

THE
CARTER CENTER



CARTER CENTER NEWS

SPRING 2026

**Children in South Sudan
See Bright Days Ahead**

**20 Years of Work
in the DRC**



Waging Peace.

Fighting Disease.

Building Hope.

CARTER CENTER NEWS

SPRING 2026

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ON THE COVER

The Carter Center flew these children from rural villages in South Sudan to the capital, Juba, to undergo eyelid surgery to halt trachoma damage. The children spent 15 days in Juba, home to the country's only pediatric eye clinic, and returned to their homes with their vision preserved.



From the CEO, Paige Alexander

Toward a More Perfect Union

As a follower of The Carter Center, you are probably aware of our long history of election observation around the world. But you may not know as much about the expanding footprint of our election integrity work in the United States.

In 2020, our peace teams began to address deepening distrust in elections and widening political polarization. Our approach combines nonpartisan observation with bridge-building that promotes cross-partisan understanding and civil discourse.

In February, we announced a partnership with the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation to conduct nonpartisan observation of Michigan's elections this November. The Ford-Carter Election Observation Network will train Michigan residents to serve as nonpartisan observers to assess whether election laws and procedures are consistently followed — and to share their findings with the public.

Similar Carter Center-supported election observation efforts are operating in Georgia, Montana, New Mexico, and soon, Nevada.

The two presidential organizations also support Michiganders for Civic Resilience, a network of state leaders from across the political spectrum committed to defending democratic institutions and encouraging peaceful dialogue.

The Michigan group is one of six democracy resilience networks created by the Center; the others are in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. Each organization is made up of trusted local leaders on the right and the left who are united by their commitment to democratic ideals and peaceful political dialogue. Network members use traditional and social media to address misinformation and reduce tensions.



Paige Alexander is the chief executive officer of The Carter Center.



With Carter Center support, the Montana Election Observation Initiative observed preparations for the 2024 election, including in Missoula County.

In Georgia, we've also backed the creation of the Faith Forward Network, made up of multifaith leaders dedicated to healing political divisions in their communities.

This November's elections will be pivotal to preserving and strengthening democracy and the rule of law in America. If you live in one of the states where we work, I hope you'll join our networks. But wherever you live, I encourage you to find a way to participate that is meaningful to you.

Carter Center Rallies Lawmakers, Advocates for Mental Health Parity Enforcement

The Carter Center hosted its third annual Mental Health Parity Day on Feb. 3 at Central Presbyterian Church near the Georgia State Capitol in Atlanta.

The free public event brought together mental health stakeholders, legislators, and state agency leaders to discuss advancing implementation of the bipartisan Georgia Mental Health Parity Act of 2022. The law requires insurers to cover mental health care and substance use disorders on equal footing with physical health care.

During the event, the Center outlined plans to engage business leaders to help ensure employer-sponsored health plans comply with parity standards.

Among the highlights, Georgians for a Healthy Future unveiled a new public tool to track parity violations. Advocates called for stronger financial penalties against insurers found in noncompliance, arguing that current fines were insufficient to drive meaningful change. Twenty-two private health insurance companies have been fined a combined \$25 million since the law took effect in 2023.

Charting Five Decades of Women's Diplomacy in U.S.-China Relations

The often-unsung role of women diplomats in shaping U.S.-China ties took center stage at the annual Jimmy Carter Forum on U.S.-China Relations this January, as The Carter Center convened experts to examine women's contributions to the bilateral relationship over five decades.

The two-day forum featured roundtable discussions and panels on the influence of person-to-person exchanges as building blocks of diplomacy, especially amid geopolitical and economic tension.

"For this forum to feature so many women experts prominently — not just



Dr. Kashaf Ijaz speaks during Mental Health Parity Day at the Georgia State Capitol on Feb. 3, 2026.

one or two — is powerful, especially in this moment," said Rosie Levine, executive director of the U.S.-China Education Trust. "Our two governments don't always see eye to eye, and experts are often caught in the crossfire."

The forum is a critical venue for constructive dialogue on U.S.-China relations, a legacy rooted in President Carter's decision to normalize ties in 1978.

