



KNOWLEDGE

KHOR WAKOW SCHOOL PROJECT

The Spirit of Giving

Articles by Steve Young

Khor Wakow Project depends on the spirit of giving from all our supporters. We take this opportunity thank you each of you for your generous support for the Khor Wakow Project, our students, and teachers in Khor Wakow South Sudan. Your support help us to keep education and hope alive in areas of South Sudan.

Meade Hopes Soccer Shirts Bring Joy to Khor Wakow

In a place with little material wealth like South Sudan, a boy with a soccer shirt might feel like the king of the world.

At least Marilyn Meade hopes so.

Earlier this past spring, the retired Le Mars, Iowa, schoolteacher sent hundreds of t-shirts and soccer shirts along with David Jal to take back to his South Sudan homeland as part of his work on the Khor Wakow School Project. Marilyn runs her own screen print and embroidery business in Le Mars, and for the last several years had made shirts for David’s annual fund-raiser meal.

This year, her gift to the children in the villages along the Khor Wakow River amazed even David.

“We were going to pay her for them, but she donated them all for free,” David said. “She even put the Khor Wakow logo on them. She’s just



Soccer Shirts Bring Joy to Khor Wakow

been a great part of trying to do more for the villages and our project.”

Having experienced life and learning in the classroom while teaching family consumer science (home economics) for 30-plus years, Marilyn said she is inspired by David’s efforts to put roofs over schools that South Sudanese children are clamoring to come to. “I think it’s

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Summer 2018 Trip to Khor Wakow

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Sioux Falls, SD 57101-0295

Our mission is to support Christ-centered education, health, and humanitarian efforts in the Khor Wakow region and empower its community to identify and pursue improvements that will enhance all aspects of their lives.

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A warm welcome at Wic Deng Village



Donn Hill with Pastors and Evangelists of Khor Wakow Villages at Wic Deng Village after a Sunday morning fellowship and successful meetings

fabulous ... that this is such a big thing, such an important part of these kids' lives, that they want to come to school so badly," Marilyn said. To help such a cause, to maybe brighten a child's day with the gift of a t-shirt or soccer shirt, "makes me feel good," she continued. "I realize it must be a really tough existence for the people there. I feel bad that their life is so difficult. I can't fathom what it must be like. So really, my hope is that maybe this brings a little joy to someone else's life.

For the Love of Alice: A Goat Ministry

Her name was Alice. Alice Pound. She loved the Lord, and she loved refugees, too—all those timid newcomers to our shorelines, and all the anxious strangers in our midst.

Because Alice loved so much, her spirit abides today in the villages along the chocolate-colored waters of the Khor Wakow River in South Sudan. Her kindness is in the gourds pressed to the thirsty lips of children. Her joy echoes in the bleating of a newborn goat.

Alice, 77, died on January 16, 2018 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The sorrow with her passing rippled throughout the world, but few places more deeply than in a house in the small South Dakota town of Worthing. For there, David Jal, the founder of the Khor Wakow School Project, mourned the loss of a woman who in virtually every sense of the word was like a mother to him and his wife, Janeane.

The Jal children—Dori, Peter, Jenna, and Jacob—grieved the loss of "Grandma" as well. Yet from their tears grew something wonderful and enduring.

For you see, Alice Pound was a giver. David learned that from the moment the two first met back in 2001. He was doing case management for Lutheran Social Services in Sioux Falls. She arrived on the LSS doorsteps through the auspices of the Mennonite Voluntary Service. She came to assist the new refugees coming into Sioux Falls, setting up places for them to live, showing them how to transition into this imposing new world.

Over their next seven years together at LSS, Alice and David became more than co-workers. They became good friends. And while that might have been true for David and all of the members of the Mennonite Voluntary Service who came out of Canada to spread their ministry of service in Sioux Falls, Alice was special.

When David considered putting graduate school aside after the birth of Jenna to stay home to help Janeane with the children, Alice insisted that she would stay with his family in the months that he went to Grand Forks, N.D., to work on his degree.

