



COURTESY OF SAVE-A-VILLAGE

PROFILE

PAYING IT FORWARD

Human Ecology MSc grad finds her calling in Africa

BY ALEXANDRIA ELDRIDGE

Leslee Greenaway had just finished a three-week safari in Kenya in 2004 where she had witnessed some spectacular wildlife. But the images that stuck with her the most had nothing to do with lions, elephants, zebras and giraffes; it was the abject poverty in which people lived that touched her heart. As she wondered how she could help, a chance conversation would eventually lead the way.

Two days before flying back home, Greenaway had a conversation with a young African man who told her he had grown up in a small village near Homa Bay, one of the few local sites Greenaway's tour group had visited on the safari. He told her that the women's group in his village was looking for financial support for some projects.

Greenaway, a licensed realtor who graduated from the University

of Alberta with a BSc in 1978 and an MSc in design from Human Ecology in 1989, promised that she would try to help. She didn't have experience in charity work but true to her word, she returned to Kenya in February 2006 to do a needs-assessment of the village of Nyarut and area. What she found was that people were living without clean drinking water or adequate nutritious food. Their medical and educational facilities were grossly inadequate. She got to work raising funds to build what the villagers needed.

She started by giving presentations to interested groups and hosting small African dinner parties at home. She held afternoon teas and started writing grant proposals. Friends helped her prepare an 'Evening in Kenya' event with an African-menu dinner, a silent auction, and entertainment for 150 guests. It was a huge success.

A HELPING HAND: Leslee Greenaway, standing in the picture on the left, discusses the project with local stakeholders. ABOVE, members of the Emmanuel Foundation in front of one of two playgrounds they funded and built. BELOW, one the classrooms of the new elementary school.

The Alberta Distribution Relief Agency – Aid Society International (ADRA-ASI) came through with two containers of donated supplies and in 2007, Save-A-Village received a \$25,000 grant from the Alberta Government's Wild Rose Foundation. Eventually, with the help of friends, Greenaway raised the remainder of the \$90,000 needed, and Save-A-Village hired a local contractor to begin building in Nyarut.

They completed a nine-classroom elementary school and installed a rainwater collection system off the roof that serves eight villages with cleaner drinking water. They also used the funds to build a four-bed medical clinic with a pharmacy and an attached community hall. Many of the buildings were furnished with goods from the containers from ADRA-ASI and the Kenyan government has since provided a full-time nurse to the clinic.

The Emmanuel Foundation, a charitable organization with a mission to provide 'play' to children in needy countries, donated two state-of-the-art playgrounds to the Save-A-Village project. They visited Nyarut in 2009 to personally install the playgrounds that now serve 500 children at Nyarut and at the Nyangweso School for the Deaf. But it didn't stop there.

As the project grew, it was necessary to get more help. In 2010, Greenaway registered Save-A-Village: A Mission In Kenya Society of Alberta with the provincial government and found qualified individuals to serve as a Board of Directors. The same year, she adds, Engineering Ministries International, another charitable foundation, visited both village areas with Greenaway and worked with the

villagers to help them improve their food production and health through better agricultural, irrigation, and sanitation.

In 2011, Save-A-Village received another matching \$25,000 grant, which it used to build a school in a second village area, Nyangina. "The people here have been wonderful to work with and full of energy and gratitude to Canadians," says Greenaway. "This school now has four completed classrooms and proudly graduated their first class in February 2013."

The villagers have even begun expanding the school on their own, using donated and borrowed materials from their community.

"The walls are almost up. It is very exciting to see their strong community motivation," says Greenaway. "Their

school has not yet been provided with government teachers so the community has provided their own, with the parents contributing a small amount each month to pay the teachers."

The Save-A-Village project has been so successful that Greenaway had to put her career on hold in many ways. But it's not something she regrets. "My (real estate) career became part-time but I became so passionate about this project. There is such a great need and the work has been so rewarding. And there's so much more that still needs to be done," she says. ♣

For more information on the project, and to see how you can help, visit www.saveavillage.ca.



IN MEMORIAM

REMEMBERING DOUG SHEARER '51 BSc (Ag)

BY EV MCCRIMMON, '51 BSc (Ag)

One of Doug's favourite stories was that he was the last baby born in Waterhole, Alberta. The railroad had just arrived in his part of Peace River District and the railway station was at Fairview, a few miles north of Waterhole.

Doug and I had a close friendship that started in 1946 at the Vermilion School of Agriculture and continued at the University of Alberta where we were part of the Ag Class of 51.

Doug became a very successful business man. With a partner in Calgary, he developed a number of companies supplying the oil industry. One company was established in Switzerland to service the oil fields off the coasts of Norway and Scotland.

He developed strong contacts with companies in Japan. At one time Syncrude was having trouble finding enough steel in North America for its plant at Fort McMurray. Doug and a steel expert traveled to Tokyo and

signed a contract to provide steel to meet Syncrude's needs. Over the years Doug made so many trips to Tokyo that he bought an apartment in Hawaii so he could break up the trip to Tokyo, arriving fresh and ready for business.

When Doug and his wife Barb retired, they built a home in Mill Bay, north of Victoria, BC. Doug was a bit of a perfectionist about gardening. He sent more than 75 truckloads of soil to a plant that screened out all of the stones before the soil was returned to his garden. My wife and I home-sat for a couple of months while Doug and Barb were on a trip to Australia; I had very specific directions about what he wanted me to do in his garden.

There are many more stories I could tell about my wonderful friend Doug but there is no space for them. I simply close by saying this is a little bit about the life of the boy from Waterhole, Alberta. ♣