the past 10 years, NJT has been sending surplus medicines and other medical supplies to many developing countries, especially Cuba. It is run by volunteers and supplies are sent with Canadian tourists, making their operating costs minimal. At present, there is a great need for a consistent source of medicines, vitamins, and medical supplies, as well as small suitcases to transport supplies (www.njtoronto.ca or call toll-free 866 426-3695. — Compiled by Mackenzie Kinmond, Ottawa, Ont.

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