

# Giving Thanks By Giving Back

*"We make a living by what we get;  
we make a life by what we give."*  
~ Winston Churchill

It's the time of year when we stop to give thanks for our plethora of riches: families, shelter, education, medical care, jobs. Our lives may not be perfect, but those of us who travel realize that we have so much more than most people in the rest of the world. It's no wonder that travel philanthropy is flourishing.

La Jollan Deborah Lindholm made a big commitment to giving back when she started Foundation for Women in San Diego in 1997. Since then, she has raised more than \$5 million and helped to change the lives of more than one

million people living in dire poverty through microcredit loans. Recently, La Jolla residents Bill and Michelle Lerach joined Lindholm in Liberia where the Foundation for Women has a microcredit program aimed at moving that country toward poverty eradication. ([www.foundationforwomen.org](http://www.foundationforwomen.org))

Lindholm is also a member of Women Moving Millions, a community of individuals committed to the advancement of women and girls. When we spoke recently, she said that "a few good men" also support WMM, including Jim Greenbaum of Rancho Santa Fe. I haven't met Greenbaum, but I've browsed his foundation's Web site and am in

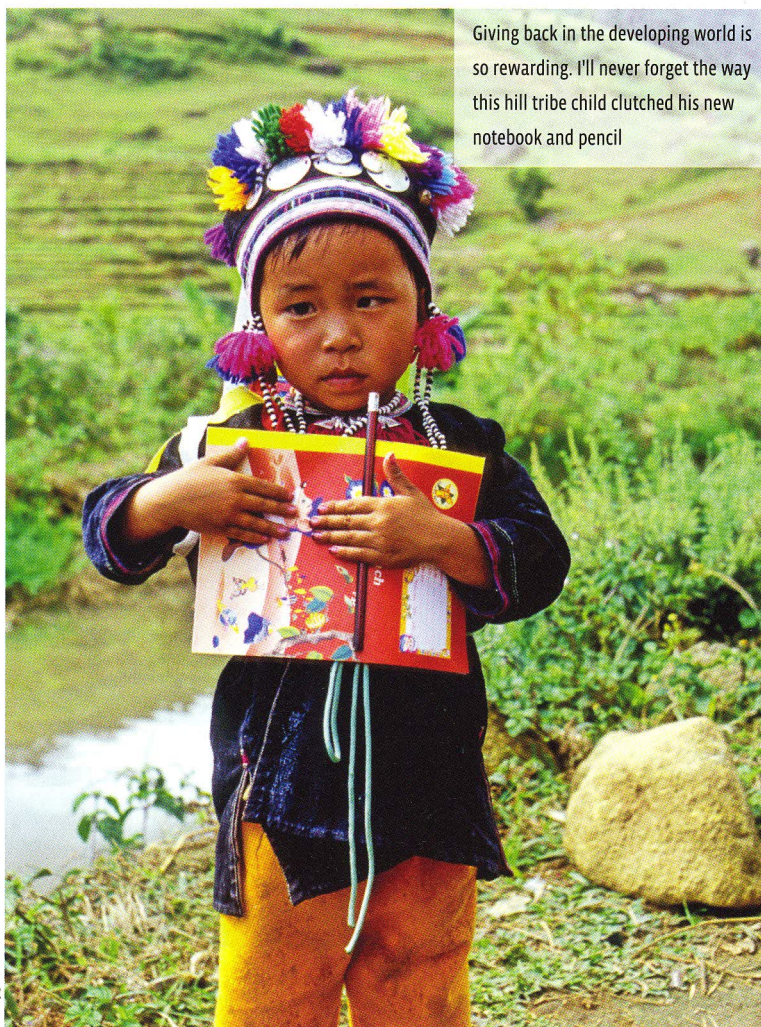
awe of everything he's done for women, children, and animals — and I love his maxim: "Being a bystander to suffering is not an option." ([www.womenmovingmillions.org](http://www.womenmovingmillions.org), [www.greenbaumfoundation.org](http://www.greenbaumfoundation.org))

Don't happen to have a megabuck to spare? It doesn't matter. According to Lindholm, you can put a child in school in Liberia for the cost of one Starbucks coffee.

When my husband and I traveled to Nisbet Plantation Beach Club on the Caribbean island of Nevis, my suitcase contained about \$15 worth of school supplies. During our stay, we visited a nearby school and, after a warm welcome from the kids and the head mistress, sat down and shared stories and songs. The smiling faces of the children we met that day are as memorable as the swaying palm trees, beautiful sea views, and Caribbean rhythms of the island.

