

Firelight Foundation Announces Peter Laugharn as New Executive Director

SANTA CRUZ, 28 February 2008—The Firelight Foundation, a private foundation that funds African organizations addressing the needs of children affected by HIV/AIDS, today announced the appointment of Peter Laugharn to the position of Executive Director. Laugharn comes to Firelight from the Netherlands-based Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF), where he has served as Executive Director for the past six years.

“Peter Laugharn brings a tremendous background in and commitment to children’s issues, HIV/AIDS, and community-level funding and programs in Africa. His leadership in international philanthropy and as an advocate for children orphaned and affected by HIV/AIDS make him a great match for the mission and work of the Firelight Foundation,” said Kerry Olson, President and co-founder of Firelight.

Laugharn, who will move to Santa Cruz from the Netherlands with his wife Marie and their three children, will begin his position at Firelight in July 2008. In addition to overall management of all aspects of Firelight’s work, he will be responsible for leading the foundation through an extensive strategic planning process to be completed by the end of the year.

“In taking on the important work of Firelight, I look forward to two opportunities—helping Firelight get assistance directly to community groups in Africa, and working with other funders, big and small, to ensure that their funding for children affected by AIDS gets to the grassroots where it can do the most good,” said Laugharn.

Firelight’s goal for the coming years is to significantly expand its grantmaking and other forms of support to community-based organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. Community-based organizations, which are often under the radar of international donors, serve as a vital source of support to the many thousands of African families struggling in the face of poverty and HIV/AIDS.

“Firelight is a recognized leader in getting small grants to organizations effectively serving children at the grassroots level,” said Geoff Foster MD, a leading expert in Zimbabwe on children and HIV/AIDS and Firelight Advisory Board member. “Peter brings a wealth of experience as a grantmaker.”

Laugharn also served as Director of Programs for BvLF and worked for over eleven years in a variety of positions for Save the Children USA, with extensive experience in Africa. As Save the Children’s deputy director in

Mali, he helped develop the "Village Schools" model, which promoted access to basic education, girls schooling, and community participation. He was later West Africa area director for Save the Children, then education adviser for Africa, providing technical assistance for programs in 10 countries.

A graduate of Stanford and Georgetown Universities, Laugharn holds a Ph.D. in education from the University of London. He is currently a member of the Governing Council of the European Foundation Centre and chair of its International Committee, and chair of the European HIV/AIDS Funders Group.

Laugharn replaces Jennifer Astone, who as Firelight's Executive Director for nearly seven years brought the foundation to a position of prominence in international philanthropy and led it through a period of exceptional growth.

Firelight Foundation was recognized in a widely cited Barron's magazine article in November 2007 as one of ten foundations globally that exemplify "wise giving".

About the Firelight Foundation

The mission of the Firelight Foundation is to support and advocate for the needs and rights of children who are orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. Firelight strives to increase the resources available to grassroots organizations that are strengthening the capacity of families and communities to care for children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. Based in Santa Cruz, California and founded in 1999, Firelight has made over 700 grants to organizations serving children in Africa totaling over \$8.6 million.