

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Richard M. DeVos, co-founder of Amway, dies**

### **Company and community mourn loss of leader and philanthropist**

Richard M. DeVos, co-founder of Amway, died peacefully at his home in Ada, Michigan, surrounded by family, on September 6, 2018. He was 92. The cause of death was complications from an infection.

Perhaps best known as an inspiring, motivational leader and pioneer of the famous Amway direct selling method that offered individuals the opportunity to build businesses of their own, Mr. DeVos also was senior chairman of the Orlando Magic NBA franchise and a generous philanthropist with his late wife, Helen.

A recipient of the *Horatio Alger Award*, Mr. DeVos's life embodied the American dream of humble beginnings turned to great success through determined effort. He was born March 4, 1926, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and grew up during the Great Depression. He credited his interest in owning a business to his father, who always encouraged his son to go into business for himself.

His entrepreneurial spirit took root in a high school friendship with classmate Jay Van Andel. The pair first dreamed of owning their own business while students at Grand Rapids Christian High School. Their friendship grew out of a business arrangement — Rich paid Jay 25 cents a week for rides to and from school in Jay's 1931 Model A Ford.

After both returned from service overseas in World War II, their early entrepreneurial ventures included a flight school and one of the first drive-in restaurants in Michigan. They sold both interests in 1948 to buy a sailboat in Connecticut with intentions to sail to the Caribbean — even though neither had any sailing experience. Their old wooden schooner, "Elizabeth," sank off the coast of Cuba. A passing freighter rescued them, and they continued their adventure on land through South America.

In 1949 they invested \$49 and became highly successful independent distributors for Nutrilite, a manufacturer and direct seller of vitamins. The California manufacturer of vitamins used a person-to-person selling approach that the partners later adopted when starting Amway from their homes in Ada, Michigan, in 1959, with an all-purpose cleaner, L.O.C., as their only product. Their refined direct selling approach offered individuals around the world a business ownership opportunity. After the first year of business, they moved to an abandoned service station located at Amway's current headquarters site in Ada, Michigan. Over five decades, they built their business into a multi-billion dollar international corporation and the world's leading direct selling company.

Mr. DeVos was Amway president from the company's founding until 1993, when he was succeeded by his son, Dick, and in 2002 by his son, Doug. Continuing in their fathers' tradition, today Doug DeVos shares the Office of the Chief Executive with Chairman Steve Van Andel, son of co-founder Jay Van Andel. Rich DeVos remained active as a member of Amway's Board of Directors until his death. Jay Van Andel died in December 2004.

"Rich and my father built this company from the ground up, and in many ways Rich was the heart and soul of Amway," said Amway Chairman Steve Van Andel. "His vision and spirit inspired our employees and independent business owners for more than 50 years. No one even comes close to Rich in the love he inspired in the hearts and minds of our family of employees and business owners. We will miss him terribly."

An award-winning, inspirational speaker, he motivated hundreds of thousands of independent business owners worldwide and kept a full schedule of speaking engagements for a variety of business and charitable organizations across the country. A self-proclaimed "cheerleader," he promoted the values of freedom, family, faith and philanthropy in books plus thousands of speeches and interviews around the world. As a reflection of his strong Christian faith, he was known for introducing himself at speaking engagements as "just a sinner saved by grace."

Mr. DeVos wrote five books: *BELIEVE!* (1975), *Compassionate Capitalism* (1993), *Hope From My Heart* (2000), *Ten Powerful Phrases for Positive People* (2008), and *Simply Rich* (2014). *Simply Rich* is a memoir reflecting on his work, faith, family, and the core values he held onto from his humble, Christian upbringing through his success as co-founder of Amway.

## **Orlando Magic**

The DeVos family purchased the Orlando Magic in September 1991. The Magic's mission is to be world champions on and off the court, delivering legendary moments every step of the way. The Magic have won five division championships (1995, 1996, 2008, 2009, 2010) and had seven 50-plus win seasons, while capturing the Eastern Conference title in 1995 and 2009. In 2016, Mr. DeVos was inducted into the Orlando Magic Hall of Fame.

"Mr. DeVos' boundless generosity, inspirational leadership and infectious enthusiasm will always be remembered. Simply, he was the team's No. 1 cheerleader and the best owner that a Magic fan could ever want for their team. When the DeVos Family purchased the Magic, his vision was that the team and organization would serve as a platform to improve the Central Florida community. That legacy will certainly live on, both in the Orlando Magic's community efforts and philanthropic contributions, as well as in the way we strive to play the game with passion, a strong work ethic and integrity, while also bringing people together from all walks of life," said Alex Martins, Chief Executive Officer, Orlando Magic.

## **A Legacy of Philanthropy**

Annually ranked by *Forbes* magazine as one of the world's billionaires, Mr. DeVos shared his success as a philanthropist and community leader. Mr. DeVos volunteered his time and leadership to a number of causes and with his late wife, Helen, donated generously through the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation.

In the 1970s, as chairman of the New Grand Rapids Committee, Mr. DeVos was instrumental in the revitalization of downtown Grand Rapids, including the construction of the DeVos Performance Hall. He and Jay Van Andel led the restoration of the former Pantlind Hotel, which was purchased by Amway and is now the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. Mr. DeVos and Mr. Van Andel also spearheaded the Amway-owned JW Marriott Hotel.