"The Carter Center plays a critical role in strengthening dialogue and people-to-people links between the U.S. and China through events like the forum," said keynote speaker Sarah Beran, a former senior U.S. diplomat whose 23-year foreign service career focused primarily on China. "These efforts will become increasingly important as diplomatic channels dwindle and frictions increase."

New Cities Join Inform Women, Transform Lives Campaign

Our global effort to empower women by helping cities promote access to information and life-changing municipal services has expanded further.

The Center selected 13 new cities to

join the Inform Women, Transform Lives campaign, bringing the total number of city partnerships to 48. Collectively, these four dozen cities span five continents and serve a metropolitan population of more than 265 million people.

Since 2021, the campaign has worked with participating cities to enhance awareness of women's right to information, increase understanding and use of municipal and social services, and support local governments in reaching women. By selecting a service to amplify, cities make major impacts. Guatemala City, for example, increased use of free health services by 200%, and Kampala, Uganda, provided \$250,000 in small loans to women's groups.

The cities in the new cohort are: Abuja, Nigeria; Cardiff, Wales; Guadalajara, Mexico; Karachi, Pakistan; Kingston, Jamaica; Kisumu County, Kenya; Liverpool, England; Medellín, Colombia; Recife, Brazil; Rosario, Argentina; Tangier, Morocco; Toronto, Canada; and Tulsa, Oklahoma.

City governments applied to be part of this campaign, and the finalists were selected based on their commitment to transparency and gender equity.

For more information about the campaign, visit informwomen.org.



Caregivers and children prepare to board the plane that will take them from Pibor to the capital, Juba.

A Flight for Sight: Nine Children, One Plane, and a Chance to See Clearly

The blue-and-white prop plane descended through clear skies and skimmed along a scorching runway.

After it slowed to a halt, five children — some of them barefoot — made their way down the plane’s three deep stairs, blinking in the harsh sunlight as they took in this place where they’d suddenly found themselves.

Just an hour earlier, they’d been lounging in a field waiting for the plane — the first they’d ever ridden — to take them from their villages in rural South Sudan to its capital, Juba.

They and four other children who arrived on a second flight were there for the same reason: to undergo eyelid surgery to halt damage caused by trachoma.

The state of their eyes shocked public health experts.

Trachoma is a bacterial eye infection common where clean water and sanitation are scarce. Repeated infections lead to scarring, causing eyelids to turn inward and eyelashes to scratch the cornea — damage that is painful and can eventually result in blindness.

This process usually plays out over decades, said Angela Sanders, a senior associate director in the Carter Center’s Trachoma Control Program. “It should take 30 years for someone to reach the stage where they’re in danger of going blind, but in South Sudan we’re seeing it in children as young as 3, 4, or 5.”

A simple surgery can correct an eyelid’s orientation. Carter



Pediatric nurse anesthetist Grazilla Thomas gives 7-year-old Loro Awan a clean bill of health after a pre-surgery check. In addition to recording their age and weight, Thomas listened to the children’s hearts and lungs to make sure they were healthy enough to undergo anesthesia.



A surgeon performs eyelid surgery on one of the children.



Grazilla Thomas carefully moves a child from the surgical table to a gurney to transport him to the recovery ward. Meanwhile, behind her, a surgeon has already begun working to repair the eyelids of the next child.



A technician removes the bandages from the eyes of 3-year-old Yayo John as her mother, Lolech, comforts her. Yayo was the youngest of the nine children who received surgery. The oldest was 12.

Center-supported surgeons use local anesthesia to perform the procedure on thousands of adults each year. But children can't be counted on to lie still as a scalpel approaches their eyes. They need general anesthesia, and that means specialists.

That's why The Carter Center chartered the little prop plane—to bring the children to South Sudan's only pediatric eye clinic.

In all, the kids and their caregivers spent 15 days at the Ministry of Health's Buluk Eye Centre, sleeping side by side in a ward cooled only by fans, taking morning tea at a stand just outside the compound's gates, waiting patiently in blue plastic chairs until their next eye check or meal.

