

MCC to receive \$1 million gift for maternal health

EPHRATA, Pa. — Throughout her long career in international development — including with Mennonite Central Committee — Luann Habegger Martin of McLean, Va., worked to promote the well-being of women and children around the world.

After her death in July, her family decided to give \$1 million to MCC in honor of her lifelong passion for maternal and child health and nutrition.

The gift will increase MCC's capacity to realize Martin's lifelong dream of seeing more "healthy children, lives saved and kids growing up with meaning and a future."

Projects improving health and preventing disease are an integral part of MCC's development work, which seeks long-term solutions to poverty, hunger and poor health by working alongside local partners and communities.

The Luann Martin Legacy Fund for Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition will allow MCC to scale up its work with partners throughout Eastern and Central Africa that are addressing barriers to maternal and child health. Their work includes ensuring women, infants and children have access to adequate nutrition, providing prenatal and pediatric health care and preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV.



Luann Habegger Martin's husband, Ray Martin, center, holds a document he and Mennonite Central Committee staff signed acknowledging the terms of agreement on how a \$1 million donation will be used. With him are, from left, son-in-law Emre Ozaltin, son Gregory Martin, daughter Annette Martin Ozaltin holding grandson Troy Ozaltin, and Gregory Martin's girlfriend, Joanna Walker.
— Brenda Burkholder/MCC

Beth Good, health coordinator for MCC U.S., observed that the mortality rate for children younger than five has fallen by half over the past 25 years. Yet nearly 6 million infants and young children die globally every year, mostly in developing countries. MCC's projects will contribute to the global goal of ending preventable child deaths by 2030.

"The church and her faith were vital to Luann, so I am especially pleased that the fund will strengthen and expand MCC's commitment to partner with churches and other community-based groups working to improve maternal and child health and nutrition," said MCC U.S. executive director J Ron Byler.

Aligned priorities

At a Feb. 26 event celebrating the fund's launch in Akron, Martin's husband, Ray, shared with a gathered group of friends, family and MCC staff why his family decided to donate her retirement savings to create the MCC fund.

"Our Anabaptist theology and culture emphasize the importance of service and community," he said.

Several of their family members served with MCC, and the Martins knew its priorities aligned with the causes they cared about deeply.

"From the beginning of our marriage, Luann and I donated liberally to MCC," Ray Martin said.

Throughout their international development careers, the couple often encountered MCC service workers. They

admired MCC's emphasis on relationship-building, community development and partnerships with the church and other local organizations.

Through the fund, Martin looks forward to the opportunity to support MCC's "growing capacity to incorporate cutting-edge approaches into its development work while maintaining its commitment to relationship-building and working with the church."

He also hopes his family's story will inspire others who are considering how to share their resources in ways that reflect their faith and values.

Martin views the fund not as a gift but an investment.

"It's an investment in healthy mothers, babies and families — and overall, a better world," he said.

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