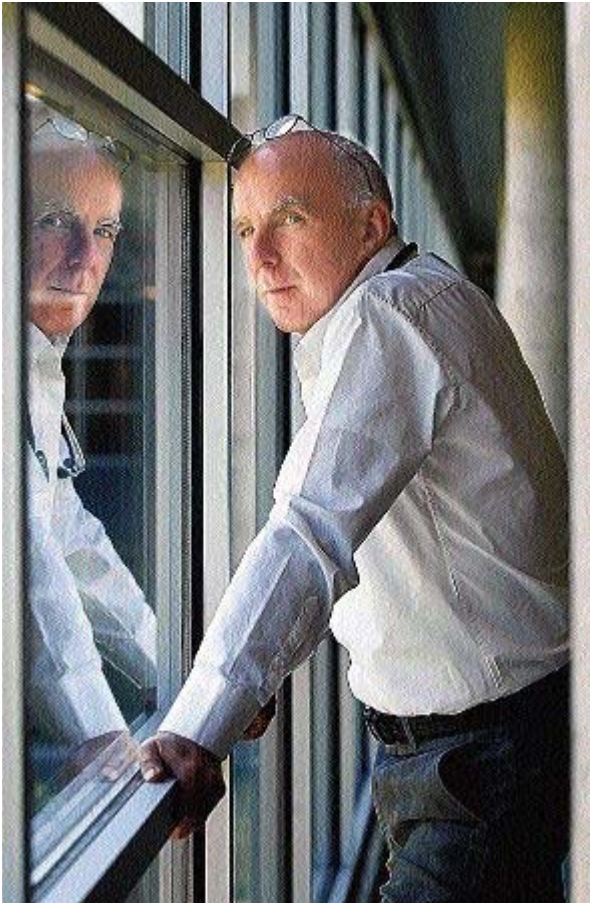


'We have an obligation to help'

BY PAULINE TAM, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN JULY 6, 2009



Dr. don kilby founded CACHA, the Canada Africa Community Health Alliance, to provide basic medical services and HIV care to African communities with the highest rates of the disease.

Photograph by: Julie Oliver, the Ottawa Citizen, The Ottawa Citizen

For more than a decade, starting in the 1980s, Dr. Don Kilby was on the front lines of the battle against AIDS, taking care of Ottawa's gay village.

"I was hanging on by my fingernails because it took a lot of energy to care for the number of people who were dying in those days," said the director of the University of Ottawa's health services. "I was burying 45 patients a year, but I had 75 living at any given time."

Everything changed in 1996, when life-saving antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV/AIDS were approved for use in Canada. Suddenly, with dramatically fewer patients dying, Kilby found he could manage a caseload of 750, where once he struggled with 75. That's when Kilby turned his attention to villages in other parts of the world.

"As First World citizens, we have an obligation to help our colleagues and their patients in developing countries attain the same success that we had attained in saving people's lives and helping people with HIV live dignified lives," said Kilby.

The result was CACHA, the Canada Africa Community Health Alliance, which Kilby founded in 2001 to provide basic medical services, as well as HIV care, to African communities with the highest rates of the disease.

During the past eight years, the grassroots charity has sent more than 1,000 volunteers and well over \$3 million in medical equipment and supplies to African hospitals and organizations. CACHA's medical caravans, which partner Canadians with medical staff in Gabon, Benin and Tanzania, have treated tens of thousands of patients.

Kilby's colleagues applaud him for his savvy and determination in establishing partnerships with African physicians to bring medical care to isolated rural villages. "His ego is minimal," said Dr. Robin Fairfull-Smith, Kilby's longtime friend and colleague. "He's got the personal drive to make things happen."

Kilby has also rallied Ottawa's medical community around his cause, giving many doctors and nurses their first taste of development work through CACHA's two- or three-week overseas missions. "Not all of us can be away for the minimum six-month requirement that's needed by Doctors Without Borders," said Kilby. "I want CACHA to be an introduction for people who want to try their hand at development work."