



Bringing clean water to impoverished rural areas is just one of the life-changing projects supported by members of the Church through LDS Philanthropies.

G BLESSED TO GIVE

By Evelyn Jeffries

How the work of LDS Charities is blessing countless lives around the world—including those of the givers.

John and Elizabeth (real names withheld by request) live in a modest home with their six young children. John worked as an electrical engineer for a company in which he purchased a small amount of stock. Several years later, John and Elizabeth redeemed the stock for far more than they had paid. About that same time, their last child was born. When the child didn't breathe and couldn't cry, his life was saved through neonatal resuscitation. Elizabeth says, "We were so grateful the doctors and nurses knew what to do and had the wherewithal to help our child to live. We realized we could have lost him."

When the stock sale proceeds arrived, John and Elizabeth decided they wanted to help somebody else. An article in the *Church News* described how neonatal

resuscitation could save many babies through training and technology. John also recalled that while on his mission in Argentina, he had served a family that had asked for a blessing for their sick baby. John was appalled by conditions at the hospital when he went to give the baby a blessing. The baby later died, and John felt bad that the child couldn't be saved.

With John's mission memories and their own recent experience in mind, the couple donated half of their stock sale earnings to help newborn children in developing countries. Elizabeth explains: "We were trying to say thank you to Heavenly Father for the things he'd already given us. We're excited that a relatively small amount of money can make a huge difference in another country. We're so impressed by what's going on. I hope at some point that we can do something else."

LDS Philanthropies

Elizabeth and John made their donation through LDS Philanthropies, a department of the Office of the Presiding Bishopric responsible for encouraging and facilitating voluntary donations to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its charities. These donations are made by members who feel that they can afford to give after paying tithes and other offerings. Those charities include Humanitarian Services, the Missionary Fund, the Perpetual Education Fund, the Temple Patron and Construction Funds, Church and Family History, and the four LDS universities and colleges.

McClain Bybee, Managing Director of LDS Philanthropies, explains that the role of LDS Philanthropies is to be “the matchmakers—to learn what the donors’ dreams are and what cause they want to support, and then match them with that program in the Church that can help them fulfill their dream. The Church is the charitable organization that sponsors these programs, the Brethren approve these programs for the support required, and the various Church institutions are the vehicles for carrying out that work. It’s an amazing and effective system. And it’s done the Lord’s way.”

Those who donate through LDS Philanthropies come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are well-known and might be considered wealthy. But many come from modest backgrounds and live otherwise ordinary lives in ordinary neighborhoods. What distinguishes them is that when the Lord has blessed them beyond what they really need, their eyes and hearts have turned to those with unmet needs. They show how ordinary people can turn their own blessings into blessings for others.

“I’ve Always Had Enough”

Leah Christensen grew up on a farm in Bloomington, Idaho, USA. Her parents barely had enough to support the family of 10, much less to finance college. In 1949, Leah borrowed \$200 from her former 8th-grade teacher

“It’s an amazing and effective system. And it’s done in the Lord’s way.”

to pay the first semester’s tuition at LDS Business College in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. Although a “nervous little country girl,” she loved the one-year course. After she completed it, College President Kenneth Bennion recommended her for a secretarial position with the Dean of Students at then Utah State College. Leah accepted the position as she had discovered her natural abilities and her love of learning. She went on to earn a degree in business education and then a master’s degree.

Years later when she was widowed for the second time, Leah tithed the proceeds from her husband’s insurance settlement and then made a significant gift to the LDS Business

College. A matching donor doubled the amount of her gift, and Leah hopes to increase that endowment even more. Now over 80 years old, she says, “Those nine months with LDS Business College played such a significant role in my life. I’d like others to have the same success I had as a result of borrowing that \$200 from my 8th-grade teacher. I’ve always had enough, and those who have enough



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE LEWIS, BYU-IDAHO

should share with those who don't. I've always felt the blessings from giving to others are greater than those I'd receive otherwise. I'm not a wealthy woman, but if there's anything left, it will go to [charity]. Our wealth is not ours. It belongs to the Lord."