The surgeries were a success, and the children clambered back up the plane steps free from pain and no longer in danger of imminent blindness.

The Carter Center is now working to help the dozens of other children in South Sudan like them, so that they, too, can enjoy brighter futures—ones in which school, jobs, and a full life are all possibilities.



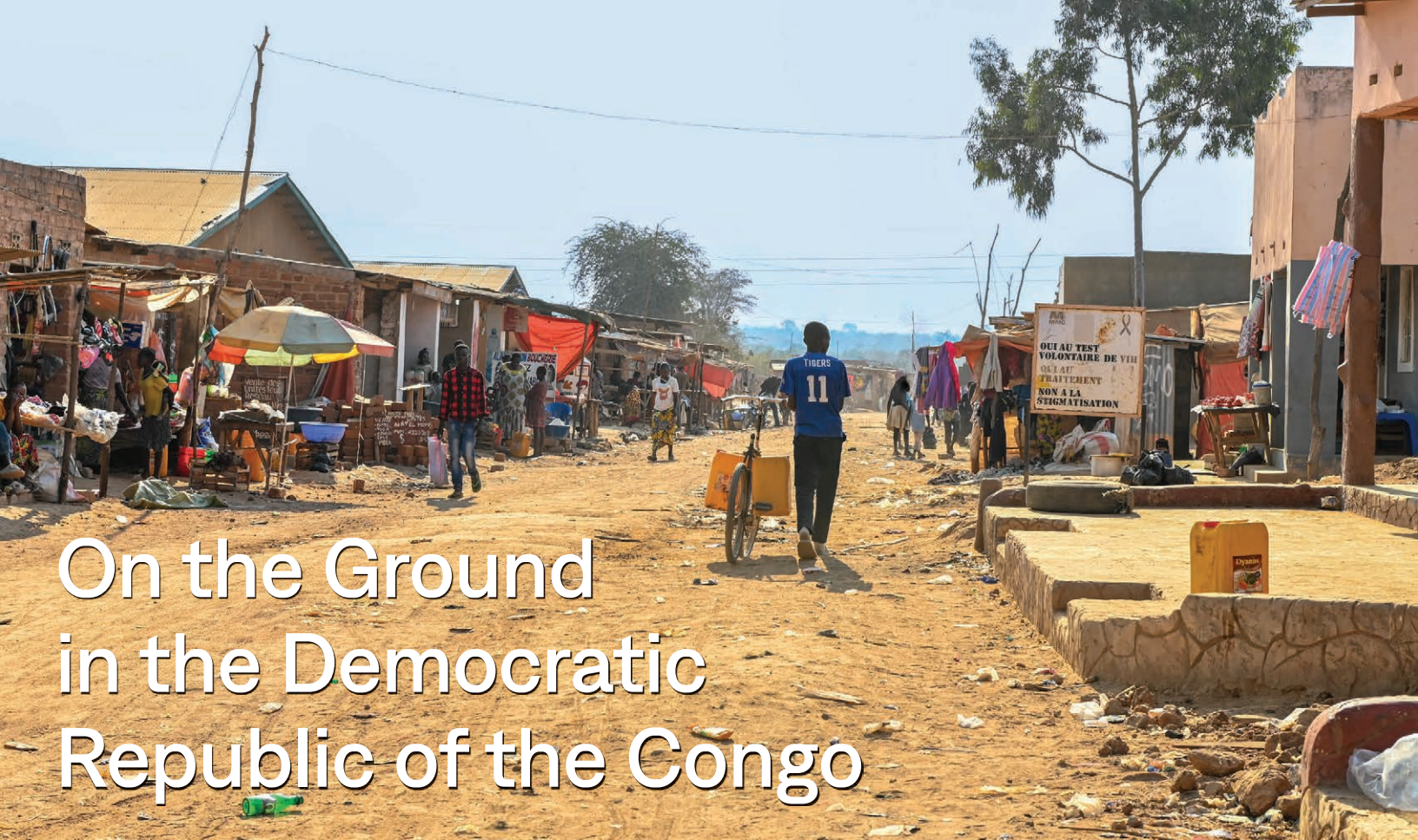
Carter Center epidemiologist Pallavi Kache photographs one of Loro Awan's eyes post-surgery. Meticulous documentation will help future researchers and health care specialists provide the best care to young patients.



