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Celebrating
LAKEWAY'S 50TH

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Life



Spreading Pure Joy

Smith family proves every person can make a difference

Lake Travis Life

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Cover photo by David Smith



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Rose Mona, or "Joy," is the genesis of the name Pure Joy Foundation.

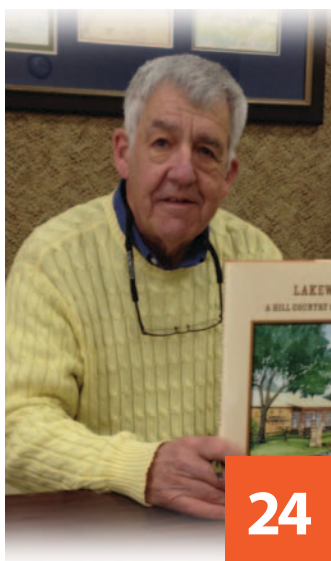
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Avery Smith provides one more lasting image from her trip to Pure, South Sudan.

Lake Travis Life



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Message from the Editor



As I've mentioned in this space in the past, one of my favorite parts of this job is the chance to speak with and learn about ordinary people who are accomplishing extraordinary things. I have spoken with and written about more than a few of your neighbors who are dedicated to helping others.

This issue of Lake Travis Life is no different. All throughout this issue, you will have a chance to read about the Smith family and the amazing things they've done in a small village in South Sudan.

You'll read about what brought the family to the village of Pure (pronounced, Poo-ray) and what is now occurring in the village to help the locals become self-sufficient.

You'll hear from Avery, Cameron and Spencer Smith, who will offer a first-hand account of how the visits to South Sudan help not only those living there, but how they themselves have been affected by seeing people living in such extreme conditions.

You'll have a chance to see photos taken by David and Avery Smith chronicling just a few of the things they've seen during their visits to Pure.

And you'll find out how you can help if the stories and photos in this magazine so move you.

This is an ordinary family making a remarkable difference in a small village. The Smith family is just one more reason to believe the sayings that "every little bit counts" and "every person can make a difference."

Let us know about your family, friends and organizations that are making a difference at home and around the globe.

Craig Ostroff

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Smith Family Spreading Pure Joy in South Sudan

David Smith, his wife, Kate, and their daughters are proof that every family and every person can make a difference.

by Craig Ostroff
Editor

David Smith and his wife Kate always felt the desire to help those less fortunate. Given their respective pasts, they both felt strongly that they wanted to focus their efforts to an area in Africa.

While in the military, David Smith did reconnaissance work in Bosnia in the 1990s and documented the Bosnian genocide.

“Seeing everything that was happening in Bosnia had a very profound affect on me,” Smith said. “It’s bothered me for a long time ... having the ability to make a difference but not being allowed to make a difference. To watch what happened and see the world kind of turn a blind eye to it, it bothered me.”

Kate Smith’s father was in the oil business, and she spend significant time growing up in countries such as the Congo and the Ivory Coast. In January 2011, Kate accompanied Lake Hills Church on a trip to Uganda to sponsor a well.

The Smiths had decided that when their children were old enough, the family would look to find a place in Africa where they could help. The goal was not simply to funnel money or food to a needy village, but to help a community learn to stand on its own.

“It’s all about being self-sustaining,” David Smith said. “There are a lot of well-meaning people who set up programs that aren’t self-sustaining and unfortunately create dependency. We want to come alongside the community and seed programs that will help the people help themselves. We want to create programs that are self-sustaining and will bear fruit for many years and many generations.”

The Smiths had been considering Zimbabwe or Zambia until they had been informed of the village of Pure (pronounced Poo-ray) in South Sudan after meeting with representatives of Water Harvest International, an organization that drills wells in underdeveloped countries.

“We wanted to find a village and support it end to end,” Smith said. “We wanted to prove a concept that an average American family can make a profound difference.

“We met with representatives of WHI and asked them to find a village that is really remote where the people are even



The current school in Pure is only first to fourth grade and is held in mud huts and under a tree.

Photo by David Smith



One of the village children, Julia, with her solar light. Avery and Cameron Smith raised \$500 from their ninth-grade world geography class to purchase 100 solar lights to be distributed to children in Pure.

Photo by Avery Smith

forgotten by their own country. They reached out to me a couple of months later and said, ‘We think we found a village, but you’re not going to like it — It’s hard to get to, it’s a long way away and nearly inaccessible during the wet season, but there is an urgent need there.’ I said, ‘That’s it.’”

The Smith family traveled to Pure in July 2012 to speak with village and South Sudan representatives, meet with the villagers — who had never seen white children before — and set the groundwork for drilling the well.

