



News Release:

Blind man's vision of safe water benefiting millions of people

Lifewater Canada – selected as a five-star and “Top-10 Impact Charity” for four years in a row

Nov. 15, 2022 – When he learned in his mid 40's he was going blind, Jim Gehrels had every reason to abandon his hopes of someday drilling water wells in Africa. Instead, he chose to accelerate those plans – drilling two wells initially and then, after recognizing the enormous need for more, founding Lifewater Canada.

Since then, in Africa and Haiti, Lifewater has drilled 2,131 new wells, repaired or replaced the pumps on 5,778 other wells, installed 437 rainwater harvesting and storage systems, built 149 community toilets and hand-washing stations, and offered health and hygiene training to tens of thousands of people.

Today, in response to Lifewater's work, Charity Intelligence selected the organization as one of Canada's 10 most impactful charities (giving it a five-star rating) for the fourth year in a row. Charity Intelligence is an independent entity that tracks the performance of Canadian charities on behalf of potential donors.

"Lifewater continues to demonstrate that it does not take a large charity to create significant impact for its clients," says Greg Thomson, Charity Intelligence's Research Director. "By providing safe local drinking water and improved hygiene very cost-effectively, Lifewater is able to save and improve the lives of people in Africa and Haiti, creating one of the highest returns we have seen of all Canadian charities."

Lifewater and the other top-10 charities deliver average returns of almost \$7 for every \$1 donated, says Charity Intelligence, describing them as "a breed apart from the over 800 Canadian charities we report on and rate."

Sadly, Jim Gehrels is no longer alive to see Lifewater's impact, as the Ontario government hydrogeologist died of a heart attack in July 2020. His legacy continues to grow through Lifewater's team in Canada and local partners in Liberia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Haiti; helping millions of people obtain safe drinking water.

"Jim built a foundation for Lifewater that was focused on training and strengthening local capacity," says his wife Lynda, now the organization's president. "Today, with our new and expanded Canadian and in-country teams, backed by our faithful community of donors, we have seen a dramatic growth in the work in Africa and Haiti. Working together, we have provided safe water to more than 4.4 million people so far; almost one million of those in the past year alone."

Meanwhile, Lifewater has consistently kept its overhead costs below 10% (only 4% in 2021-2022) to ensure donations go directly to saving and improving the lives of those in need.

Each water project Lifewater completes is posted on the organization's website with photos, GPS coordinates, information about the benefiting community, and a thank-you note from community leaders, so donors can quickly determine what tangible impact their support is achieving.

Lifewater also posts monthly reports detailing how many people are benefiting from each project. This includes cumulative data such as total beneficiaries, local economic impact, additional hours in school for children who no longer need to walk long distances every day to fetch water, and additional hours saved for girls specifically who can now be in the classroom to improve their lives and pursue new opportunities due to having access to safe water.

“Access to safe water is a human right, and one that also has ripple effects into areas of education, poverty, gender equality, and health and well-being,” Lynda Gehrels says.

The World Health Organization says at least two billion (or one in four) people on our planet are drinking water each day that is contaminated by feces, and 829,000 people are dying each year from diarrheal diseases caused by contaminated water and inadequate sanitation and hygiene. Someone – usually a child – is dying every 38 seconds. Lifewater Canada and its donors are committed to ending this tragedy.

For interviews or more information about Lifewater Canada:

Lynda Gehrels, President (Thunder Bay, ON) – lifewatercanada@gmail.com / 807.622.4848

Dan Nickol, Vice-Pres. (Swift Current, SK) – danielnickol.lifewatercanada@gmail.com / 306.741.1158

Jeff Adams, Donor Relations Manager (Calgary) – jeffadams.lifewatercanada@gmail.com / 403.615.8747

Scott Chapman, Grants Manager (Coquitlam, BC) – scott.lifewatercanada@gmail.com / 778.878.8338

Photo Requests:

Jeff Adams – jeffadams.lifewatercanada@gmail.com / 403.615.8747