Lukayele Ngachor receives eye drops from his mother, Kernoi, the day after surgery. Keeping eyes clean and infection-free is a critical part of aftercare.



The children enjoy morning tea the day after surgery. One of their favorite things about the trip, they all agreed, was getting to eat three meals a day—more than they usually get at home.



On the Ground in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

For 20 years, The Carter Center has worked to promote peace, democracy, and human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The second-largest country in Africa has outsized regional and global importance, thanks to its vast natural resources, environmental significance, large and ethnically diverse population, and the fact that it's bordered by nine countries.

Roughly the size of Western Europe, the DRC suffered decades of brutal dictatorship and years of civil war. It continues to endure ongoing conflicts, especially in the east. The strife is rooted in politically motivated ethnic decisions, fights over natural resources, regional competition, long-standing hostilities, weak governance, and more.

“Our work shows the benefit of a long-term presence, especially as communities confront new and enormous challenges,” said Romain Ravet, the Center’s DRC country representative for the past three years. “Our various programs exist to help the Congolese people have a voice in international and domestic policy processes that impact their lives.”

The Carter Center’s initial foray into the country began in 2006, when it observed elections there. Since then, it has established

two permanent offices — one in the capital of Kinshasa, the other in Lubumbashi — with nearly 50 staff members.

The Center continues to strengthen electoral processes, having monitored three additional elections, while offering recommendations for improvement and supporting citizen observer networks. It also partners with Congolese nonprofits to back human rights defenders, empower women, and help youth be a force for good in their communities. Youth account for at least 60% of the DRC’s population of 115 million.

The ongoing work is paying off. The Carter Center has established networks to safeguard human rights defenders. With support from the Canadian government, it is expanding an initiative that’s already reached more than 1.5 million women and girls and funded nearly 100 women’s rights organizations. And the Center has leveraged the passion of young people, training them on topics that include disinformation, leadership, and critical thinking.

“This is a really consequential moment in the DRC’s history, and what happens now is going to have lasting and global impacts,” said Beth Plachta, the Center’s Atlanta-based associate director of the human rights and democracy projects in the DRC.

The village of Kifita in the DRC sits near land being mined by foreign investors. The Carter Center has helped residents negotiate for investments in their community, which now has a community center, hospital, and school.

On top of this work, The Carter Center is leading local efforts to increase the transparency and accountability of mining, oil, and gas companies, an issue that’s becoming more urgent amid increased risks of corruption and exploitation.

The DRC is one of the most mineral-rich countries in the world. It produces more than 70% of the planet’s cobalt, which is needed for batteries used in electronics and electric vehicles. But about 90% of the DRC’s resources, worth an estimated \$24 trillion, remain undeveloped. So far.

Mining companies grow rich, while most Congolese people see no gains and often suffer. Communities near extraction sites, already impoverished, have lost work, been displaced, and experienced health and environmental repercussions.

“Our goal is to minimize the harm done to these communities while maximizing the benefits,” said Fabien Mayani, director of the Center’s Extractive Industries Governance Project in the DRC. “The wealth generated from Congolese resources should create

shared value, not just profits for foreign investors.”

The Carter Center helps ensure access to mining sector information and fights against corruption. It identifies risks and impacts from extraction and provides recommendations for safety and remediation. And it supports communities so they can negotiate with mining companies to secure investments that serve them.

By the end of 2025, these efforts to encourage negotiations secured more than \$300 million in community investments, paving the way for services like health clinics, schools, and community centers.

“There’s so much more to be done,” said Ravet, the Center’s country representative. “But we are uniquely positioned to keep doing good work.”



CEO Paige Alexander attends an art contest in Kinshasa, where The Carter Center works with partners to engage youth in public life and the promotion of peace.

Baking a Path to Economic Independence

Berlette Liale is a mother of four in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo. She is also a baker, a business owner, and a mentor to the women in her neighborhood.

