

# Rotary brings free health services into underserved communities in Africa

The Rotary clubs of South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Nigeria, Uganda and Ghana have teamed up with NGOs, businesses and governments for Rotary Family Health Days (RFHD), an innovative international campaign providing free health-care services to underserved families. Launching its fourth edition in April 2014, it aims to reach 350,000 people.



Marion Bunch, director and managing partner of RFHD and a Rotary club member from Georgia, USA, became active in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa after losing a son to the disease.

The programme, led by Rotary's mobilising arm - Rotarians for Family Health & AIDS Prevention - addresses Africa's most pressing health challenges, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and reproductive health, as well as conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. An important component is immunising children against polio, measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases.

The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation, the South Africa Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USAID, the SABC and Caxton, as primary media partners, as well as YFM, Media 24 news and Independent Newspapers in the Western Cape, sponsor the programme.

## Excellent reception

RFHD was launched in 2011 at 160 sites in Uganda and Kenya and immediately exceeded organisers' expectations by drawing 38,000 people to the one-day event. In 2012, Nigeria signed on and the programme expanded to three days. By 2013, RFHD operated 368 sites in Uganda, Nigeria and South Africa, reaching over 275,000 people. More than 5500 Rotary members from 362 clubs participated.

"We believe we have achieved 'proof of concept' and identified the power of our health campaign," said Marion Bunch, director and managing partner of RFHD and a Rotary club member from Georgia, US. She became active in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa after losing a son to the disease and has since expanded the scope of her efforts to address other health issues. "We have learned that when a campaign delivers several interventions at once, the benefits rise exponentially for families and communities."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), every year millions of Africans die from diseases that are preventable and treatable. The region faces many challenges including weak and fragmented health systems, inadequate resources for delivering proven interventions, limited access to health-services and extreme poverty. Rotary Family Health Days addresses these challenges by bringing life-saving health services into the communities most at risk.

## **Programme dates**

- South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho April 2-4 160 sites
- Ghana April 10-12 30 sites
- Uganda April 10-12 120 sites
- Nigeria April 24-26 150 sites

For more information on South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland call Annemarie Mostert, +27 (0)82 457 4558 or email [annemarie@rfha.org](mailto:annemarie@rfha.org).

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>