“We had some very meaningful discussions, started mapping out



Avery, Spencer and Cameron Smith spend some time with the local children in Pure.

Photo by David Smith

where the need was and how we can work together,” Smith said.

Smith made it clear to the village that the family was not in Pure to drill a well and build a school — but the family could work with the village to help.

“I told them, ‘If your hope is for me to build a school, I can’t do it. But we can do it together. Let’s talk about what we can do,’” said Smith, who has referred to the setup as a public-private-community partnership.

Smith is working with the villagers, who are farmers, to finance a grain grinder to help Pure become self-sustaining.

“When I talked with the village chief about their crops, I learned that they manually grind their grain just as our ancestors did in the Stone Age,” Smith said. “I was shocked. A grain grinder costs about \$3,000 and could provide for several villages, but no one has the capital to buy one nor do they have the collateral needed for a high-interest loan.

“The chief said he didn’t want one given to them, as he knows they can pay for it within two years. So our plan is to raise the funds needed to buy a grinder and provide the chief a three-year loan at one-percent interest rate secured by his handshake.”

And in this instance, a simple handshake was enough for Smith.

“The village chief is a highly respected leader and served as an officer during the civil war,” Smith said. “I was humbled to

Continued on next page

6 GOALS OF PURE JOY FOUNDATION

- **Drilling a clean water** well for the villagers.
- **Supporting mobile health clinics** (including self-adjusting eyeglasses program)
- **“Light the Night” Program** (providing solar reading lights for all students; providing solar lights for every family)
- **Build a fifth- through** eighth-grade school
- **Provide textbooks and school** supplies for every child
- **Provide scholarships for children** to attend secondary school)

Continued from previous page

be around a man who had literally fought for his freedom and protected his people from genocide.

“We hope to present this opportunity to him next summer. And we’ll commit that every payment made on the loan will go back into the village as another loan. The village may need a truck to take crops to the market — great, we’ll back that loan. And secure it by the entrepreneur’s and the chief’s handshake. The grinder will radically change the village on its own, but we hope that the rolling loan can help develop the economy and turn the village into a self-sustaining ecosystem.”

Education in Pure

With a permanent well in the village, there is no longer a need to hike miles and miles to gather clean water. This frees up many of the children to go to school and get an education.

Progress is being made on both a permanent structure for grades one to four, and the foundation’s highest priority now is to build a middle school for grades five to eight.

The schools will be a collaborative effort between the Smith family, the village and the South Sudan government.

“We received a donation which is enough for us to start construction of the middle school and we hope to raise the remainder before the wet season sets in,” Smith said. “The government is going to give them the land and the community will clear the land and excavate the foundation. The government is also giving them the right to go onto government land and harvest the materials needed for construction, such as wood, rocks, aggregate and sand.

“Say you need 100 trees to build the school — the government will allow them to harvest 150 so they can pay the woodcutters and carpenters 50 trees for the lumber they will create. The community can get some of the materials on their own and they will also provide the labor and sweat needed to construct the facility. We will provide what they can’t provide for themselves, such as sheet metal, nails, cement, transportation of materials, payment to the builder. The government, the community and our foundation may not have the resources to build this school individually, but collectively we do. We all have to do our part and hopefully we can get it constructed for around \$40,000.”

That’s a remarkably small amount to pay for a school. For a family, however, that’s a sizeable sum. Which is why the Smiths developed the Pure Joy Foundation, so that others can help make a significant difference in the lives of those who have so little.

“There are a lot of people in this world who want to help but don’t know how,” Smith said. “So now we need to get people aware of what’s going on.”

The well was drilled at the school site in March, then latrines were constructed, making the school eligible for the United Nations World Food Program so the students can receive a hot meal.



A villager from Pure fills her bucket with water from a hand-dug hole in the ground. Before the well was drilled, the options for villagers was to get water this way, or walk five miles to the nearest clean water source.

Photo by David Smith

“We then plan to provide microfinance loans to the farmers for seed to grow the specific crops that the UN purchases so they can sell their crops to the UN, who will provide food to their schoolchildren — another self-sustaining ecosystem,” Smith said.

Pure Joy Foundation

For Smith, the family’s work in South Sudan is part of helping to inspire his daughters to appreciate the remarkable lives they lead and to use what they have to help others, but more importantly, to inspire others to do the same.

“Kate and I tell our girls they should ‘Lead a life to be followed’ and ‘Live a life of significance,’” Smith said. “I want to make sure that my daughters have genuine confidence. And to have genuine confidence, you need to be able to look at yourself in the mirror and respect who you see.

