



GIRAFFE IN THIS ISSUE

Eddie Bergman of NYU and Long Island, New York



Eddie Bergman may be young, but he's been creating miracles for years. While finishing a Masters at New York University, Bergman spends his out-of-class time improving the quality of life for people around the world through the nonprofit organization he co-founded, Miracle Corners of the World (MCW).

In high school, Bergman joined a community service club helping the homeless of New York City. A trip to Nicaragua solidified his interest in helping others in need, no matter where they were. When a high school senior, he taught entrepreneurship to a group of women in the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, drawing on his years of entrepreneurial experience as founder of a successful business that provided music for Long Island parties, he started that enterprise when he was 12. While he was in Africa, he helped build a three-room school and helped community groups there establish entrepreneurial farming projects.

Back in New York, he wrote to every person he'd met in Africa, offering the resources and expertise of the newly created MCW to any village that could use such assistance. He got one response, from an American nun who said the town where she was working, Arusha, Tanzania, could use some help.

Arusha hasn't been the same since.

Thanks to MCW, Arusha now has a community center whose services include free pre-school education, after-school sports, computer training, arts and crafts classes that are earning Arushans sales income from tourists, and a clinic where visiting NYU dentistry students provide free dental work. Several MCW-inspired small businesses help fund the center's operations, since the entire Arusha program is designed to be self-sustaining. MCW programs are now spreading to other impoverished communities that are eager to their own talents and resources to create a bootstrap economy.

Some of MCW's current projects: developing affordable housing in Tanzania's Songea region; HIV/AIDS education outreach in Botswana and soon in China; and youth leadership development retreats that have trained over 200 young people from 15 nations.

Despite earning no money for his efforts, the health hazards and security risks of many of MCW's work sites, and the challenge of not speaking the languages of most of the people he's assisting, Bergman is undaunted.

"Once you get going you can't stop," says Eddie Bergman. "The addiction comes from noticing each small improvement, from getting e-mail updates, visiting sites, and knowing that things are happening, that you're making a small difference."