

Making A Difference In Africa

I went to Southern Africa to research travel articles for *Ranch & Coast*, but I found I couldn't ignore the region's massive challenges of poverty and AIDS. While my heart ached, my head was cautious, knowing that many donations fail to reach the intended recipient. I started looking for ways to help, to really make a difference.

My first break came at Norman Carr Safaris in

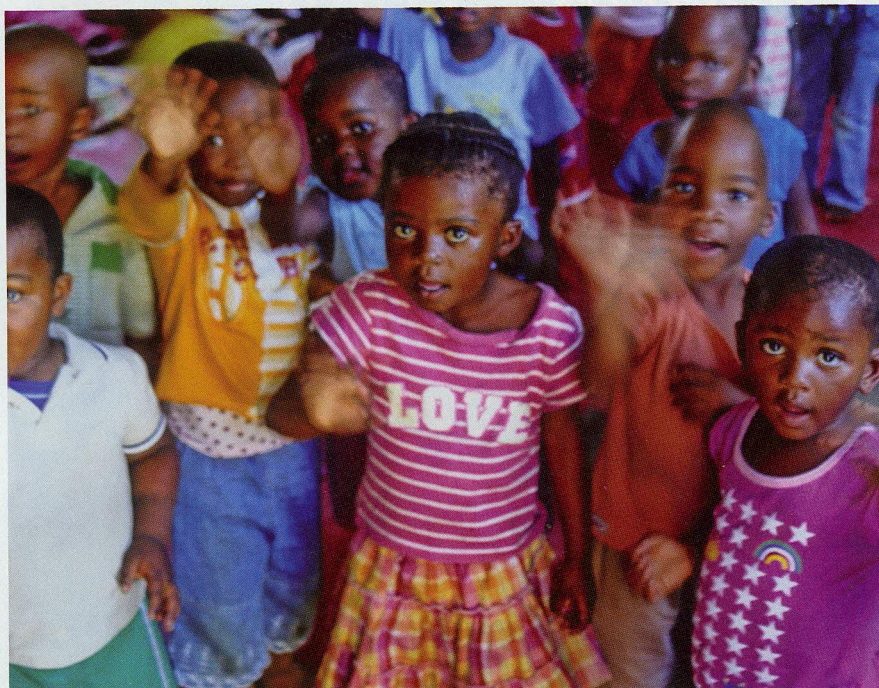
Zambia's South Luanga National Park. Guide Abraham Banda seemed to know a lot about my very-far-away hometown. When I queried this, he explained that two La Jolla families are major donors to the local school, where one-third of the students are AIDS orphans.

Oliver and Paula Jones first visited Zambia in 1998 with Bushtracks Expeditions and felt the urge to lend a hand. Bushtracks, a California travel company with a strong giving back ethic, connected their guests to Philanthropic Ventures Foundation,



The Qantas Cabin Crew Team, partnered with Airline Ambassadors International

The Africa Foundation provides support for village schools



which maintains a Generosity in Action Designated Fund for the benefit of the Kapani School Project and its flagship Yosefe School.

(www.venturesfoundation.org,
www.normancarrsafaris.com)

The Joneses (Bill is a retired UCSD physician) have directed their donations to building teacher homes, as well as additional classrooms — thus enabling the student body to double in size. They also created the Abraham Banda College Scholarship, which has made it possible for 37 students to pursue a level of education that was once beyond imagination in this rural area.

“We’ve made five trips to Africa, and I’m really taken with the way the school committee has used our funds,” Bill told me. “Contributing money is the easy part; the commitment from teachers, the community, and Norman Carr Safaris has made the difference. It’s an exciting experience to witness the impact of education on the children.”

La Jollans Papa Doug and Betsy Manchester traveled to South Luanga National Park with members of the World President’s Organization and

now support the Kapani School Project. “Their needs are so vast that it’s hard to focus on one particular area,” Betsy related, “so they decide what’s most urgent.”

San Diegans are also making a difference in other areas of Zambia.

In Livingston, where we went to see Victoria Falls, I noted that The Anthony Robbins Foundation funded two classrooms at Tujatane — The Tongabezi Trust School.

(www.tujatane.com)

Elsewhere, the Africa Foundation is making a difference by working to empower rural communities adjacent to conservation areas. Their major partner, CC Africa (Conservation Corporation Africa), is the region’s leading ecotourism company. Two grandchildren of J. Paul Getty — Mark Getty, founder of Getty Images, and Tara Getty, a well known Africa conservationist — are trustees of the organization.

(www.africafoundation.org)

In South Africa, we stayed at Phinda Private Game Reserve, operated by CC Africa, and visited a community

school that the Africa Foundation is helping to support. Here we found four children sitting at a desk meant for two, but studying in spite of the lack of books and supplies. I was embarrassed to proffer a puny sack of pencils, pens, and crayons brought from home, but they were gratefully accepted by the headmaster, who spread them out on a teacher’s desk as if they were something really valuable.

In Johannesburg, we joined a group of volunteers from Airline Ambassadors International and the Qantas Cabin Crew Team and worked on the restoration of a home for AIDS mothers and their children.

(www.airlineamb.org,
www.qcct.org.au)

Nkosi’s Haven is one of four projects operated by activist Gail Johnson, whose 11-year-old adopted son Nkosi became the face of AIDS in Africa after he spoke at the 13th International AIDS Conference in 2000. Before he died the next year, he and Gail opened their first refuge, and she continues a stalwart fight for the rights of AIDS victims. In 2005, Nkosi was posthumously awarded the International Children’s Peace Prize, which Gail accepted from the hand of Nobel Peace Laureate Mikhail Gorbachev. It was a privilege to spend time with this courageous woman. (www.nkosi.iafrica.com)

Our group also shared a day in the Joburg countryside with children from an inner-city preschool. FLOC (For the Love of Children) kids rarely feel sunshine or see green grass because the center, where they spend 12 hours a day, is located in a windowless basement.

Their smiles assured me that my donations had reached the intended recipient. — Elizabeth Hansen, photography by

Adams/Hansen Stock Photography