“This has been life-changing for them. When you experience an environment like that you don’t look at things the same way anymore. We wanted to expose them to the real world, and that’s the real world.

“The fact is, 20 percent of the world lives on a dollar a day. You’re talking a billion-and-a-half people. Fifty percent lives on \$2 a day. Eighty percent lives on \$10 a day. If you make \$50,000 a year, you’re in the top 1 percent of the entire world. The stan-

The price of a textbook

\$4

Pure Joy Foundation is committed to making sure every student has their own textbook.



Light the Night

One of the prime objectives of the Pure Joy Foundation is to provide solar lights to the villagers.

When David Smith and his daughter Avery returned to Pure in December, they brought with them some very special gifts for the villagers — solar lights.

“For \$10 you can really change someone’s life,” Smith said.

“The girls raised \$500 at Lake Travis High School that was used to purchase 100 of the solar book lights that we provided to students at Pure. To those 100 kids, LTHS literally changed their lives.

“When we gave the lights to the students, I told them, ‘This is a blessing and a curse to you. It’s a blessing as you can now read at night and do things you weren’t able to do before. But it’s also a curse as you now have no excuse for being unprepared for class.’”

Concerned that the parents might think about trying to sell the lights at the local market for money or food, Smith addressed them as well and spoke to them in a manner in which the farmers could understand.

“I said to the parents, ‘This is a seed for your children. You plant it, you water it, you cultivate it, you care for it and it grows into something that produces much fruit for many generations. You eat that seed, you have nothing for future generations. This is for them, not for you.’”

The new middle school is also being equipped with a solar-powered lighting system that will allow for classes, meetings and other gatherings at night.

“We received an unsolicited grant,” Smith said. “A group learned about us and said, ‘We love what you’re doing and want to give you a grant.’ We’re still stunned. The grant is enough to purchase and install a solar lighting system for the school. Now they can teach children during the day and adults at night. The adults will pay a small fee, which will help subsidize the teachers, so the system becomes more self-sustaining.

“We received another donation recently which will allow us to open a three-grade preschool at the same location as the school. The community has adopted a fee structure of \$9 and 5 kilograms of grain per term, which will allow the school to be self-sustaining once it is at scale. The community is building mud huts to be used initially, the government has identified teachers (but is unable to pay for them) and Pure Joy has committed to funding the first year’s operating expenses so the school can get to scale. We intend to fund scholarships in the future that will provide for the orphans in the community who are unable to pay. Registration has begun and we expect to have over 100 children within one year.

dard of living we enjoy today is literally unimaginable for most of human history and is still unimaginable for most of the people in the world today. Exposure to the reality of the rest of the world makes you genuinely grateful for what you have and realize the personal obligation you have to help those in need.”

Those interested in donating to, helping out or simply learning more about the Pure Joy Foundation are encouraged to visit the website at purejoyfoundation.org. The site describes the organization, its goals and its initiatives, and also features the informational slideshow that Avery and Cameron Smith presented to their world geography class at Lake Travis High School. There is also a Facebook page at facebook.com/PureJoyFoundation?fref=ts.

Smith said that every donation makes an unimaginable difference in the lives of these people who have so little.

“We’re a proof of concept that the average American family can make a profound difference,” he said. “We’re just an average family. Kate and I tell our girls that they should ‘Aspire to inspire before you expire’ and we hope that they will inspire other people to make a difference.

“As for the Pure Joy Foundation, we’re going to focus on one village right now. We’ll be with them for decades. That was our commitment as a family even before we went over. We’re seeing some fruits right now, but these are minor fruits.

“Ultimately, though, the more people who can help, the more of a difference we can make. And I would love for someone out there to see this and say, ‘We should do that, too,’ because there are a lot of villages out there.”

Our Time in Pure

Avery, Cameron and Spencer Smith offer a first-hand look into their visit to the village of Pure, South Sudan, and how it affected their outlook on life.



Twins Cameron and Avery Smith and younger sister Spencer Smith during their visit to Pure, South Sudan. The sisters have returned from their trip with a newfound appreciation for all the things they 'get to' do.

Photo by David Smith

by Avery, Cameron and Spencer Smith
Community contributors

Our parents always told us that they couldn't wait to take us to Africa so we could meet some of the most amazing people in the world. Now we know why.

After reading the book "A Long Walk to Water," by Linda Sue Park, we wanted to help children in South Sudan get clean water. So our parents made a deal with us — for every dollar we gave, they would give 10 more so that we could have a well drilled there by Water Harvest International.

We were a bit nervous as we prepared for the trip because South Sudan is a war-torn region and Joseph Kony had been all over the news, but we were excited to go make a difference.

