

25th Anniversary NEWSLETTER 2015



Celebrating 25 Years of Sustainable Change

Twenty-five years is enough time for babies to become parents, or clothing fashions to disappear and return as “retro.” It has also been enough time for the modest dream of a better world to grow into an international development agency working on three different continents, having helped more than 100,000 people.

Most people who have heard of A Better World have also heard the story of Eric Rajah and Brian Leavitt starting the agency in 1990 with a budget

of \$5,000 and a goal of funding one development project a year in a developing country, for at most 10 years. The College Heights Church backed the men’s vision of a volunteer-run organization, where all the donated funds went to the projects with no deductions for overhead.

What neither the visionaries nor the congregation could predict was that their new program would gain such momentum, partnering with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and

the Canadian government, and eventually gaining support from volunteers and donors outside the church as well.

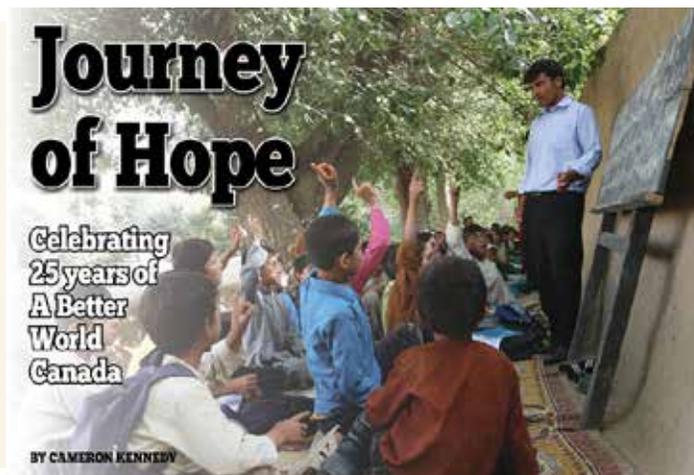
A Better World will celebrate its silver anniversary with several special events throughout the year, and is bringing special guests to Central Alberta from Kenya, to share in the April events. After 25 years, with support from across Central Alberta, across Canada and beyond, A Better World has achieved sustainable change around the world, and is still looking toward the future.

25th Anniversary Book Launch

A new book by Red Deer Advocate News Editor Cameron Kennedy is being launched to celebrate A Better World’s 25th anniversary.

Kennedy, a seasoned international traveller who has worked as a journalist in southeast Asia, has accompanied A Better World three times to Afghanistan and Kenya, reporting on the work done overseas. He has combined updated versions of those stories with a thorough examination of the agency in his book *Journey of Hope*:

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WestJet Co-Founder is New ABW Donor

Thank You for Sharing in the Celebration

Message from the Chairman



Thank you for sharing in the celebration of A Better World's 25th anniversary.

From its humble beginnings in 1990, Eric and Brian's dream has become a reality thanks to your involvement and advice, as well as their willingness to grow and adapt.

You can expect lots of remembering as we celebrate the miracles of watching brave people move beyond their inabilities and peculiar circumstances. Just a few weeks ago Nicole and I were able to visit once again many of the projects in Kenya, and were again inspired as we witnessed the lives of so many being impacted in such positive ways.

A special "shout out" to Eric for his perseverance, inspiration and generosity with his time and energy, facing the many obstacles that present themselves whenever attempting to help the helpless move beyond their circumstances. May each of you please continue to help us fulfill our vision of encouraging sustainable change to improve lives.

Ron Sydenham,
Board Chair

BOOK LAUNCH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Celebrating 25 Years of A Better World Canada.

Sandwiched between hundreds of full-colour photographs are stories of his interactions with fascinating people in recipient countries, volunteers traveling with him, and key volunteers at home who have nurtured the growth of A Better World.

In addition to documenting his travels, Kennedy recounts the early development and growth of A Better World, and peers into its future as the agency prepares for change.

Journey of Hope will be launched at the 25th anniversary luncheon April 25 at the Lacombe Memorial Centre. Copies are on sale through A Better World.

Neighbours Update

Over 200 volunteers, more than 20 Central Alberta businesses, and generous donors enabled Neighbour's two signature projects in 2014.

The family of Nyah Trca, a nine-year-old disabled girl, were the first recipients chosen. As Nyah grows, her needs are changing, requiring renovations to the Red Deer family's home: a barrier-free bathroom, wheelchair-friendly flooring and widened doorways. At the completion of the project, Nyah's mom Angela said in tears, "Because of Neighbours, we can now keep our daughter at home."

"Because of Neighbours, we can now keep our daughter at home."

The second recipients were the Jeff Tataryn family of the Lacombe area. In September of 2013, Jeff fell while on the job, breaking his neck, rendering him an incomplete quadriplegic.

To allow their wheelchair van to navigate the driveway, extensive yard work was needed. After a week of hundreds of people invading their yard (not to mention bobcats, gravel trucks and dump trucks), the Tataryn family was left with a beautiful yard and a stable driveway.

