

Texas House, Senate Honor Christian Healthcare Charity

Sun, May. 24, 2009 Posted: 01:17 PM EDT

The Texas House of Representative and Senate honored global healthcare charity Mercy Ships Thursday for their 30 years of humanitarian service and outstanding contributions to global health.



The Texas-based charity was honored on the floor of both the Texas House of Representatives and Senate when two resolutions were presented after House proceedings. Mercy Ships founder and president Don Stephens and chief executive officer Sam Smith received the award on behalf of the three-decade-old group.

“There is no charitable organization more deserving of recognition than Mercy Ships,” said state Sen. Kevin Eltife. “The care and compassion they provide to those less fortunate is incredible. I hope and pray that God continues to bless their mission and the individuals who carry out that mission.”

Founded in 1978 by Don Stephens and his wife Deyon, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 70 countries providing services valued at more than \$748 million. The free medical services done by volunteer professionals have directly benefited more than 2.16 million people in developing nations.

Working aboard huge high-tech hospital ships, volunteer medical professionals perform surgeries on cataracts, cleft palates, club feet, facial tumors, among others. They also provide dental services.

The charity has performed long and painstaking surgeries, including one involving a 7-lb. tumor on a face. The benign tumor had grown very large because of the lack of medical attention, Mercy Ships reported.

In addition to providing physical care, volunteers of the Christian organization also share the Gospel through talking to patients. Many of the patients have been ostracized and isolated by their community. Some haven’t even had contact with another human for years.

The charity staff often sit with the patient and hear about their life and then tell them their own stories of what God has done for them. Through this personal communication, the charity has been able to lead many non-Christians to Christ. Mercy Ships also shows the Jesus Film and hands out Bibles on the ship, but it says this is not the primary way it shares the Gospel.

“Mercy Ships is a world-wide organization that brings faith, hope, and healing to people across the globe, and they can be found right here in Texas,” said Rep. Dan Flynn. “It has been my honor to know Don and Deyon Stephens for a number of years, and I commend their efforts to help those who need help the most.”

The charity has more than 1,200 crew members worldwide, representing more than 40 nations. Each year they are joined by 2,000 short-term volunteers. These volunteer professionals include surgeons, dentists, nurses, health care trainers, teachers, cooks, seamen, engineers, and agriculturists who donate their time and skills to helping those in need.

Michelle A. Vu

Christian Post Reporter

Copyright © 2006 Christianpost.com. All rights reserved.