It was, David said, "amazing ... for us to see a friend offer taking on such a responsibility for us."

After David earned his graduate degree in social work, Alice eventually went back home. But their friendship still flourished. There were regular trips back and forth for the Jal's and Alice. And when David started his efforts to build a school and bring clean water to the villages along the banks of his native Khor Wakow homeland, Alice



A Goat Ministry

would routinely drop everything and come down to South Dakota to stay with Janeane and the kids while he journeyed over to Africa.

"Alice would tell me that I am her son, and I felt the same way, that she is 'Mom' to me," David explained. "I think someone would say, 'well, there is no paperwork done on that to prove it. But it was like she was an adopted Mom for me. She was a mother to all of us.'"

Her passing left him reeling. Though David had experienced the pain of death before, having lost

so many brothers and friends to the fighting and conflicts in Sudan, the loss of Alice was different. In war-torn Africa, a bullet would rob him of someone he loved very quickly, and he was never there to witness it. But Alice was different. Alice was a longer more intimate goodbye. In war-torn Africa, a bullet would rob him of someone he loved very quickly, and he was never there to witness it. But Alice was different. Alice was a longer more intimate goodbye.

“You know, when someone gets killed because of a bullet, maybe it’s right away, or maybe it’s a couple of hours or a day and they die,” David said. “But this one was quite different for me because I talked to Alice. I loved who she was ... and not knowing if she would be there tomorrow. ... it was a very different experience for me.”

At her funeral service, Alice’s friends, church community, and others approached David with memorial contributions given in her honor that they wanted him to take for his school project in South Sudan. Alice loved that project and so wanted to serve the people of South Sudan in any way she could. Take it and do good with it in Alice’s name, they told David.

So, David talked to Alice’s daughter, Robyn, and told her how he wanted to honor his friend. Alice was always a great advocate for serving refugees who were struggling, who were hungry, even those who were widowed. So this was his idea—to create a ministry with the memorials in which widows in the villages along the Khor Wakow River would receive a female goat as a blessing in their lives.

He created a lottery system so no one could accuse him of favoring his relatives or the people in his native Dunyal village. A widow who selected the word “yes” would receive a goat. A “no” meant they would have to wait. Women in RokRok, Chanchew, Wicdeng and Dunyal who received a goat now had an additional source of milk to feed their children. But in receiving the gift, they also had to agree to pass an offspring from their goat on to another widow.

They all happily agreed, and were given their goats when he and Khor Wakow School Project members traveled to South Sudan this past June, David said.

“I told them, ‘You get this goat as a blessing to you, but you also need to bless another person.’ That way, we can multiply this as we go,” he said. “They were excited about the opportunity to do that.”

Alice would have been excited it, too, David believes.

“You know, something like this is critical in that part of the world, where you don’t know when your next meal is,” he said. “But if you have milk, if you know your children will have milk to drink, that is a blessing. I know Alice would be very delighted that we’re trying to help these widows help themselves, and help their children.”

For that’s what Alice did. And now the Khor Wakow School Project is doing the same—for the love Alice.

An Unexpected Meeting at the Intersection of Charity and Need

When cancer shut down Ken Cornacchio’s coaching career 5½ years ago, ending almost a quarter century of instructing kids from Rapid City, Sturgis, and Gillette, Wy., in the sport of soccer, his wife used to pose this question to him as they eyeballed all the gear sitting unused at their place:

“Why don’t you get rid of some of that stuff?”

The jerseys, some worn and tattered after 25 years. The soccer balls now unused and gathering dust. Ken would simply shrug his shoulders and say, “I don’t know.”

But a different answer finally came to him, revealed unexpectedly at the intersection of need and charity, in a community called Rosa Parks Elementary in Sioux Falls three months ago.

Ken was working at Rosa Parks as an education assistant with a class of second graders at the time. One day one of the students started reading to him from a book called “David’s Journey,” written by a local probation officer, David Jal, who was one of the Lost Boys of Sudan.

