

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hands to Hearts International Doubles Reach in One Year

HHI has now served more than 80,000 caregivers and children

Portland, Ore.—Hands to Hearts International (HHI), a local nonprofit dedicated to improving the health and well-being of disadvantaged children and orphans through improved early childhood care, has doubled its reach in the past 12 months. One year ago this month, HHI had served 40,155 women, men and children, a number that took five years to reach. To date, HHI has now reached 81,202 caregivers and children around the world.

Just as notable as the dramatic increase in the number of people served, is that HHI is operating with the same budget as previous years. “HHI is designed with sustainability as a core value. Intervening during the early years is among the most cost-effective interventions for creating a lifetime of health and success,” Said Laura Peterson, HHI’s founder and executive director. “We’ve maximized our reach by utilizing strategic partnerships with existing organizations.”

It’s estimated that 40 percent of the world’s children under the age of five are failing to reach their cognitive potential due to poverty, poor health, nutrition and deficient care (Lancet, 2007). HHI's goal is to reach the most children, at the earliest time, with the simplest, most cost-effective, and replicable intervention possible. HHI provides trainings for organizations and caregivers to improve the early development of very poor and vulnerable children, particularly those surviving in the orphanages, refugee camps, and severely impoverished or conflict-ridden communities.

Currently, HHI holds trainings in India and Uganda. Caregivers trained by HHI demonstrated increased knowledge of early childhood development, more responsive interactions with children, greater awareness of child health and development and improved hygiene and nutrition practices. The children show increased weight gain, decreased illness, are easier to sooth, have earlier and greater language development, better digestion and improved sleep. Most notable was a report from an orphanage that, “no babies have died since HHI [training].”

This announcement comes on the heels of Governor Kitzhaber’s symposium outlining his early childhood education goals for Oregon last week. In addition, new research was released on how a baby’s brain develops differently if they have been abused or neglected. The focus on early childhood development underscores the importance of reaching the world’s most vulnerable population at the earliest time possible.

“Science is finally catching up to what HHI has known for years and legislators are beginning to take note,” said Peterson. “Reaching children before the age of three when their most crucial brain development is taking place is critical. This is true in Oregon and around the world and is exactly why I founded HHI.”

About Hands to Hearts International

Hands to Hearts International (HHI) is a Portland, Ore. based non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of orphaned and vulnerable children and economically disadvantaged women around the globe. Established in 2004, HHI envisions a world where all children are nurtured and loved and where all women have the opportunity to actively contribute to their communities. HHI's simple and cost-effective program provides tools and resources for organizations and caregivers to improve the early development of children surviving in orphanages, refugee camps, and severely impoverished or conflict-ridden communities. Through HHI's support and training, caregivers improve their ability to nurture a child's language, social, cognitive and physical skills. HHI's specialized training program enhances the attachment and bonding of infants to caregivers, which establishes the base for all future relationships. Currently HHI operates in India and Uganda. For more information, visit <http://www.handstohearts.org>.

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