

CAFI Founder Receives Lifetime Achievement Award for Global Health



Shepherd Smith, founder of Children's AIDS Fund International (CAFI), was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award in Global Health by [Friends of the Global Fight](#), one of four independent associations globally known as "Friends" that develop contacts and allies, promote an understanding of the [UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria](#), and

mobilize political and financial support.

CAFI founder Shepherd Smith holding Lifetime Achievement Award in Global Health presented by Friends of the Global Fight on July 10, 2024.

Credit: Friends of the Global Fight

Smith received the honor at A Celebration of Bipartisan Congressional Leadership in Global Health, hosted by Friends to publicly recognize and honor Members of Congress at the forefront of supporting US critically needed contributions to the UN Global Fund.

Lawmakers honored included Senator John Bozeman (R-AR) and Representatives Grace Meng (D-NY), Peter Aguilar (D-CA) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL).

Event speakers included: Ambassador Dr. John Nkengasong, US Global AIDS Coordinator and Senior Bureau Official for Global Health Security and Diplomacy, US Department of State; Dr. Angeli Achrekar, Deputy Executive Director, Program of [UNAIDS](#) Assisting Secretary General of the United Nations; and award recipients or their representatives attending the event.

Watch a brief video with event highlights below.

Credit: Friends of the Global Fight

Shepherd Smith's award was presented by Ambassador Dr. Mark Dybul who served as the US Global AIDS Coordinator (2006-2009) early in President George W. Bush's signature initiative to save lives during a burgeoning pandemic with millions of lives around the globe being lost to HIV/AIDS—[The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\)](#). Dybul also served as the Executive Director of the UN Global Fund from 2012 to 2017.



(left to right) Ambassador Dr. Mark Dybul, CFI founder Shepherd Smith, and Ambassador Dr. John Nkengasong.
Credit: Friends of the Global Fight

Smith and Dybul worked closely together on PEPFAR before its bipartisan beginning and through additional program reauthorizations every five years for its first 20 years (2008, 2013, 2018), and in 2023, when for the first time in PEPFAR's history reauthorization was blocked by a partisan effort (Rep. Chris Smith-R-NJ) citing false allegations related to program spending and priorities, limiting it to a one-year reauthorization. The fight for a five-year reauthorization will continue in 2025 with 25 million lives at risk of death—young, unborn and adult—in this battle.

Watch Ambassador Dybul's award presentation and Shepherd Smith's comments below.

Credit: Friends of the Global Fight

For Smith, this global effort emerged after more than 18 years in the US addressing HIV/AIDS from a five point public health agenda: 1) Promoting the value of early HIV diagnosis; 2) Limiting epidemic spread through traditional public health intervention strategies, such as education, awareness, and voluntary and confidential partner notification; 3) Engendering a compassionate response to anyone infected or affected by HIV disease; 4) Facilitating development of

treatments, vaccines, diagnostics and a cure for HIV; and 5) Addressing access to healthcare in respect to HIV.

After its 1986 founding, CAFI (then named Americans for a Sound AIDS/HIV Policy–ASAP) worked diligently with local, state and federal legislators; testified before President Reagan’s first National Commission on AIDS and multiple Capitol Hill Congressional committees; worked with thousands of US faith leaders and faith institutions to educate, equip and engage them in an effective HIV/AIDS response; CAF (then ASAP) received a US government grant to reach the conservative faith community under Surgeon General C. Everett Koop’s America Response to AIDS in 1987—the first US government funds awarded to private sector non-profit organizations to help mitigate HIV/AIDS).



(left to right) Former US Representative Martha Roby (R-AL 2011-2021) and current Friends of the Global Fight Board of Directors member, greeting CAFI founder and award recipient Shepherd Smith.

Credit: Friends of the Global Fight

Armed with extensive US HIV/AIDS experience, Smith first

traveled to Africa in 1994, visiting South Africa (just after apartheid ended) and Malawi to understand the pandemic's epidemiology; meet with business and government leaders, charities and local organizations who saw the needs and wanted to develop strategic responses in the workplace; the faith community; local, district, regional and country-level leadership. This global effort continued to 2001-02, during which CFI received a large private sector grant to set up HIV/AIDS clinics for diagnosis, treatment, overall family-centered care, mother-to-child transmission prevention, orphan services, nutrition programs and local prevention education through schools and community organizations. Sites were opened in Uganda, South Africa, Malawi and Zambia led by local organizations—most of them faith-based—building on existing health outreach and care programs.

In addition to local treatment sites, in 2002, Smith led two delegations to Uganda—the first nation to see a dramatic reduction in HIV/AIDS deaths. Delegations comprised of both private and public sector experts met with national health leaders, clinical researchers, epidemiologists, schools, local service organizations, community and faith leaders to better quantify existing challenges and potential solutions.

This varied background fostered a broad understanding of both the domestic and global pandemic so when PEPFAR was announced by President Bush in 2003, Smith and CFI were uniquely prepared to support it wholeheartedly, build effective partnerships, develop strategic plans to address multi-cultural issues, and ensure sustainability of local partners to lead the program long-term.

CFI heartily thanks Friends of the Global Fight for recognizing Shepherd Smith's contribution to global health over the past 38 years, for his personal dedication, commitment and sacrifice with the goal of saving millions of lives through these bold, innovative, effective and collaborative efforts.

(left to right) CAFI founder and award recipient Shepherd Smith and his wife Anita have worked together to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic since 1986.

Credit: Friends of the Global Fight