Through the Women’s Voice and Leadership program — a five-year initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada and executed by The Carter Center across six Congolese provinces — Liale gained entrepreneurship training that changed her life.

She built her own bread-making oven, opened a shop, and trained 30 other women in bread making. Sixteen of them now regularly use her oven to produce and sell bread.

Baking profits have helped pay for her children’s schooling and supported her family. Success has made Liale a local leader, one who continues to channel opportunities into better economic prosperity and quality of life for those around her.

Liale’s story proves what’s possible when a woman is given the chance to rise.



Berlette Liale sells bread in her neighborhood in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo. Liale participates in a community group supported by the Center’s Women’s Voice and Leadership program, funded by Global Affairs Canada.



Congolese women sort through refuse from a local mine, looking for material they can sell.

10 Guinea Worm Cases Reported Last Year, Lowest on Record



Kurujwok Okoth Oriew, 10, of Wichini village, pours pond water through a household filter into a pail in Gog, Ethiopia. Water for drinking or cooking is strained through the cloth to remove the parasite that causes Guinea worm.

Only 10 human cases of Guinea worm disease were reported worldwide in 2025—the lowest number ever recorded—bringing the ancient parasitic disease closer than ever to eradication.

The provisional figure marks a 33% decline from the 15 cases reported in 2024, continuing the momentum of a initiative championed by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Having made eradication a personal mission, President Carter often said he wanted to outlast the last Guinea worm. He very nearly did.

“This campaign reflects the values that shaped my grandparents’ lives—the conviction that hope, hard work, and respect for everyone can change the world,” said Jason Carter, Carter Center board chair and eldest grandchild of President and Mrs. Carter. “Seeing Guinea worm cases reach historic

lows is one of the clearest expressions of that legacy.”

Of the 10 cases, four were detected in Chad, four in Ethiopia, and two in South Sudan. Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and Mali each reported zero human cases for the second consecutive year.

When The Carter Center assumed leadership of the global eradication campaign in 1986, an estimated 3.5 million people contracted Guinea worm each year across 21 countries in Africa and Asia. Since then, the campaign has averted more than 100 million cases—a more than 99.99% reduction. Guinea worm is poised to become only the second human disease eradicated in history, after smallpox, and the first achieved without a vaccine or medicine.

Eradication requires eliminating the

disease in animals as well as humans, since the same species of worm, *Dracunculus medinensis*, infects both. Chad, once the global epicenter for animal infections, reduced Guinea worm infections in domestic animals by 47% in 2025—its sixth consecutive year of progress. Still, global animal infections rose slightly, driven by increases in Cameroon and Angola.

People and animals contract Guinea worm by drinking water contaminated with tiny larvae. About a year later, a 3-foot-long worm exits the body through a painful blister, most often on the legs and feet. Sufferers frequently submerge their limbs in water to relieve the burning, inadvertently releasing larvae and continuing the cycle of infection. The agony can last for weeks, leaving people unable to work, care for their families, or attend school.

Progress depends on strong community partnerships. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers are trained to provide health education, and people in endemic countries receive cash rewards for reporting cases. In 2025, national programs investigated more than one million such reports, nearly all within 24 hours.

“Each number represents a person we know by name,” said Adam Weiss, director of the Carter Center Guinea Worm Eradication Program. “We’re energized by this year’s progress, but zero is the only acceptable number.”



Children use pipe filters to sip water from a pond near Ablen, Atheti, and Wichini villages near Gog, Ethiopia.



Meet the Cartoon Cat Keeping Children Safe in Conflict Zones

Civil war has ended in Syria, but its people are not yet safe.

After fighting ceased in December 2024, families began returning to neighborhoods devastated by the estimated 1 million explosive weapons deployed during the 14-year conflict. Rubble has become playgrounds for children, and unseen danger lies within the ruins: unexploded bombs that remain deadly.

“On their way to school or out playing, children encounter bombed buildings and shiny objects that catch their eye,” said Tala Haydar, communications manager for SHEILD, a nonprofit that raises awareness about the dangers of mines and other explosive munitions across Lebanon and Syria. “Simply touching a mine or bomb can trigger it.”