Other students chimed in that they knew the story as well. And as fortune would have it, Ken was going to get to meet David a few weeks down the road when he came to Rosa Parks to talk about his missionary work and his experiences growing up in Donyal village along the Khor Wakow River in what is now South Sudan.



The Intersection of Charity and Need

At about the same time as all this, Ken had been asked to build a relationship with a fifth-grader at Rosa Parks named Marcus because of some things going on in the boy’s life. Marcus was interested in soccer, Ken learned. To build trust with the child, Ken tried a different approach than many people would take. Instead of rewarding Marcus if he successfully did what was asked of him, Ken gave him the ball right up front as a sign of his belief in him.

Now it turns out that the soccer ball would end up in lost and found. When Ken retrieved it and asked Marcus about it, the boy admitted he had forgotten it at school, but that his family had gotten him a new one. So, with David speaking to the students at the school, Ken suggested that Marcus donate the ball he had given him to Mr. Jal to take back with him on his travels to South Sudan.

“Marcus thought that was a great idea,” Ken said. “His face lit right up as we talked about it.”

But the story doesn’t end there. As he listened to David speak at the school assembly, Ken’s mind drifted back to all those jerseys and soccer balls at his own home. Based on what he was hearing, Ken decided that maybe there was a need for such things in the villages along the Khor Wakow River. Maybe this was God bringing David and a faith-filled believer like Ken together at that intersection of charity and need.

So, he asked David after the assembly if all this gear, including old jerseys sponsored long ago by Kentucky Fried Chicken, could find new life in the land of the Nuer in South Sudan.

“Absolutely,” David replied.

And so there it was that Ken had a different answer for his wife.

“It’s strange, thinking of kids halfway around the world, playing soccer with these balls and jerseys,” Ken said. “I’m glad I met David, and that we can do something like this for these children.”

David is glad as well that their paths crossed in those most remarkable of ways.

“The neat thing is, Ken wanted to bless someone with all these jerseys and balls,” David said. “You know, it’s amazing. There are a lot of good people out there that you just need to connect with. They have a willingness to do things, but they have no way to connect with the people being called to do work overseas. So, for us to meet this way, for us to connect this way, it is a wonderful thing. It really is amazing.”

A Young Basketball Player's Gift to the Children of Khor Wakow

At age 12 and heading into seventh grade at Harrisburg's South Middle School, Tannen Steever harbors the dream of many young athletes—to become a professional basketball player one day. Until then, however, he'll settle for simply making a difference in the world.

In fact, that's exactly what Travis and Melissa Steever's son accomplished earlier this year when he handed Khor Wakow School Project founder David Jal a check for \$220.

It seems that in one of Tannen's sixth-grade classes this past school year, his teacher tasked the kids with solving a world problem. Tannen landed on the topic of access to school supplies in Third World countries. But who, he wondered, could he talk to about that?

His mother had an idea. Melissa had once worked as a therapist with the state court system and knew David Jal, a probation officer here in Sioux Falls who grew up as one of the Lost Boys from Sudan. So she helped arrange for the two of them to talk.

As he listened to David speak, Tannen thought maybe he could gather school supplies to send back to South Sudan. That would be great, David told him, but realistically, the needs of each of the village schools along the Khor Wakow River in his homeland were so different that it was difficult to identify exactly which supplies should go where.

What really would make the most impact is money, David told him. So raising those dollars became Tannen's mission.

It just so happened at the time that the young basketball player was struggling with his shooting confidence. In an effort to break

down their son's reluctance, his parents had an idea. As an incentive to shoot, they offered him one dollar for each attempt he took in a game whether he made it or not.

After Tannen came back from his interview and told his parents what David had told him about raising money, his parents bumped up the offer. They would give him \$10 for each shot he took—and a little more if he made it. "And his response was, 'Oh, that would be great, but I want to give the money to David,'" Melissa recalled.

This past January at a tournament in Minneapolis. Tannen started shooting. And shooting. And shooting.

"He just shot like crazy," his mother recalled. "Yeah, I think it was because of the opportunity to help David. He had to have had that goal in his sights because we have never seen him take that many shots before or since."