The Neighbours Board is sincerely grateful to those involved who allowed these projects to come to fruition. And to the recipients, thank you for the privilege of allowing us into your lives and homes.





A BETTER WORLD LEADERS HONOURED

Feature Story

It was a tremendous year of recognition for leaders of A Better World, as several were honoured for their service to their communities and to the world.

Executive Director Eric Rajah received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Andrews University in Michigan last May, for exhibiting the university's values and church mission in an exemplary fashion. During the conferral ceremony, President Niels-Erik Andreasen called Rajah "an inspiration," and Provost Andrea Luxton cited his "enthusiastic work as a humanitarian."

In April 2014, both Rajah and Azalea Lehndorff, head of the Afghanistan 100 Classroom Project, were invited to LaSierra University in California to speak at a TedX conference. This was the second time Rajah had been invited to speak at a TedX conference.

TedX is an international series of

locally organized sessions licensed by the global Ted Talks conference series. Both feature short presentations (under 18 minutes) by people with "ideas worth spreading."

Both Rajah and Lehndorff shared some of ABW's success stories with a large university audience. Rajah spoke about his formula for maximizing returns in international aid, while Lehndorff reflected on the value to society of educating youth, from both her personal educational experiences and her trips to Afghanistan.

Like Rajah, Lehndorff also received multiple recognitions. In September she was selected by E-Town Radio in Boulder, Colorado to receive the E-Chievement Award. E-Town gives the award to "everyday heroes" who work behind the scenes to improve their communities.

Lehndorff was also recognized by

her alma mater, Canadian University College (now Burman University) as Young Alumnus of the Year. CUC also recognized ABW's Director of Education Keith Leavitt, an education professor at CUC, as the 2014 Alumnus of the Year.

Ronda Ziakris, manager of the Neighbours program for ABW, was also recognized. Her high school, Parkview Adventist Academy, chose her as Alumnus of the Year.



Schools Raise Money to Build Schools in Africa

Because of Your Support - Project Highlight

Three Canadian schools have once again put their support behind ABW projects, raising funds for projects in Africa.

Sunshine Hills Elementary of North Delta, B.C. raised \$25,000 to build a school in Kosti, Sudan and this year is working at raising the same amount for a school in Rwanda. Sunshine has an incredible fundraising program that has generated \$100,000 for ABW projects in recent years.

Paul Kane High School of St. Albert partnered with

Warren Trenchard to fund construction of the Oloolamutia Health Centre in Sopa, Kenya. To date, Paul Kane has contributed more than \$70,000 to our projects.

Westwood Community High School of Fort McMurray is busily raising money once again for another three classrooms at Ikonge Elementary School in Kenya. The students totalled \$15,000 raised by the end of 2014 and is aiming to reach \$25,000 mark by the end of the school year.

Student Loan Program for Bolivia

Because of Your Support - Project Highlight

A Better World has begun a loan program for students in Bolivia. Donors have so far supported nine students with funding for college tuition, living arrangements, textbooks and other living expenses.

Many of the students, who have sufficient academic requirements to enter college, are orphans or came from a background that limits their ability to access an education. Most never would have dreamed a college education could become a reality for them.

After the students graduate and become financially stable, they will be expected to repay the loans to the fund, which will then be redistributed to new students to continue the cycle of change.

New Washrooms for 400 Tanzanian Students

Project Highlight

A Better World began working in a new country in 2014: Tanzania. By March 2015, a second project was already completed.

Tanzania is a stable, democratic country that shares its northern border with Kenya. Its location makes it convenient to visit on trips to existing projects in Kenya, and the country has even greater need for development aid than Kenya.

Misajini Primary School was brought to ABW's attention by a new donor. The registered school is in a rural area outside the tourism zones. It has more than 400 students and was in desperate need of toilets. Last year, ABW built 16 toilets with washrooms on site for students and staff. Coincidentally, they were opened on World Toilet Day.

This year ABW completed renovations of four classrooms, and will return to further develop the school when the



Rama Kaonoke, in-country project manager of Tanzania projects, opens the door to the new toilets built by ABW at Misajini Primary School.

community has gathered enough support to share in the project. The next projects will be to renovate four more classrooms and build two new ones.

In the meantime, ABW is bringing water to the community of Vuga, Tanzania, and renovating an existing clinic there.



Sister Regina of the Kaplomboi community helps fill water jugs for the local community members at the refurbished community well.

Originally developed by the Kenyan government, the project had been abandoned, despite having a water tank, kiosk and other infrastructure in place.

A Better World drilled a new borehole, added a pump and more piping to allow water sales to the community of 3,000 people.

Celebrating What's Right With the World

Message from the Co-Founders



So often, the stories we see in the media are about what is wrong with the world. The noise of war and poverty threatens to drown out the goodness, compassion, empathy and love that is also everywhere. It's easy to focus on what is wrong, but we want to celebrate what is right with the world, and what is right with the world is people like you.

