

Harts launch program for South Africa clinics

By Russell Rian

Linda W. Hart and Milledge A. Hart III have donated \$150,000 to launch a novel program at UT Southwestern that will give physicians an opportunity to work at a South African AIDS clinic.

The gift, which was made to Southwestern Medical Foundation, will underwrite doctors who agree to spend several months treating South African children with HIV or AIDS. The program is a first for UT Southwestern and the region.

"What better exposure and indoctrination could there be for a physician than to go where he or she is not only getting a unique experience, but is also getting exposed to the reality of the devastation that HIV and AIDS can cause," Linda Hart said.

The Harts initially proposed funding for the program to Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern, after returning from a vacation in South Africa and hearing a presentation on the Waterberg Welfare Society Hospice House clinic. This facility, which serves hundreds of South African patients who otherwise would have no means of receiving medical care, is funded by the Wilson Education Foundation, established by renowned Dallas interior designer Trisha Wilson. The clinic is directed by Dr. Peter Farrant, one of South Africa's top pediatricians.

"We saw the poverty, and we saw the disease," said Mitch Hart. "For any health-care professional who has the opportunity to be a part of the program, I think it will be an extraordinary and life-changing experience. Just going down there for three weeks changed us."

The gift will provide a stipend and benefits, immunizations and insurance for the participating physicians, who will be selected from the departments of Pediatrics, Internal Medicine, or Family and Community Medicine and will be stationed in South Africa for three to six months.

"This novel program holds great promise for helping patients in South Africa, while simultaneously enhanc-

ing the training and experiences of participating physicians," Dr. Wildenthal said. "Mitch and Linda Hart's generous support for this innovative effort will extend UT Southwestern's international reputation while helping tackle the difficult and tragic consequences of AIDS in Africa."

Longtime supporters of UT Southwestern, the Harts have previously provided gifts establishing the Perry E. Gross, M.D., Distinguished Chair in Family Medicine in 1999 and the Linda and Mitch Hart Distinguished Chair in Neurology in 2004.

Mr. Hart is chairman of the board of the Hart Group, Rmax and DocuCorp International. He is one of the founders of Electronic Data Systems Corp., where he served as president until his retirement in 1977, and of The Home Depot, where he remains on the board of directors. Mr. Hart also serves on the board of trustees at Southern Methodist University and the Episcopal School of Dallas and is a trustee emeritus at Duke University, among others.

Linda Hart is vice chair and chief executive officer of the Hart Group, which she joined in 1990. Prior to that, she was an attorney in private practice specializing in corporate and securities matters. She also served as outside consultant to the Securities and Exchange Commission in Washington, D.C., and as a visiting professor at Stanford Law School. She is the former chair of the Dallas Symphony Association and The New York Stock Exchange Legal Advisory Board. Ms. Hart currently serves on, among other boards, the UT Southwestern Health System Board of Visitors and the Southwestern Medical Foundation, as well as multiple advisory boards at SMU and UT Dallas.

"Linda and Mitch have long been wonderful friends of Southwestern Medical Foundation and UT Southwestern," said W. Plack Carr Jr., president of Southwestern Medical Foundation. "We are deeply appreciative of this most meaningful gift that will provide critically needed care for patients in South Africa and unique training for physicians at the medical center."



Mitch and Linda Hart