



Lyn Lusi of HEAL Africa Awarded \$1 Million Opus Prize

Faith-Based Humanitarian Organization From Africa Joins Two From Los Angeles and South America in Being Honored at Ceremony and Events at LMU November 2-3

LOS ANGELES, Oct. 26, 2011 –HEAL Africa, in honor of co-founder and program director Lyn Lusi, has won the \$1 million Opus Prize. HEAL Africa is a humanitarian organization that battles gender violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The announcement was made by the Opus Foundation and Loyola Marymount University. The prize will be awarded at a ceremony at LMU next week along with \$100,000 grants to Homeboy Industries of Los Angeles and The Association of Small Rural Producers of Jacaré in Brazil. The ceremony will take place Nov. 2 at 7 p.m. on the Westchester campus.

The three recipients will spend two days, Nov. 2 and 3, sharing with the LMU community their stories and inspirational lives in classroom discussions and other settings.

The Opus Prize annually honors faith-based humanitarians and their organizations that have worked to solve persistent social problems in their communities.

The three recipients are:

Lyn Lusi

Lyn Lusi is the co-founder and program director of HEAL Africa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working to transform individuals and communities shattered by the atrocities and gender violence from the war that has been raging for more than 15 years. Lyn and her husband, Dr. Jo Lusi, founded a predecessor organization to HEAL Africa in 2000. HEAL Africa has performed more than 1,500 post-rape fistula repair surgeries, provided primary care and counseling to more than 40,000 women, established 31 Safe Houses, trained 90,000 community activists in HIV/AIDS prevention and care, and funded more than 1,500 micro grants for families. HEAL Africa's medical, social and economic initiatives cultivate peace and development and are grounded in both Lyn Lusi's and the community's spirituality, and the belief that lasting change cannot be imposed but comes from within communities themselves

Gregory Boyle, S.J.

Gregory Boyle, S.J. is founder and executive director of Homeboy Industries, a nonprofit that has helped at-risk and former gang-involved men and women in Los Angeles through a variety of free programs and services, including counseling, education, tattoo removal, job training and job placement. Fr. Boyle has paved the way for community-based rehabilitation of gang youth and ex-convicts using comprehensive counseling and job services, as well as involving the candidates in a community of kinship. The agency's programs, which have become a national model, offer a great deal of structure, but it is the boundless compassion and infectious belief in rehabilitation by Fr. Boyle and his staff that provide the motivation for young people to succeed.

Rita Pessoa, R.S.H.M

Rita Rodrigues Pessoa, R.S.H.M. founded The Association of Small Rural Producers of Jacaré in Brazil in 1997 with the objective of promoting cultural, educational, and social activities to combat the migration of youth and father figures to shanty towns in urban centers and their subsequent involvement in drugs and prostitution. With Sr. Pessoa's vision and ability to address the drought conditions of the region, the Association has constructed Casa da Polpa and Casa de Farinha to commercialize the region's fruit and cassava (manioc) crops, ensuring sustainability. It orients small landowners and fruit growers, provides educational, nutritional and culinary courses, and buys the fruits and cassava from the local people for processing and distribution. The Association is determined to help people retrieve their culture and protect the dignity of all people.

The Opus Prize Foundation is a private, philanthropic organization. The foundation honors individuals and their organizations that are largely unsung while providing exceptional and unique responses to difficult social problems such as poverty, illiteracy, hunger, disease and injustice in the world's poorest communities. Beyond supporting the humanitarian efforts, the Opus Prize also seeks to inspire people to pursue service to others. The goal is to provide funds that advance the winner's work to a new level of impact, provide greater visibility and attract other supporters.

The foundation each year selects a Catholic university and partners with it to identify nominees who are put before a university established jury to determine the three finalists. The process then involves faculty and students in site visits and assessments of the finalists.

David W. Burcham, LMU president, chaired the 10-member jury, which met in January. The jury selected the finalists

from more than a dozen candidates and made recommendations for the award winners. The other jurors were: Salam Al-Marayati, president, Muslim Public Affairs Council; R. Chad Dreier, former chairman of LMU Board of Trustees; Antonia Hernandez, president & CEO, California Community Foundation; Steve Hilton, president & CEO, Hilton Foundation; J.D. Hokoyama, president & CEO, Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics; Joshua Holo, dean & associate professor, Hebrew Union College; Dolores Huerta, president, Dolores Huerta Foundation and co-founder, United Farm Workers of America; Cardinal Roger Mahony, archbishop emeritus of Los Angeles; and Constance L. Rice, co-director, Advancement Project. Based on those recommendations, the foundation selected the recipient of the Opus Prize.

Prior Opus partners include Fordham University, University of St. Thomas, Seattle University, The Catholic University of America, University of Notre Dame, Marquette University and the University of San Francisco.

More details of the campus events and involvement can be found at www.lmu.edu/opusprize.

Contact: Media please call to arrange parking and media pass

Directions and maps: <http://www.lmu.edu/resources/CampusMaps.html>

About Loyola Marymount University

Located between the Pacific Ocean and downtown Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount University is a comprehensive university offering 56 major programs, 38 master's degrees and a doctoral degree in education from four colleges, two schools and Loyola Law School. Founded in 1911, LMU is ranked fourth in "Best Regional Universities/West" by U.S. News & World Report. LMU is the largest Catholic university for undergraduates on the West Coast with nearly 5,800 undergraduate students and more than 3,000 graduate and law students. For more LMU news and events, please visit www.lmu.edu/news.

About the Opus Prize Foundation

The Opus Prize Foundation recognizes unsung heroes of any faith tradition, anywhere in the world, who are solving today's most persistent social problems by annually awarding the Opus Prize. Opus Prize winners combine a driving entrepreneurial spirit with an abiding faith to give power to the disenfranchised, opportunities to the poorest, and inspire others to pursue lives of service. Each year the Opus Prize Foundation partners with a university or college to maximize the impact of its mission. The first Opus Prize was awarded in 2004 and today, 18 individuals from the United States and around the world have been recognized. The Opus Prize Foundation, established in 1994, is a private and independent foundation and does not accept unsolicited nominations. For more information, please visit www.opusprize.org.

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