



PRESS RELEASE

Mission Doctors Association

www.MissionDoctors.org

6102 South Victoria Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90043 Phone: (213) 368-1872 Fax: (213) 368-1871

CONTACT:

Elise Frederick, Executive Director

Office: (213) 368-1875

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 1, 2023

Outstanding Catholic Doctor to be honored

Award to be presented October 22, 2023 to Mary Cathleen Schanzer, MD, FACS

LOS ANGELES, CA: Mission Doctors Association will recognize Dr. Mary Cathleen “Cathy” Schanzer as the Catholic Doctor of the Year, with the “World of Difference Award” to be presented October 22, 2023, at the Los Angeles Archdiocese Annual Mass for Healthcare Professionals at the Cathedral of our Lady of the Angels.

Dr. Schanzer was first inspired to follow a call to missionary service in the third grade when she heard a Maryknoll priest speak about his mission work in Africa. In 1988, she went on her first medical mission trip to a Catholic Mission Hospital in Abak, Nigeria. She continued with annual mission trips to other African nations. In 2006, Dr. Schanzer and husband Tom Lewis, at the invitation of local Archbishop Joseph Ganda, established Southern Eye Clinic in Serabu, Sierra Leone.

Today, Southern Eye Clinic of Serabu is open year-round, providing diagnostic examinations, medicines, eyeglasses, and modern eye surgery free of charge to all patients. It is not uncommon for patients to walk several days to reach Serabu to receive this essential care. Each January and June, when Dr. Schanzer is in Serabu, it is usual to care for 100+ clinic patients and 30+ surgical patients per day. During the rest of the year, 64 employees keep the primary clinic and 10 satellite clinics in nearby villages running. Additionally, their work supports numerous community development projects including water wells, food programs, education scholarships, a computer center, sports, and cultural events.

Dr. Schanzer attended the University of Texas Medical School and completed her Ophthalmology residency at Baylor College of Medicine. During her residency, Cathy and Tom pursued adoption and ultimately adopted seven children.

Earlier this year, Dr. Schanzer was diagnosed with Glioblastoma (brain cancer), a diagnosis that is often terminal in less than two years. Dr. Schanzer had surgery to remove the primary tumor, followed by radiation therapy and continues with chemotherapy. Cathy and Tom feel grateful for their deep faith and the strong worldwide support of family and friends.

Executive Director, Elise Frederick noted, “After Tom reached out to share Cathy's diagnosis, I had the opportunity to speak to them while they were on the road visiting friends and family. I was so moved by their years of dedicated service and their faith. Having provided sight restoring surgery both here in the United States and in Africa, truly they have a clear vision of striving to follow where God is leading them. I am grateful that Mission Doctors Association will have the opportunity to recognize this Outstanding Catholic Doctor who is truly living her faith daily.”

Mission Doctors Association was founded in 1959 to support the work of Catholic Doctors, Dentists, Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants who serve at Catholic hospitals and clinics at the invitation of a local Bishop or Religious Order. For information on the Annual Mass for Healthcare Professionals, visit the web site: www.CatholicWM.org. For information on the work of Mission Doctors, please contact Elise Frederick, Executive Director or visit the web site www.MissionDoctors.org. For more information about the work of Dr. Schanzer visit the web site www.Serabu.com.