"I Feel Like a Different Person"

George (real name withheld by request), a retired research physicist, says his charitable giving began "for selfish reasons." Following his wife's death in 2002, he wrote their love story. In doing so, he realized her greatest gift was charity. George felt he needed to acquire her same gift. The scripture that motivated him was Moroni 7:47: "Charity is the pure love of Christ . . . and whoso is found possessed of [charity] at the last day, it shall be well with him."



PHOTOGRAPH BY JUSTIN ANDREWS, PERPETUAL EDUCATION FUND

Above and left: Advanced education, vocational or academic, is key to both family financial security and the capacity to make a greater contribution in the community.

George was interested in the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF) proposed by President Hinckley in 2001.¹ So he started donating to the PEF on a regular basis. He also started traveling to Central and South America, where he was struck by how happy the people were, even though they often had very little. On a trip to Machu Picchu, Peru,



SACRIFICE IS MADE SWEET TO US

"I pray that we will freely give. I pray that we will be touched by the feelings of others, that we will give without feelings of compulsion or expectation of gain, and that we will know that sacrifice is made sweet to us when we treasure the joy it brings to another heart."

President Henry B. Eyring, "Giving with Joy," *Liahona*, December, 1996, 14.

George met a Peruvian woman and little girl. He gave a sack of candy to the little girl. She carefully pulled out pieces of candy, and gave one to each person present before she finally put one in her own mouth. George couldn't get the incident out of his mind. He realized: "That was my Father in Heaven telling me I had a long way to go. I call it 'The Parable of the Little Peruvian Girl.' Sharing with others before yourself is obviously important to the Lord." After that George began to donate regularly to Humanitarian Services causes.

George feels he has been blessed with greater patience and love for his fellow man as a result of his charitable giving. Referring to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (see Luke 10:30–37), he said the Lord wants us to act—not just feel charity. Another blessing is the growth of his testimony, specifically the sure knowledge that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. The Holy Ghost has borne witness to him of that. George says, "It is important for people to use their agency. This is how I use mine. Charitable giving reminds us of what He did. His whole life was giving, including His ultimate sacrifice. I hope I've changed. I think I have. I feel like a different person."

From Generation to Generation

William (Bill) and Beth Brotherson were farmers and ranchers in the Uintah Basin in Utah, USA, and taught their children to give through their example. They supported many young people on missions. Bill loved studying about the setting of the Savior's life and teachings in the Holy Land. Although he never personally traveled there, Bill developed a love for the region's past spiritual history and its future significance. "It would have been wonderful to hear Jesus as he gave his Sermon on the Mount and to



Humanitarian projects supported by LDS Philanthropies bring improved health and nutrition through initiatives like measles vaccinations and promoting local food production.

walk with him as he journeyed in Palestine,” Bill once said. “But fortunately we do not need to have been there in order to follow him today. His message is universal.”

It might seem that there would be little, if any, connection between the lives of Bill and Beth Brotherson in a remote farming community in rural eastern Utah and the Church’s interests in the Holy Land. But the Lord touched the hearts of the Brothersons, prompting them to contribute generously to the creation on the Mount of Olives of a memorial to Elder Orson Hyde, who had dedicated the land of Israel for the latter-day gathering. Theirs was a quiet and crowning gift of consecration. When Bill died, his children, learning from the example he set, funded a scholarship in their father’s name.

One of his sons, Jack Brotherson, a retired BYU botany professor, and his wife, Karen, who taught in the English department, continued to give when the opportunity presented itself. In 1990 their oldest son, Mark, was killed in an auto accident. Shortly after his death, they learned Mark, who was unmarried, had a \$50,000 life insurance policy from a job he had recently taken. As the beneficiaries on the policy, the Brothersons endowed a scholarship in the History Department in Mark’s name. Also, the Brothersons have helped finance the missions of many young people from their stake, continuing the legacy left by their parents.