The Carter Center estimates that there are more than 300,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance in Syria. With roughly 5 million children living in affected areas, the need for safety education is urgent.

Enter an unlikely hero: Sukkar, a cartoon orange tabby cat.

Created by SHEILD, Sukkar teaches children what to do if they encounter explosive hazards. Children first meet Sukkar — Arabic for sugar — through

Children interact with Sukkar, an animated cat who guides them in learning about hidden explosives and other deadly remnants of war. Sukkar is part of an augmented reality application developed through a partnership between The Carter Center and SHEILD, a Lebanese nonprofit.

coloring pages. Using an augmented reality app developed with The Carter Center, Sukkar then comes alive, guiding children through interactive quizzes that reinforce lifesaving lessons.

“We’ve already seen that Sukkar is an effective educational tool in Lebanon,” said Rana Shabb, associate director in the Carter Center’s Conflict Resolution Program. “The Carter Center chose to support this innovative expansion into augmented reality because we saw how impactful it could be in Syria.”

Augmented reality helps reach children whose schooling was interrupted — or never began — during the war.

“Many children read less, but they’re drawn to screens and enjoy learning from cartoons,” Haydar said. “No matter their circumstances, they can learn how to keep themselves safe.”

More than 300 children in Lebanon have benefited from Sukkar’s augmented reality teachings — a promising start, but a fraction of those at risk. The Center plans to introduce Sukkar in Syria, and potentially

other countries where Arabic is spoken, as a tool to strengthen lessons.

The project’s benefits extend beyond the classroom. Parents are learning as well.

Haydar recalled meeting a child who told the story of their father finding a small explosive stuck in the branch of a lemon tree. Unsure what it was, he brought it home, displaying it as a decoration. When the child saw the explosive, they knew what to do, having been taught by Sukkar.

What did the child tell their father?

“Sukkar tells us not to touch!” They reported the danger immediately.

Clearing Syria of these deadly remnants may take decades, and The Carter Center is committed to making the country safe for all its people.

“Using our data and expertise, we want to support Syria as it rebuilds,” said Shabb. “Working with SHEILD to bring Sukkar to children ties directly into the Center’s mission of peacebuilding and supporting communities as we clear these deadly remnants of war.”

George Zeidan

Wrestling with Israel-Palestine Conflict, Inspired by President Carter

Some jobs seem predestined. Just look at George Zeidan, the Center's country representative for Israel-Palestine. A lifelong admirer of President Jimmy Carter, he dreamed of working for The Carter Center years before he came on board.

"President Carter put his morals and principles above all else. He spoke to antagonists, not to validate them but because he knew we can't solve conflicts with hot tea and hugs," Zeidan said. "The Carter Center touched issues no one else would touch. That was very inspirational to me."

Any day can look different for Zeidan, as he strives to build bridges in this deeply divided region. He sits down with human rights activists, diplomats, or politicians. He supports democracy-seeking community groups and focuses on Palestinian self-determination and political legitimacy. He works across generations, carving out extra time to hear from young people. He promotes nonviolence, listens a lot, and drinks plenty of coffee.

Zeidan lives in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, in the home where his maternal grandparents married and his mother was born. His parents are "a mixed marriage," two Palestinians with different paperwork — his mother, a Jerusalemite, is a resident of Israel; his father, a West Banker with a Palestinian passport.



George Zeidan is the Carter Center's country representative in Israel-Palestine.

As a result, he grew up living in the occupied West Bank city of Beit Jala, so his parents could be together. But he traveled with his mother through Israeli checkpoints to go to school in Jerusalem so she could maintain her residency status and pass it on to him.

The seven-mile journey to school could take hours to complete. Plus, there were curfews to navigate and tensions that flared between Israeli soldiers and stone-throwing protesters outside the family's home. Zeidan recalls peering out

the window with his mother when hostilities erupted, worried and waiting for his father to safely return from work.

He traveled abroad for the first time to attend Chowan University, a private Christian school in Murfreesboro, North Carolina. Later, a Fulbright scholarship sent him to the University of Southern California, where he earned a master's in public policy with a focus on nonprofit leadership.