Your generous commitment of time, money and other support has truly made this world a better place, and made A Better World what it is today.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of A Better World. We would not have reached this milestone without your involvement and dedication. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to lead and serve you.

The celebration also includes the launch of the book *Journey of Hope* by Cameron Kennedy, which recounts his travels with A Better World, along with the successes and challenges that A Better World faces in helping people.

This book will be fascinating to anyone with any connection to A Better World, and 100 per cent of the proceeds will go toward building schools.

We hope you will look into buying your own copy.

Eric Rajah & Brian Leavitt,
Co-Founders

Native Kenyan Helps Manage Projects Overseas

Feature Story



David Omoganda shows faults in classrooms built by the Kenyan government at Sogobet Primary School

David Omoganda provides the insider's advantage. The Kenyan project manager is part of A Better World's solution of creating sustainable development. Working in Kenyan communities in his native country, he helps ensure that local people are part of the planning process, contributing to and taking ownership of development projects.

Omoganda was a natural fit for ABW. The retired teacher was already working to raise funds for his childhood school, Ikonge Primary, when he connected with the agency.

"I taught for 21 years," he said during a recent ABW trip to Kenya. "When I retired, I involved myself."

Through his sister, an executive director at Barclay's Bank, he had accessed a grant of one million Kenya shillings from the bank to build four classrooms. That attracted the attention of Joseph Nyachiro, a Kenyan on ABW's steering committee who was visiting his hometown and saw the development at his old school.

After they met each other, Omoganda applied to ABW for funding to build the preschool and library. Later, he met Executive Director Eric Rajah and the relationship was cemented.

An important element in ABW's development projects is community involvement. A native Kenyan who knew the community, was well educated, had time and was interested in getting involved presented an invaluable resource to the agency.

ABW contracted Omoganda to meet with community members and Canadian representatives to help assess community needs, assure the community's involvement and contribution, and to oversee the actual construction and development, making site visits in person. Having a native Kenyan involved helps build strong relationships with the communities. He continues to take that role in several communities.

Even Omoganda faces challenges working in communities outside the Ikonge area, though. Wherever he goes, he has to bust some myths.

"They will perceive you as an intruder," he said. "I try to explain, but it is challenging."

**"I taught for 21 years.
When I retired, I
involved myself."**

Once he makes them understand that they have influence on the development, but also that they must commit resources and that ABW won't provide an endless stream of funding, then progress is smoother.

"When you get it done correctly, you feel very proud."

As a former teacher, he finds it especially rewarding to see schools being built. He recalled going to school in classrooms with dirt floors that during rainy seasons had "all sorts of bad things" in the mud. The work of ABW has had an obvious influence on his old school.

"It increases the chances of a child performing well."

Success Stories

Project Updates

Kenyan School Experiences Largest Growth Spurt in ABW History

Tulwap School in Kenya is experiencing one of the largest growth spurts in ABW history, thanks to a well-organized community and a multi-donor partnership.

Tulwap Principal John Bariwot helped bring together the local community and Kenyan government to support the badly needed development of the primary school and addition of a new high school. Tulwap is in a highly populated rural area, with more than 600 students.

New donors Don Bell, who is a co-



Don Bell, co-founder of WestJet, speaks to an area resident about contributions to the development of Tulwap School.

founder of WestJet, and Paramount Cares, a fundraising wing of the Paramount Group, will partner with the Red

Deer Youth and Community Orchestra and the Rosedale Valley Strings, as well as Cameron Kennedy, author of the new book on ABW (see page 1).

Together they are providing more than \$75,000 to add to the Kenyan government's \$25,000 and community contributions.

The new development will add three nursery school classrooms, four secondary classrooms, a science lab, toilets and a water project. The Bairos and Figueiredo families of Ontario had already funded construction of the first six classrooms, completed in March this year.



Two New Girls Schools to Be Built in 2015

Afghanistan Project Update

In January 2015, after a one year pause, construction began again on the 100 Classroom Project. A 13 classroom renovation at Arab Khana High School was completed in March. Construction of two new girls' schools Quanchugha Girls High School and Qara Kent Girls High School will also be completed in 2015.



Last year's medical team trip to Kenya included a six-member rehabilitation therapy team. For the first time, a pediatrician and a pediatric therapist were able to work with clients simultaneously.

The rehab team alone saw about 400 clients, including this child who was taught to use a computer by pecking the keys with a modified device on his head. The entire medical team saw nearly 2,000 patients.



This Kenyan woman prunes her passion fruit vines at a project developed through table banking.

Table banking is a growing program backed by ABW, allowing entrepreneurs to take out microloans to start small businesses.

Repayments are made into a cash pool from which further loans can be drawn.

**Sustainable
change to improve
lives.**