Tuned in to the Vision

Like the Brothersons, Kim and Jennifer Bertin have made charitable giving a family affair. A successful orthopedic surgeon, Kim was attending a medical conference at a lavish resort in Texas, USA, when the thought struck him: “Does all this really matter?” He and his wife met with an estate attorney to set up a family foundation for charitable giving. Their five children sit on the board, and as a group they make decisions about donating to various charities. The children continually search out and research causes. Jennifer says, “You haven’t affected charity until you pass it on to the next generation. Our children are ‘tuned in,’ with a vision that has extended past their daily lives.” Kim adds, “We were concerned about how to instill in our children a desire to help others.” Kim and Jennifer feel they have done this by teaching their children to give to those in need.

In 2008, the Bertins made a trip to Uganda and Kenya to see firsthand the results of some of their donations. Jennifer compiled a beautiful scrapbook of narration and photographs showing a water treatment facility, gardens, and farms with cows, pigs, and chickens—all designed to raise standards of living and encourage self-reliance. Kim described the experience as “Christmas,” a “spectacular eye-opening” as to what the Church is doing with the donations through service missionaries. He also remarked



on the incredible efficiencies of the administration of the projects. Kim and Jennifer’s observations motivated them to give even more and to encourage others to donate.

The Bertins feel they have been blessed as a result of donating to Church causes. In addition to their close ties with their children, they feel that as they have recognized others in need and done something about it, they have come to a greater realization of their own blessings.

Even small donations can bless others’ lives. Jennifer said, “Everyone can find a little bit to give in a way they haven’t thought of before. . . . If one million people donate \$5 each, the resulting \$5 million will have an unbelievable impact. Everyone can be part of the unbelievable.”

Giving the Lord’s Way

Ron Taylor, communications manager for LDS Philanthropies, says, “Motivation for giving comes from a wide variety of reasons, but when we follow the Spirit’s promptings to give, we find great joy and spiritual strength in doing so. At the same time, the Lord uses those who consistently give as a channel to bless the lives of others. He blesses them with an abundance—whatever that may be. All are edified. It’s a wonderful partnership with the Lord.” ■

NOTE

1. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Perpetual Education Fund,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 51.

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THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GIVE

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) said: “Our Heavenly Father expects that we do more with our riches than build larger barns to hold them. Will you consider what more you can do to build the kingdom of God? Will you consider what more you can do to bless the lives of others and bring light and hope into their lives?”¹

Donations often come not from prosperous business people or large philanthropic foundations and trusts, but from devoted members who have lived carefully and frugally, conscious of their stewardship over the gifts the Lord has given them. Making a donation can be as simple as writing a check and filling out one or more of the “Other Offerings” entries on tithing slips, or as complex as establishing a testamentary trust or charitable foundation. Some donors investigate the various approved opportunities online and make a donation through ldsp.org.

Many donors use Facebook and other online social networking tools to combine resources to increase donations to causes within the Church.

Donors may give cash or any number of other assets, such as stock or real estate. Timing of gifts may vary. Donors may wish to make a gift now, or they may want to consider planning a gift for the future. LDS Philanthropies, along with the family’s professional advisors, can help donors determine a course that best fits their situation. There are no costs associated with LDSP services, and 100 percent of every gift goes to the institution and purpose intended by those making the gift.

For information on donating to LDS Philanthropies call 1-800-525-8074, e-mail at ldspanthropies@ldschurch.org, or go to ldsp.org.

NOTE

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Earthly Debts, Heavenly Debts,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 40.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY

Tithing and Other		Ward
Date		
Name (last, first, middle). Use the same		
Full address		
Tithing	Fast offering	\$
Ward missionary		
General missionary		
Book of Mormon		
Humanitarian aid		
Temple construction		
Perpetual education		
Other (specify)		