

Richard M. DeVos Obit

Amway co-founder and Orlando Magic Senior Chairman Richard M. DeVos died September 6, 2018, at his home in Ada, Michigan. He was 92.

Rich was known globally for his business achievements and locally in West Michigan and Central Florida for his community leadership and giving, but often referred to himself simply as “just a sinner saved by grace in Christ Jesus.”

Born March 4, 1926, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Rich graduated from Grand Rapids Christian High School in 1944 and attended Calvin College before serving in the Army Air Corps from 1944 to 1946. In 1953, he married the former Helen J. Van Wesep, who passed away on October 18, 2017.

His early ventures with business partner Jay Van Andel included a flight school and one of the first drive-in restaurants in Michigan. In 1949, the duo became distributors for Nutrilite, which sold vitamin supplements. Their experience with that company inspired the founding of Amway in 1959 in the basements of their homes in Ada, Michigan.

Through Amway they offered people the opportunity to own a business and achieve through their own efforts. Today Amway is the world’s leading direct selling business.

Rich 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. Rich served on the company’s board of directors until his death.

A motivational speaker who inspired audiences around the world, Rich encouraged people to set big goals and work hard to achieve them. His most famous speeches included “Try or Cry,” “The Three A’s,” “Life Enrichers,” and the award-winning “Selling America.”

He wrote five books: *BELIEVE!*, *Compassionate Capitalism*, *Hope From My Heart*, *Ten Powerful Phrases for Positive People*, and *Simply Rich*. *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.

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.

Rich gave his time and leadership to many organizations and causes. As chairman of the New Grand Rapids Committee in the 1970s, he helped lead the city's revitalization and later spearheaded projects to improve his hometown through higher education, health care, economic development, and the arts. His leadership roles included serving as chairman, Butterworth Health Corp.; director, Spectrum Health; director, Heart of West Michigan United Way; president, Junior Achievement of Grand Rapids; and as a member of the board of trustees for the Gerald R. Ford Foundation.

Rich led national organizations including the Direct Selling Association; United Network on Organ Sharing; and Council for National Policy; and served on boards including the National Association of Manufacturing; National Constitution Center; and National Organization on Disability.

A major supporter of the Republican Party, Rich was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the Presidential Commission on AIDS, and he was finance chairman for the Republican National Committee and a member of the Advisory Board for the National Republican Congressional Committee.

Through the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation, Rich and his late wife, Helen, supported hundreds of Christian churches and ministries, with an emphasis on alleviating human suffering and strengthening community. In addition, they supported important community projects such as the DeVos Performance Hall and DeVos Place, which served as catalysts for growth. Areas of particular passion included The Grand Rapids Christian Schools, the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, and the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative. They said they were inspired to give because of their Christian faith and a responsibility to be good stewards of the financial resources God had given them.

Rich was recognized with numerous national honors including the Direct Selling Association *Hall of Fame and Lifetime Achievement Award*, Sales and Marketing Executives *International Academy of Achievement*, Junior Achievement *National Business Hall of Fame*, Norman Vincent Peale *Award for Positive Thinking*, Horatio Alger Association *Horatio Alger Award*, and, with Helen, the Philanthropy Roundtable *William E. Simon Prize for Philanthropic Leadership*. He was awarded 14 honorary doctorate degrees.

A member of LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Rich served as an elder and active member. He also was a former member of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Rich was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Helen, and is greatly missed by their children and spouses Dick and Betsy, Dan and Pamela, 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 also is survived by two sisters, Bernice Heys and Janice (Bob) Courts.

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 for more information.