



Global Friends
FOUNDATION

My Tanzanian Adventure



For the last three years I have had the pleasure of working with Cathy Mulvale, the founder of Global Friends while planning the annual FORE! Rafiki Golf Tournament that Penalta Group has hosted for 10 years now. Being on the planning side of things was an important place to start for me. I was able to witness the generosity of people who realize the importance of giving to communities less fortunate than our own.

Each year, I would listen to Cathy, who had been to Africa several times, explain to all of us how much the funds raised from this event changed lives and communities in Tanzania. I knew it was true, I knew that the funds were changing lives for the better and improving communities but I didn't realize just how much until I saw it for myself.

When I was told that I was going to Africa, I had no words. Despite the constant flow of thoughts racing in and out of my mind, I didn't know what to expect. I was extremely excited but I was also very nervous.

Nervous of the unknown, nervous of the sadness I would be exposed to, and nervous

knowing I would never be the same after the trip, that one however turned out to be a good thing.

On our first day we went to Mama Jane's Orphanage in Arusha, Tanzania. On the very bumpy drive over there, I was able to see what I didn't see on the dark drive to the hotel the previous night. For the first time, I saw the cluttered streets made up of people selling goods on unstable wooden structures, I saw the mopeds that carried way more than their ability, I saw the kids running barefoot on the uneven ground while cars drove around them both ways on the very narrow roads, I saw dogs laying under cars in search of shade, I saw the chaos of poverty that was their norm.

I sat in silence and took it all in, watching heads do a double take as a van of white people drove through the middle of their lives, while the adorably less subtle children pointed with smiling faces, screaming "MZUNGU" (white people visitors).

We then arrived at Mama Janes and were greeted by the Mama Jane herself, her wonderful staff made up of volunteers, and the 43 beautiful children she cares for. They greeted us with songs and welcomed us into their home. With a huge lump in my throat, I followed them inside.

I saw the chaos of poverty that was their norm.

After introductions we walked around the orphanage and surveyed the area for the building that would take place in a couple days. As I mentioned before, during and after the trip, it was the people that were the most important part of this adventure. They all have a special place in my heart and there are a couple I would like to mention....

sharing one world



Happy is a girl we met at the orphanage. She is 16

Happy is one of the luckier ones because she has the support of Mama Jane.

years old and she has a one-year old baby named Lovely. Having a baby at that age is never ideal but having a baby that age over there presents even more challenges.

Happy is one of the luckier ones because she has the support of Mama Jane and the other children who love and protect that baby like it is their own blood. But even still, I saw a sadness in her that I wanted to be able to heal.

Each day I came into the orphanage I saw her and we exchanged simple hellos. By the third day, I got a smile. Our interactions never really went beyond that but I felt a connection to her. I wondered what was going on in the mind behind those sad eyes.... Maybe she wishes she never got pregnant. Maybe she wishes she could go to school. Maybe when she closes her eyes and is praying so deeply, she is wishing for a better life for her and her baby.

Regardless of what it was, I felt I could relate to her, despite the events in our life being different, I could see the weight she was carrying on those shoulders.

It wasn't until the last day that I knew she felt the connection too. We were saying our goodbyes to everyone at Mama Jane's and when I got to Happy, she grabbed my hand and put a black beaded bracelet, that she was previously wearing, on my wrist. We hugged for a second time and I put the blue beaded bracelet I was wearing on her wrist. I said to her jokingly, "best friend bracelets". I am not sure if she understood, but we both laughed and hugged once again. I have worn that black beaded bracelet every day since.

Then, there's Isaac. One of the most impressive, kind, patient, hard-working, smart and loving people I know. He was with us every day of the adventure and truly was the highlight of our trip. Hearing stories about him and knowing what he has been through, I can safely say he is the most resilient person I have ever met. He radiates positivity and grace, and greets each new day with a hunger to be better than yesterday. He has truly made the most of the support he was offered with Global Friends Foundation and has reached his goals with hard work and dedication to make a better life for himself.



Isaac is now a professional safari guide and took us out on a two-day safari. Those two days are two of the most memorable days of my life. Not only because we were in the middle of African wilderness but because I got to see the joy that, teaching people about the animals and guiding them through the national parks, gives Isaac.

Saying goodbye to Isaac was incredibly hard and in our short time together we created a special bond

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that will never break. Even if Isaac was the only success of the Global Friends Foundation (which he definitely is not), he would be a person to be extremely proud of.

It was the bonds I created with all the different people of this journey that changed my life for the better. Starting with Penalta Group and Cathy, three years ago to Happy and Isaac, and all the children at Mama Janes whose smiles would melt your heart.

All the little girls I got to give dresses to because of the support we received through the Global Friends Dress for Success fundraising.

All the little hands I held as they led me through their everyday lives. The young girl who told me I was the best when I gave her a pencil. The girls who became movie stars when I gave them my sunglasses.

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Respicius, Steve and all the other wonderful people that make sure everything is operating as it should over there. **Dez**, one of the hardest-working men I have ever met.

Mama Jane, who has selflessly taken in 43 children and loves each of them as if they were her own.

Emmanuel, Lucas, Sam and all the other volunteers at Mama Jane's who were so helpful in building the playground and so dedicated to the children.

And of course, the wonderful team that came from Canada and the USA to build for the children of Mama Janes. I had my time with all of them. I learned a bit about each of them, and the community that Cathy has created is really remarkable.

Although, she continues to humbly remind people that it is a team effort, which of course it is, it started with her vision; her vision to make the world a better place, and I have seen first hand that she is succeeding at that! Her efforts to change the world for the better has engaged people everywhere to follow suit.

I came home with a new perspective on life. New appreciation for things I took for granted. New patience for things I used to complain about. It has changed me in ways I will forever be grateful for.

I look forward to the next golf tournament where I can stand by Cathy's side and once again explain to people, with all the certainty in the world, that their involvement and contributions are really changing lives over there.



Asante sana.

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