Back home, he spent four years with a Danish humanitarian organization doing work in Gaza and the West Bank before he joined the Center. His current role started just before Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas led a deadly attack in southern Israel and took hostages, unleashing a brutal war in which Israeli attacks killed more than 70,000 people in Gaza.

Zeidan finds his own peace in workouts. He's run 15 marathons and completed an ultramarathon. He organizes sporting events. He finds comfort in his nieces and nephew.

He's not naïve. Resolving, not just managing, an age-old conflict demands a long-game approach — and a heavy dose of pragmatism. It requires the recognition of each side's right to exist, he says, because neither Palestinians nor Israelis are going anywhere.

Given Israel's dominance, spiraling gun violence in Palestinian communities, deadly attacks by Israeli settlers, and now a widening regional war, it's hard for Zeidan to be optimistic.

"We are in a situation that is becoming increasingly unlivable, especially for Palestinians," he said. "Both people need to understand that there's no violent solution to what's going on. We need to take a different path."



George Zeidan engages in conversation with Jason Carter, chair of The Carter Center Board of Trustees, at the 2024 Carter Center Weekend in San Diego, California.

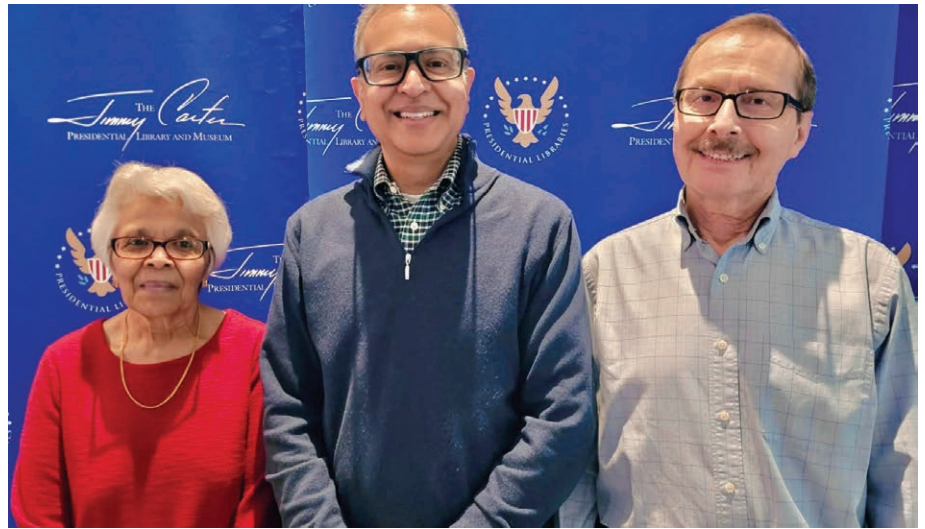
A Gift with a Personal Twist

What started as a family visit to the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum inspired a meaningful act of giving for Revathi A-Davidson and Russ Davidson. Impressed by the extraordinary lives and humanitarian spirit of former President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, the couple from Albuquerque, New Mexico, were moved to make an estate gift to The Carter Center.

Yet their story of generosity has a deeper, more personal dimension.

The Davidsons' philanthropy also celebrates the life and work of their nephew, Dr. Arjun Srinivasan, a physician and health care epidemiologist who joined the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2003. He has been at the forefront of efforts to prevent infections in health care settings, improving people's lives by informing policy and protecting countless patients from harm.

Recognizing the alignment of values between their nephew and the Carters, the Davidsons chose to make their gift to the Center in honor of Srinivasan.



Revathi A-Davidson and Russ Davidson (left and right) honored the work of their nephew, Dr. Arjun Srinivasan (middle), with a gift to The Carter Center.

Creative Ways to Give — and Even Save

Advancing peace and health worldwide through support of The Carter Center can be done in simple and powerful ways that can tangibly help you and your loved ones.