Mr. DeVos and his late wife supported many other community projects, such as DeVos Place Convention Center and the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital.

The couple also supported Christian education including Rehoboth and Zuni Christian Schools in New Mexico that have been providing opportunities for Native American children for more than 100 years. Others include the Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Arts and Worship at Grand Rapids Christian High School, the DeVos Communications Center at Calvin College and the Helen DeVos College of Education at Lee University. They were generous supporters to other higher education institutions including The King's College in New York City, Grand Valley State University, Northwood University, Michigan State University – College of Human Medicine, and Hope College.

They were long-time residents of Central Florida and supported numerous civic, educational and religious organizations there. The Orlando Magic supports the local community through sponsorships of events, donated tickets, autographed merchandise, and grants. In addition, over the last 28 years, various local nonprofit community organizations have received support through the Orlando Magic Youth Foundation which serves at-risk youth and has impacted more than one million children. Orlando Magic community relations programs annually impact an estimated 100,000 kids each year, while the Magic Volunteer Program (MVP), an organizational staff-wide initiative, provides more than 7,000 community volunteer hours annually.

They also contributed to national organizations such as the National Constitution Center and the National Organization on Disability.

In 2006, Rich and the late Helen DeVos were honored with The Philanthropy Roundtable *William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership*. In 2010 they were awarded the *Clare Boothe Luce Award* by the Heritage Foundation and in 2012 they received the *Lifetime Achievement Award* from the Direct Selling Association.

## **Christian Faith**

Rich and the late Helen DeVos always said they were motivated to give because of their Christian faith and their responsibility as stewards of the financial resources God had given them. In addition to Christian education, they supported scores of Christian churches and ministries.

Mr. DeVos was director of the Board of Home Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church and with his late wife, Helen, generously supported the work of denominational outreach. He was a member of LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, where he served as an elder, and he was a former member of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

## **Active Political Supporter**

He was an active political supporter and major contributor to the Republican Party. Mr. DeVos was a friend of U.S. Presidents Gerald R. Ford, George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush and William J. Clinton. President Ronald Reagan appointed him to the Presidential Commission on AIDS. He served as finance chairman for the Republican National Committee and was a member of the Advisory Board for the National Republican Congressional Committee.

## **Civic Leadership**

Mr. DeVos served numerous organizations with board leadership both locally and nationally. Local roles included: honorary committee member of the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital; Spectrum Health Board member; director of the Grand Rapids Economic Club and of the Heart of West Michigan United Way; president of Junior Achievement of Grand Rapids; and member of the board of trustees for the Gerald R. Ford Foundation.

Notable national leadership roles included: board member and chairman, Direct Selling Association; chairman, Direct Selling Education Foundation; director of the National Association of Manufacturing; member of the board of trustees, National Constitution Center; board member and founding chairman, National Organization on Disability; chairman of the Speakers Bureau for the United Network on Organ Sharing; council of trustees, Freedoms Foundation; and president, Council for National Policy.

## **Awards and Achievements**

Following are a few of the numerous major awards presented to Mr. DeVos: *Norman Vincent Peale Award for Positive Thinking*; Direct Selling Association *Hall of Fame and Lifetime Achievement Award*; Direct Selling Education Foundation *Circle of Honor Award*; Junior Achievement *National Business Hall of Fame*; Horatio Alger Association *Horatio Alger Award*; American Marketing Association *Edison Award*; Sales and Marketing Executives *International Academy of Achievement*; Salvation Army *William Booth Award*; Napoleon Hill *Gold Medal Award for Free Enterprise Achievement*; The Philanthropy Roundtable *William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership*; Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars *Corporate Citizenship Award*; Intercollegiate Studies Institute *Trustee's Award for Distinguished Service* and *Charles H. Hoeflich Lifetime Achievement Award*; the *Orlando Magazine Best Corporate Citizen Award*; Grand Rapids Symphony *Bravo! Award*; and the Michigan Republican House and Senate *American Spirit Award*. He also holds 14 honorary doctorate degrees from various colleges and universities across the country.

## **About Richard M. DeVos**

Mr. DeVos was born March 4, 1926, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, graduated from Grand Rapids Christian High School, attended Calvin College, and served in the U.S. Army Air Corps from 1944 to 1946. He married the former Helen J. Van Wesep of Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1953.

Mr. DeVos was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Helen, and is survived by their children and spouses Dick and Betsy, Dan and Pamella, Cheri, and Doug and Maria; grandchildren and their spouses Rick and Melissa, Elissa and Nate, Andrea and Michael, Ryan, Cassandra and Heath, Sydney and Andrew, Cole, Hannah, Katie, Ben, Jessa, Addie, Dalton, Micaela and Jordan, Monreau, and Olivia; and great-grandchildren Clara, Sloane, Remington, Richard, Wilhelmina, Aurelia, Taggart, and Riven. He is also survived by two sisters, Bernice Heys and Janice (Bob) Courts.

## **Memorials**

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial contributions be made to Grand Rapids Christian School Association, Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, or Prison Fellowship Ministries.

Please visit [www.RichDeVos.com](http://www.RichDeVos.com) for more information.

###