

History:



AIDS Bear Project:

The AIDS Bear Project was initially begun through [Catholic Charities](#) in the diocese of Galveston/Houston, TX in 2001. The first blue “C.C. Bear” and now the *Africa Bear* is part of a partnership series that is manufactured by [Holy Bears, Inc.](#) located in Houston, TX. *Holy Bears, Inc.* creates special Christian theme bears and allows organizations to sell them as fundraiser projects for their specific needs. For Catholic Charities’ AIDS Ministry Program the bear project was developed as an idea which had a twofold agenda. First goal was that it might be used as a simple non-threatening tool to open honest conversation around the difficult topic of HIV/AIDS. The second agenda was that it might serve as a simple fundraiser to help augment the financial needs supporting the HIV/AIDS education program.



“CC ” The fist Bear



“BUPE “ The African AIDS Bear
The name means “gift”

As the project began to unfold, so did healthy conversation around the global reality of HIV/AIDS. Global awareness grew into a desire for greater global responsibility and solidarity. Catholic Charities provides a unique ministry opportunity in that individuals requesting support services for the illness of HIV/AIDS are from all walks of life and presented the face of HIV/AIDS from all corners of the world. While the primary concern was to make an educational impact upon the community of Houston, a concern for being able to contribute “*some good*” towards healing the global pandemic of the devastating illness began to emerge as a concern of equal importance.

Sr. Mary Brenda, O.P. ([Houston Dominican](#) sister, and Program Director of Catholic Charities’ AIDS Ministry at the time), and Jennifer Carr, (HIV /AIDS Education Specialist) began to consider how they might share the fruits of their work locally with a community in a different part of the world who was greatly in need. This dialogue led to a search for a sister community that could somehow help us to establish a relationship of heart-felt solidarity. Financial contribution would be part of the relationship, but more than that a personal connection would be established between two communities in the world who share a mutual concern and struggle for a compassionate Christian response to the “Living Face of HIV/AIDS” in our world.

As Sister Mary spoke with other sisters in the Dominican order in regard to her desire to establish this connection, Sr. Robin Richard, ([St. Mary's New Orleans Dominican](#)) introduced her to the [KAVU Clinic in Zambia, Africa](#). Several years earlier five, Dominican Sisters, representing different congregations traveled to Zambia to participate in a similar mission of developing mutual relationships of solidarity. Sr. Robin facilitated the connections by introducing Sr. Mary to Sr. Christine MWalle (SP?)



The KAVU Clinic, in rural Zambia, Africa

Initial e-mail correspondence began and shortly thereafter, a first check of financial support was sent as an act of mutual concern and faith journey for the ministry of serving persons marginalized in our world because of the illness of HIV/AIDS.

Catholic Charities contributes 20% of their overall profits achieved through the sale of the HIV/AIDS Bear Project to the KAVU Clinic in Zambia, Africa. Other concerned groups around the country, (such as the Dominican Sisters, youth groups, schools, and retreat centers), have joined in this fundraiser project and have sold the AIDS Bear directly through Holy Bears, Inc. and have made 100% contributions of their profits to the KAVU Clinic. The African AIDS Bear Project is an ongoing endeavor. Please consider how you or your group might witness your solidarity by sharing in our project.

Where in the World is the HIV/AIDS *AFRICA BEAR* ?

During the four years the project has been active the story of the Bear Project has been shared throughout the world. Sr. Margaret Ormond, OP – Representative of *Dominican Sisters International* says that wherever she travels she tells the powerful story of the AIDS Bear and how a simple desire to care can be transformed into a ministry of bearing hope and healing love half a world away.

In the United States alone our sales records indicate that the message of the Africa AIDS Bear has been supported in over 33 states.



If you know that the BEAR has made it elsewhere please let us know about it.

History Of HIV/AIDS-

In the early 1980's, the lens of medical science first recognized HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and its frightening risk to human life. Yet as hard and fast as the world health community has tried to contain and halt the spread of this virus, small success has been achieved at permanently eradicating the illness once it has taken hold. Anti-viral medications continue to be developed which help to slow down the advance of the illness. However, to date the virus continues to find ways to mutate and/or spread and there is still no cure for HIV/AIDS. The Sub Sahara region of Africa continues to be hit hardest by this devastating world wide pandemic.

For further reading on the history of HIV/AIDS try the below links.

<http://www.aegis.com/topics/timeline/default.asp>

http://www.avert.org/his81_86.htm