

**For Immediate Release**

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# News Release

## Passion Center Leaders Visit Support EXP from Africa to “Speak Hope” in Changing Malawi Children’s Lives



*(Left to right: Saul Mateyu, Passion Center Executive Director; Rhonda Sheets, Support EXP President & CEO; Pilira W. Chibwana, Passion Center National Director; Eric Von Barnau Sythoff, Passion Center President; Julie Von Barnau Sythoff, Passion Center Office Manager)*

**CENTERVILLE, OH** – Leaders from [Passion Center for Children](#) in Malawi, a small country in southeastern Africa, visited Support EXP headquarters recently to share stories of their grassroots, faith-driven efforts to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and their communities. Passion Center is sustained by a dynamic partnership of individuals, churches, and organizations like Support EXP. Through Joe Mattera, Chief Retail Officer of Honda Federal Credit Union, Support EXP serves as the primary sponsor of the annual [Run with Passion 5K](#), which directly benefits the Passion Center for Children.

Passion Center was founded in 2004 by current president Eric Von Barnau Sythoff, a former military pilot who was teaching at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi when he teamed up with Pilira W. Chibwana, now Passion Center's National Director, to address the needs of Malawi children orphaned by AIDS. From working with 10 orphans in 2004, Passion Center has grown to be able to provide for around 500 orphans in 2022. By coming alongside dedicated community leaders and volunteers, Passion Center works from the ground up to change the trajectory of individual lives and communities.

While onsite at Support EXP, Von Barnau Sythoff and other Passion Center leaders related how they collaborate with others to “serve as God’s hands” in rescuing, redeeming, and restoring vulnerable children and communities. This organic, boots-on-the-ground work fills a void left by the limitations of government resources.

Providing educational opportunity is emphasized as a key component in breaking the cycle of generational poverty. Passion Center Executive Director Saul Mateyu recounted to Support EXP staff how he received his first pair of shoes to attend boarding school, then had the “privilege” of attending high school and college in a country where so few have the opportunity. Now he helps bring about lasting change in other Malawi children’s lives.

In one of the poorest countries in the world, where children with special needs are too often neglected or shunned, the Passion Center’s Champions Club is a first-of-its-kind ministry that provides encouragement, training, resources, and love to meet the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of these children.

“It doesn’t take much to change someone’s future,” observes Von Barnau Sythoff. “We ‘speak hope’ into the lives of these children by just finding out what can make a difference.” Passion Center attributes its success to “open doors,” i.e., the opportunities it finds to meet identifiable needs and change outcomes for Malawi children. Its partnerships with organizations like Support EXP are a major part of these opportunities.

By the work Support EXP employees do in their roles every day, they contribute to the mission of organizations like Passion Center through Support GO, Support EXP’s giveback program, which works to transform lives and communities throughout the world.

“We are privileged to come alongside Passion Center in its work of helping the most vulnerable,” says Rhonda Sheets, Support EXP President and CEO. “It is profoundly humbling to witness the difference that can be made in both individual lives and entire communities when we open our eyes to the possibilities of acting together.”

For more information about Support GO's community-based global initiatives, please visit:  
[supportexp.com/global-outreach](https://supportexp.com/global-outreach)

**About Support EXP:**

For 20+ years, Support EXP has researched and innovated to become the premier provider of member feedback solutions, actionable analytics, and expert guidance for the credit union industry. We specialize in helping credit unions deliver a differentiating member experience (MX) by optimizing performance with data-driven MX and EX intel. Through powerful and profoundly translated member and employee analytics, we guide credit unions to predictable outcomes.