



PAUL HARRIS FELLOW AWARD

CONFERRED UPON PEGGY TAILLON, JUNE 27TH, 2017

The following text was read at the awards presentation ceremony.

Throughout her career our honoured guest, Peggy Taillon, has shown a commitment to helping those in need. Her past leadership in senior positions at the Ottawa Hospital and her work as an advisor to Ontario's Mental Health Implementation Task Forces are examples. Similarly, she has shown a commitment to social justice by her past leadership of the Canadian Council on Social Development and as a Senior Advisor to the Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. This was her life. Then, at the invitation from her friend, Wendy Muckle, she visited Kenya.

That visit was over ten years ago. She volunteered in Asembo Bay, a village on the shore of Lake Victoria. She saw a crisis. Adults and children went hungry. Malaria, TB, HIV and AIDS had ravaged the community. Those left were destitute. Widows and grandmothers struggled to provide for families, many of which had adopted orphans. Peggy responded to their plight in two ways.

She founded The Hera Mission of Canada. "Hera" means "Love" in Luo, the language of the majority in Asembo Bay. This charity has raised over \$350 000 for use on developmental projects. These projects have empowered the women and children there. The Hera Mission works closely with a local and well respected group, the Asembo Bay Women for Development. It also takes direction from them. Together they focus on running businesses and providing education, the pathway out of poverty. In this way Peggy has helped over five hundred orphans and hundreds of widows, grandmothers and great grandmothers.

Peggy's second response arose from a commitment she had made to help Anyango Akama, a pregnant, fourteen-year old. Her family could not afford another mouth to feed: The baby would have to go. Mere days later, Peggy found herself holding that newborn baby, a boy. Anyango and her family implored Peggy to raise him.

Unbeknownst to Peggy at the time, the practice of Kenyan law did not provide for foreign, single women to adopt Kenyan babies. So, she moved to Nairobi to fight for the child. Fifteen months later a judge of *the Supreme Court of Kenya* ruled in her favour. This judgement was an amazing triumph: first, of her commitment to social justice, second of her commitment to helping those in need, as well as third and above all, her love for an infant child. Devlin Taillon was that infant. Now no longer a child, in a couple of years he will be in his teens.

Peggy Taillon, for the outstanding community service you have shown in support of the youth, women and elderly in Kenya, would you please come forward to accept the Paul Harris Fellow Award.