



Former Missionaries Reconnect With People They Served

SALT LAKE CITY | 25 July 2007 | The death of little Hilda, a 4-year-old child living in the remote villages of Peru, changed the focus of Dr. Tim Evans, an Oakley, Utah, dentist.

Hilda died as a result of drinking tainted water. Evans, who had once served as a [Mormon missionary](#) in Hilda's village, knew her family and already was aware of the limited circumstances of their lives.

And so Evans did what many former missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints find themselves doing — he reconnected with his old mission area through humanitarian service.

Lack of safe drinking water plagues communities throughout the world, but Hilda's passing brought the crisis home to Evans in a very personal way.

"When you live away from home on a mission, usually for the first time in your life," Evans said, "these people you work with become your family, become a part of you, like your own brothers and sisters. You want to give back, to respond to the needs of the people because of their love and kindness to you."

Though Evans and his missionary companions frequently shared school supplies with the poorly stocked schools in their neighborhood during their full-time missionary service, Evans always felt he could do more.

Hilda's passing motivated the young dentist to return to [Peru](#) in 1983, 13 years after his original missionary work there. He and other returned missionaries helped develop an innovative hand-dug well and water-pump strategy that brought safe water to Hilda's community.

Evans and his associates continued their humanitarian outreach with additional water projects, schools and health and hygiene training. "We've taught basic technologies, building stoves and digging wells," he reported, "technologies that help to ease the burdens in that society, particularly the burdens on the women and on the children."

Responding to the visible needs of their associates becomes second nature to most full-time missionaries. In addition to their commitment to teach about the gospel of Jesus Christ, missionaries of the Church, wherever they reside, participate in weekly community service activities. Such service becomes a routine part of the 24-month assignment but also provides opportunities for missionaries to discover firsthand the challenging circumstances faced by many people in their mission neighborhoods.

Other returning missionaries find opportunities for humanitarian service in many parts of the world.

Nate Shipp, Salt Lake City, and his missionary friend, Benj Becker, Bountiful, Utah, for example, focused their humanitarian outreach on the orphan children of [Ukraine](#).

“My mission included regular stops at the state-run orphanages,” Shipp said. “We’d use our community service time to visit the orphanages and play with the children, children who were starved for the human touch.”

With 15 children assigned to a single caregiver, the caregivers seldom had time to accommodate all the children, Shipp related.

But an even greater concern was the lack of regular meals, health care and proper hygiene for the orphans.

Thanksgiving Day following his return to the United States marked the turning point for Shipp. “I simply couldn’t sit in the midst of all that holiday celebration and ignore the hungry children I’d met in Ukraine.”

Shipp and Becker paired up again, collected donations from family, friends and neighbors and returned to assist a Ukrainian orphanage in May 2000.

And they’ve been doing it ever since, helping to remodel or supply 11 orphanages. In addition, their organization, [Project Reach Out](#), provides bedding, clothing, diapers, medicine, appliances and food directly to establishments in eight different cities.

“The greatest part of this project,” according to Becker, “is seeing the smiles on the kids’ faces as they feel they are loved.”

Another returned missionary, Peter Reichman, Provo, Utah, noted “the hardships that these people must face everyday” as he served in the [Philippines](#).

Upon completing his missionary assignment in 2002, Reichman grew concerned about the immediate medical needs of his Filipino friends. He organized a support group called Vaccines for the Philippines.

The initial goal to simply provide immunizations expanded considerably. The group has, with the support of local government officials, sponsored free medical clinics, distributed and trained recipients in the use of first aid kits, constructed sanitary bathroom facilities and distributed over 1,000 doses of rabies vaccine. The group’s June 2007 service expedition included a joint venture with Globus Relief to deliver a pair of 40-foot medical supply containers.

Christopher Nyalopo, a native of Freetown, [Sierra Leone](#), and a returned missionary from Accra, Ghana, recently gathered with 53 other former Mormon missionaries to clean the Rokupr Government Hospital in his hometown. The group donated four hours each to clean floors, walls, bed linens, mosquito nets and bathroom facilities.

According to participants, “The water for this exercise was being purchased and carried from a distance of about one mile.”

Mrs. Zainab Kamara, hospital matron, acknowledged the service. “The venture undertaken by the Church was very significant,” she said. “All the (patients) in the hospital appreciated their efforts.”

The Sierra Leone returned missionaries, organized in a group called True to the Faith, plan

additional community service projects in September and December.

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