



Jessica Asiime, a beneficiary of Narrow Road's "Journey" program in Uganda.

// LOCAL HEROES //

Rose's Journey

One woman's incredible story inspires two Breck locals to create a charity that assists international nonprofits.

In the summer of 2004, a young Ugandan woman by the name of Rose Nanyonga Clarke stood up in front of a crowd at Breckenridge Christian Ministries and recounted her journey from a childhood spent practicing witchcraft in a small Ugandan village to pursuing a graduate degree in the U.S.

The compelling tale Rose shared that day resonated deeply with locals DJ Schappert and Dave Olszewski. Both men grew up in the Dallas/Ft Worth area and had been involved in international

volunteer work since high school. Both continued to travel internationally after moving to Breckenridge.

That travel, explains Schappert, "introduced us to the difficult realities that large portions of people in the world face. We thought that starting an organization that could be based in Breckenridge but work around the world was a natural fit. It just so happened," he explains, "that we were developing a friendship with Rose, who could offer incredible opportunities in Uganda, at the same time."

Thus began Narrow Road, a 501(c) 3 that supports educational and medical programs in Uganda and now, Honduras as well. The organization's initial focus was to offer financial assistance to, and grow awareness of, philanthropic projects that Rose had already initiated in Uganda.

All of Rose's projects have roots in her own remarkable story. At the age of seventeen, she undertook a 52 kilometer solo walk from her village—which had disowned her for abandoning the witchcraft rituals she was taught from childhood—to Kiwoko Hospital, where she was taken in by an Irish couple engaged in medical work. Ultimately, they helped Rose go on to nursing school in the U.S; she is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at Yale.

Rose returned to Uganda after graduation and helped create numerous social development programs. She started a nursing scholarship fund to assist other young Ugandan women; initiated awareness campaigns about the complicated, painful issue of child sacrifice practiced by a small segment of Ugandan witchcraft practitioners; and created a nursing school at the International Hospital Kampala, where she now serves as Director of Clinical Operations. The ward offers medical care to those who otherwise could not afford such services, including victims of Uganda's civil strife.

Explaining the connection of Narrow Road to Rose's projects, Schappert says "our role is simply to assist and encourage what was put into place by local people. We just raise awareness and support. We really try to listen to locals and see how we can help them in the good they are already pursuing."

"It's hard to describe what I gain from the work without dipping into clichés," says Schappert. "It's just so much fun. I love Breckenridge, and I love all the activities that this place offers, but none of those activities compares to, for example, a day spent playing soccer at an orphanage."

"When we began Narrow Road, Mike Glerup, one of our board members, told us that the impact of Narrow Road would be directly related to the extent in which we involved other people. I think this idea of empowerment is the element of Narrow Road that I am most proud of. The truth is that it's not hard to make an impact on the lives of people around the world, but it can be difficult to help others believe that they can impact lives around the world. Narrow Road provides an opportunity to empower others and allow them to be a part of something that they may not have otherwise pursued. In that sense, I think we started something that is getting better and better through the involvement of others."

To learn more about Narrow Road's programs and Rose's journey, visit www.narrowroadintl.org.

— KATE LAPIDES