When they gave David the check for \$220, Tannen's face literally beamed. And when David told him he was going to use the money to pay for soccer jerseys for the children in the villages back in South Sudan, "he couldn't stop smiling the whole night. He was so excited," Melissa said. "And then David sent us the picture of the boys in the jerseys, and Tannen was just so happy."

It was an amazing act of charity for a 12-year-old boy, David says.

"I always think, if young people like him can do this, it gives encouragement to me to do even more myself," David said. "It also tells me that these young kids are watching what is happening in the world today. They want to do something. They have something that other kids don't have, and they want to help them out. That means a lot to me."



*Tannen Steever's Gift to the
Children of Khor Wakow*

The Gift of Soccer Binds Sioux Falls, South Sudan

A friendship forged on the soccer fields in Sioux Falls is now bringing joy to young athletes half a world away.

In villages up and down the Khor Wakow River region in South Sudan, young Nuer children are wearing various sizes of soccer jerseys, shorts, shin guards, socks, and cleats provided by the Dakota Alliance Soccer Club (DASC) in Sioux Falls, and chasing happily after soccer balls provided by DASC as well.

All this happened because David Jal, the founder of the Khor Wakow School Project and a native of Duniyal village back in South Sudan, decided his own children should learn the sport here in South Dakota.

As he began showing up at the DASC office on West 39th Street in Sioux Falls to register his children for its programs, David said a friendship blossomed with Jean Bowar, an administrator for the Recreational Division at DASC. Jean had read about David's work back in his Khor Wakow homeland in a series published by the Argus Leader. How he was digging a well to bring clean water to the villagers there, and how he was trying to build a school to educate the children in Duniyal and the other nearby villages as well.

"I would always go there and visit with her, and she would comment or say something like, 'Keep up doing the good work. God is calling you to do this,' " David recalled.

As David shared his story with Jean and updated her on his trips back to Duniyal, Jean told him that if there was anything DASC could do, it wanted to help. They had a lot of equipment left over, Jean said. Some of it was actually donated by members of their club whose children had outgrown socks and

It certainly was a proud parent moment for her and her husband, Melissa said. Especially as her son took in all her words as she described how the children of South Sudan have none of electronic gadgets in their school that kids do here. They don't have the uniforms that seem to come automatically when children sign up for sports here. And in South Sudan, many girls don't even go to school because they are expected to stay home and help with the day's work.

"He was just sort of struck by all that," Melissa said. "And David ... well, David's great. He just made sure my son felt and understood that this was a very big thing that Tannen had done for him. That was very exciting for Tannen and for us. It really was."

cleats, or needed a larger soccer ball. They would be happy to share that with the children of South Sudan if David could take it with him.

Though DASC hasn't tracked how much it has given, "it's boxes and boxes and boxes of equipment," Jean said. Her hope is that the balls and cleats and jerseys make the Khor Wakow children feel special and important, that they come to understand that people from across the globe care and want them to feel like soccer players.

Being able to share that message with them through this soccer equipment "puts a huge smile on my face," Jean said. "I think we're blessed to be a blessing. The pictures of the kids wearing and using the items we've sent to them speak volumes."

For David, none of this generosity is surprising to him because he knows Jean has a heart to serve and help. And she doesn't hesitate to echo the same sentiment about him.

"David's smile is infectious," Jean said. "He is a strong Christian man truly trying to be the 'hands and feet of Jesus.' I, along with the DASC Club, am excited to be a small part of that."



Jean Bowar

Donation form

I would like to give a gift to the Khor Wakow Project! Please find enclosed my donation that will increase the faith and hope of children and families in the Khor Wakow region of South Sudan. Mail to:

Khor Wakow Project
PO Box 295
Sioux Falls, SD 57102-0295

Or, give a gift securely online via Pay Pal on the website: www.khorwakowschoolproject.org

I would like to give \$_____ for the ongoing work of Khor Wakow Project.

I would like someone to contact me for David to come to a service organization, church, or a community event so that more people can learn about the Khor Wakow Project.

I am interested in being more involved in helping the Khor Wakow Project

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____