

# DIVING FOR A CAUSE - FOR ME, IT COMES FROM THE HEART



Left to right: Colleen Gallagher, Mike Scaglione, Bill Ernst and Katerina Topouzoglou in Mykonos, Greece (2012)

I remember witnessing a spearfishing friend use their knowledge and skills as a hunter, to secure a fish and to share it with someone in need. A gift with nothing attached. I said to myself, “I want to be able to do that.”

I am a seasoned Intensive-Care-Unit Charge Nurse and clinical instructor. For the last 35 years I’ve been passionate about providing my services to those who are critically ill. I have seen both successes and failures, yet I still feel good about every day I work. For me, it is all about the team of individuals I work with, their spirit for caring, and the camaraderie of the nursing staff that makes every experience worth it.

I carried these lessons to Diving For A Cause (DFAC). In 2010, I formed a 501C3 non-profit organization. Its stated purpose is bringing together like-minded individuals—both divers and non-divers—who share my vision of giving back to needy communities through their love for spearfishing.

I have a fantastic advisory board that has proven invaluable for the growth of DFAC. Each one of them is awesome! Our bylaws are simple—no board member is paid a salary; everyone pays for their own travel expenses; and all funds are donated back to the community.

What a learning experience it has been these last three years, and we are definitely experiencing our share of growing pains. In each trip location, we research fish stocks available for harvest. We review local take regulations and we set the stage for the selectively harvested catch making sure it is presented into the hands of the families in the communities. We also research the most effective way to serve the local host community needs. However not every trip is perfect. There are times when the fish don’t cooperate and are nowhere to be seen. Still, our diver teams never complain and their community service experience has always been reward enough.

The best team spirit ever! One I constantly admire and enjoy being around. Even when the diving conditions are not perfect, once we are with the children and their fami-

lies in the communities who have so little, but smile as if they were so rich, it honestly doesn’t matter. We all have a purpose and make the most of our giving-back campaign. Additionally, at the end of the trip, we review the event and think about ways to make it better next time for all stakeholders—divers and recipients.

Where do we go from here? Simple enough; we keep growing and giving. Our teams enjoy spearfishing, while at the same time are passionate about giving relief, such as school supplies, community-based service projects, and food for needy families. A small token perhaps—but with a big message—we care.

So you see, it all comes from the heart!

Colleen Gallagher  
Founder of Diving For A Cause