Consider this:

• IRA options

If you're age 70½ or older, gifts from your IRA can count toward your required minimum distribution, reducing or even eliminating income taxes. IRA funds can also be used to establish a charitable gift annuity, offering lifetime payments to you and your spouse, as well as significant tax benefits. And, if you name The Carter Center as a beneficiary of your IRA, you can further our mission while reducing potential taxes for your heirs.

• Gifts in your will

Creating a will can be expensive and time consuming, but we are pleased to offer supporters free access to Giving Docs, a simple tool designed to make estate planning and creating a will easier. There's no obligation to leave a gift. Accept this as our gift to you.

To learn more, call 404-420-3868, email plannedgiving@cartercenter.org, visit legacycircle.cartercenter.org/giving-docs, or use this QR code.



"Russ and I value public service and a commitment to improving the lives of others," Mrs. Davidson said. "Both qualities are consistently uppermost in the work of Arjun and the Carters."

It is easy to see why the Davidsons are proud of their nephew.

Srinivasan's work has led to important protocol changes designed to address the root causes of infectious outbreaks in hospitals and other health care settings. He has led CDC efforts to promote responsible antibiotic use. His research and leadership have helped shape national policy, ensuring that nearly every hospital in the United States maintains an antibiotic stewardship program. Srinivasan has published more than 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals, spoken at conferences around the globe, and helped guide hospitals toward safer, more sustainable, and equitable health care practices.

However, perhaps what connects Srinivasan most deeply to the Carters' legacy is his belief that humility and empathy should be the foundations of service. A humanitarian at heart, he shares their determination to make a difference and see the world through other people's eyes. And he believes a key to success is following one's passion.

"One striking thing to me about the Carters is the incredible humility with which they lived their lives," Srinivasan said. "They never sought the limelight."

Through their generous estate gift, the Davidsons have united two remarkable paths of service, honoring both a global humanitarian legacy and a personal one within their close-knit family. Thanks to their philanthropy, The Carter Center can continue advancing the work begun by President and Mrs. Carter to wage peace, fight disease, and build hope.

"Our hope is that others are inspired to give to The Carter Center while recognizing someone in their lives who is making a difference," Davidson said.

And as the couple looks forward to their next family visit to The Carter Center and the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum, their story — like their gift — stands as a testament to the power of values shared and service continued.

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WAGING PEACE. FIGHTING DISEASE. BUILDING HOPE.



Kat McGowan

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Journalist Gives Voice to Caregiver Experience

By Kat McGowan

Throughout my career as a health and science journalist, I've covered biomedical research, spent hours talking to doctors, and translated complex medical information for general audiences.

I thought I understood the health care system. Then caregiving happened to me.

First, my sister-in-law was diagnosed with a rare neurodegenerative disease related to Parkinson's. My partner and I scrambled to help her, and I quickly discovered how confusing and exhausting it is to navigate that world—even for someone who speaks the language.

A few years later, both of my parents began showing signs of dementia. For four years, I was intensively involved in their care. They both passed in 2023.

All along, I kept thinking, "I know how to talk to doctors. I know how to find information. And I am barely keeping my head above water." It's not that the caregiving system is bad—it simply doesn't exist. There are resources, but you have to be incredibly creative and tenacious to find them and make them work. How do people do it?

The answer, I learned, is that most people do it alone—and in silence. There are an estimated 63 million unpaid family caregivers in the U.S. That's the same number as parents with children under 18 at home. Yet caregiving for adults is almost invisible in our culture, as well as in our journalism.

This personal and professional path

led me to the Rosalynn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism. The fellowship made it possible for me to publish more than 10 stories with NPR online that explored caregiving as an emotionally complex experience. The caregivers I interviewed repeatedly described a bittersweet combination of love, duty, frustration, and grief. Their stories aren't heroic, nor are they tragedies. They're nuanced and real. And they're the kind of stories readers want.

NPR put out a call for caregiving stories. Nearly 600 people responded—including people whose time as caregivers ended decades ago.

People need to talk about it. I'm here to listen.

Kat McGowan is a 2025 recipient of the Rosalynn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism.



Kat McGowan speaks during the annual meeting of the Rosalynn Carter Mental Health Journalism Fellowship on Oct. 6, 2025.