When we arrived in Pure, they welcomed us as if we were the most important people in the world. They sang and danced and women curtsied to us. The

celebration lasted for half an hour. We thought they did this because of the well, but we found out later that they didn't even know they were going to get a well. When we told them, the celebrations started again.

They took us to their homes (tukuls), which are one-room huts. They had no electricity or running water and they had no kitchen or bathrooms. To get water, they had to hike to a stream that was dirty and full of debris. We were shocked at their living conditions, but they were so proud to show us their homes and were so welcoming.

The kids didn't have TVs, iPhones

or Xboxes to keep them entertained, so they entertained themselves. We brought them a soccer ball, which they loved.

We also brought thread with us to teach them how to make friendship bracelets. It was amazing. We couldn't speak the same language, but we were able to create beautiful bracelets together and enjoy each other's company.

After spending time with them, we realized that they were just like us. And even though they had nothing, they were so full of joy.

After we left Pure, we realized how much we take for granted. Sometimes we don't feel like going to school and we forget how fortunate we are to go to Lake Travis. Pure's school only goes through the fourth grade and many of the children can't attend due to their chores.

When we want a drink of clean water, we just walk to the refrigerator. They

have to hike for miles. When we're hungry, we walk to the kitchen or go to a restaurant. They eat whatever is harvested, which isn't much.

When we returned home, we experienced some culture shock as we realized how wasteful and self-centered we are in the United States. Status here is measured more by what you have rather than by who you are.

Our new goal is to wake up each day and remember how fortunate we are and to be grateful and full of joy.

Everyone wants to be happy, but we really should want joy. And joy comes from your heart, not from your possessions.

Our new goal is to wake up each day and remember how fortunate we are and to be grateful and full of joy. We plan to change our "have to's" to "get to's" – instead of "having" to do something, we now "get" to do it. We get to go to school, we get to do our homework, we get to go to the doctor, we get to go to church.

And we get to help others. The joy we receive in helping the people of Pure can't be measured. We don't have to help them, we get to help them. We try to remember that "to whom much is given, much is required" and that "whatever you have done for the least of these, you have done for me."



Spencer and Avery Smith teach Pure villagers how to make freindship bracelets. At one point, the girls had more than 30 children and parents gathered around to watch them.

Photo by David Smith

2011

The Republic of South Sudan becomes an independent state.

Following a referendum that passed with 98.83 percent of the vote, the Republic of South Sudan became an independent state on July 9, 2011, according to Wikipedia.com. Its capital is Juba, which is also its largest city. A 2008 census estimated the population of the area to be about 8.26 million people. South Sudan is a member of the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

A LESSON ON PURE AND SOUTH SUDAN

Cameron and Avery Smith did a presentation in their ninth-grade world geography class at Lake Travis High School. Some of the facts in their presentation about Pure:

- There are more than 2,500 villagers
- There are only 40 miles of paved roads in South Sudan, though the country is roughly the same size as Texas
- Less than 1 percent of South Sudan has electricity
- Pure's nearest source of clean water is five miles away
- 50 percent of school-age children never attend school, and of those who do, only 26 percent finish sixth grade. Less than one percent finish 12th grade.
- 75 percent of schools are not permanent structures (mud huts, trees, etc.)



Cameron Smith is greeted by a villager in Pure.

Photo by David Smith

Views from St. Bartholomew's Orphanage

During their visits to Pure, the Smith family spent some time with the children in the St. Bartholomew's Orphanage. The stuffed animals that some of the children are holding were donated by neighbors in Lakeway. The children were allowed to choose which stuffed animal they wanted for Christmas.

At left, Kate Smith greets children at the orphanage; Middle, David Smith gets a hug from a youngster. At right, Spencer Smith fits a villager with adjustable Eyejusters eyeglasses.

Photos by David Smith



At left, just one of the many children living in St. Bartholomew's Orphanage. Middle, Avery Smith holds hands with a young girl in the Pure village; At right, Spencer Smith carries one of the orphans.

Photos by David Smith



AND ANOTHER THING ...



Photo by Avery Smith

Christmas Day in Pure

We spent Christmas Day celebrating in Pure, South Sudan. The next day, the Payam Chief and the Headmaster of the primary school called a meeting of all the school age children and their parents of Pure. With the help of the fundraising efforts of Lake Travis High School ninth-grade world geography classes, we were able to take more than 200 solar reading lights and distribute them to the

school children. I was amazed at the reaction of everyone seeing the lights. In this picture, you can see the joy and amazement on this mother's face. It's hard to believe that in 2013, people are still living without electricity. That day in Pure was life-changing for the school children; they now have light at night so they can read and study. Their future has hope. — *Avery Smith*