

Service Matters

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EDDIE BERGMAN CONTINUES OUTREACH EFFORTS IN AFRICA

Eddie Bergman, a sophomore at New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies, studying hospitality and tourism management was featured in the Spring 2000 issue of *Service Matters* for his outstanding service efforts in Africa. He returned to Arusha Tanzania in July to continue the exciting grass-roots community development projects he co-founded this past January through Miracle Corners of the World Inc. *Service Matters* is pleased to report on the progress of the program.

Miracle Corners of the World Inc. (MCW) is a grass-roots community development and revitalization organization founded by Eddie Bergman and Robert Alsbrooks of the University of Pennsylvania. The primary goal of MCW is to enable volunteers to provide direct financial, technical and intellectual support to "disadvantaged" communities around the world, thereby fostering a mutually rewarding experience.

Bergman recently returned home after spending three months working in South Africa and Tanzania, where he coordinated nine students and adults from various universities and professions who each joined MCW's efforts in Arusha, for a two-week block, to volunteer, learn, and bring their skills to Miracle Corners of Arusha.

Bergman and Alsbrooks first traveled to Arusha in January 2000 not knowing exactly where they would end up or what they would do when they arrived. After a two-day journey including flying, driving and walking, Bergman and Alsbrooks arrived and immediately got started working with youth introduced to them by a local catholic nun. Because MCW is a non-denominational organization they decided to independently search for additional youth and individuals on the street who needed assistance and were willing to work within the framework of MCW philosophy.



Bergman and Alsbrooks (third and fourth from left) brought a surplus of NYU Week of Service tee-shirts to the children of Arusha.

By the end of their two-week trip Bergman and Alsbrooks had assisted eight independent and struggling youth, many with no families or homes successfully grow a small oil changing business, which they called IYC (Independent Youth Community) Lubricants. In addition, ten young men began a garage shop called BBM (Boys Becoming Men) Garage, and approximately 50 youths worked on the construction of the Kolemak Village Youth Ugali grinding factory. Ugali is the staple crop of Tanzania. Not only did Alsbrooks and Bergman initiate the construction and development of these businesses, they also motivated and trained the participants, on the importance of community and encouraged them to start their own community service groups.

As the trip came to an end, Mr. Muddy Gaffa, a talented and motivated resident of Arusha, introduced himself to Alsbrooks while working on the construction of IYC Lubricants. It soon became clear that Gaffa would be the person who would run, sustain and grow Miracle Corners of Arusha while Bergman and Alsbrooks returned home.

In July, Bergman returned to

Arusha, later joined by Alsbrooks and nine volunteers of MCW for two-week blocks, to assist and learn about the activities of Miracle Corners of Arusha. The success and progress made in Arusha during July and August was tremendous. Bergman says: "We witnessed first hand the wonderful progress made while we were back home in America. Then we moved forward."

MCW continued their work with BBM garage and made a two-year loan to allow them to expand their business and purchase what the people of Arusha call a "dollar-dollar van" which would provide bus/taxi services in town. MCW is in the process of raising funds to help finance the purchase of an Ugali grinding factory machine. Once purchased, the Kolemak Village Youth Community will repay the loan for the machine over a three-year period. The repaid funds will then be used to finance other projects. "The business plan is in place and the factory is built. All that is left now is to purchase the machine," says Bergman.

After in depth talks with community members in Arusha, Bergman and Alsbrooks felt that the next step of

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Miracle Corners of Arusha to further benefit the citizens and the relationship of MCW to the Arusha community would be the development of a community center, something that is lacking and "wanted and needed" by the community, says Gaffa. "In order to successfully help change a condition of a people you have to first come and give them what they want, so they will want what you have to give," states Alsbrooks. They moved forward, purchasing land in a relatively "disadvantaged" location in Arusha and began the construction of the "Dr. Herman Wrice Youth Empowerment Village". Mr. Alsbrooks remembers Dr. Wrice, who passed away in March, as "a legendary community ac-

tivist and supreme drug fighter, a dear friend, and mentor." It was through Dr. Wrice that Bergman met Alsbrooks. Both wished to dedicate their work in Arusha to his memory. "It is a deep honor to name and build the youth empowerment village after Dr. Wrice. A youth empowerment village in Arusha, is something he would be proud of," says Bergman. The BBM youth have been volunteering for several months to provide the construction labor for the community center. Additionally, during August the community center was the main project that the MCW volunteers assisted with. When the community center is completed it will include: a basketball court, volleyball court, indoor gym, table tennis, two classrooms, a common room, a library and possibly a computer room. The community center will be free of charge to the citizens of Arusha and

will be a resource center for volunteerism both from with the Arusha Community, as well as from abroad.

Bergman and Alsbrooks plan on returning to Arusha, Tanzania in December to continue their work. Additionally, Bergman will be organizing a larger trip over the summer of 2001, where MCW will host students and professionals from the U.S.A. and other countries in Arusha, Tanzania to assist with both ongoing as well as new and exciting projects. "What is so amazing about MCW, is that no matter what skills and interests you have, we will find something for you to feel good about, make a difference, learn, and grow, while volunteering both locally and abroad," says Bergman. If you are interested in getting involved with MCW and its initiatives please contact Eddie Bergman at cjb228@is9.nyu.edu.