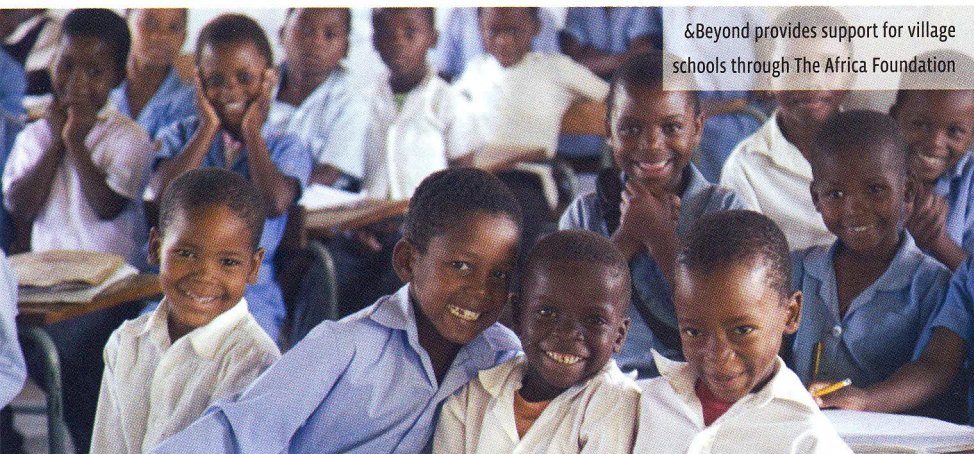
Nisbet is a member of Pack for a Purpose, a nonprofit organization that helps travelers who want to make a difference in the places they visit. You can use their Web site to learn about resorts around the world and the community programs they support. Did you know that a five-pound package in your suitcase could include 400 pencils, or five deflated soccer balls with inflation device, or a stethoscope, a blood pressure cuff, and 500 Band Aids? ([www.packforapurpose.org](http://www.packforapurpose.org))

The operators of Lisu Lodge in Northern Thailand aren't part of Pack for a Purpose, but they contribute part of the lodge's >>

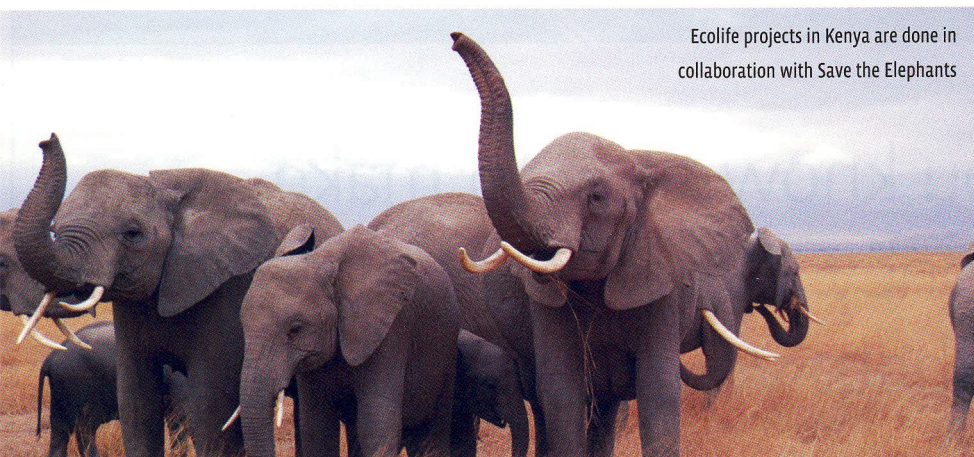


Giving back in the developing world is so rewarding. I'll never forget the way this hill tribe child clutched his new notebook and pencil





&Beyond provides support for village schools through The Africa Foundation



Ecolife projects in Kenya are done in collaboration with Save the Elephants



Deborah Lindholm visits Liberia, where the microcredit program started by Foundation for Women is thriving

<< income to the Village Bank, which is used for small business loans, agriculture projects, education, and health care. How would you feel if you knew that part of the cost of your vacation was paying for a school bus? ([www.asian-oasis.com/product/lisu-lodge-hilltribe-adventure](http://www.asian-oasis.com/product/lisu-lodge-hilltribe-adventure))

Elevate Destinations offers small

group adventure trips that benefit local communities and conservation efforts around the globe. These include custom journeys, donor travel, and volunteer trips.

([www.elevatedestinations.com](http://www.elevatedestinations.com))

Likewise, Foundation for Sustainable Development offers two distinct types of philanthropic

travel. Its Pro Corps volunteers serve the communities they visit by teaching computer skills, helping to establish urban gardens, and fostering children's love of the arts. Its Traveling Giving Circles program brings donors to visit an FSD site as observers, and they then decide which projects they want to fund — the perfect combination of philanthropy and authentic travel.

([www.fsdinternational.org](http://www.fsdinternational.org))

The Ecolife Foundation, based in Escondido, was founded by Bill Toone, formerly the curator of birds at the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park. While there, he played an important role in saving the California condor. Today, he oversees conservation projects in Africa and Mexico.

Once a year, Toone leads a trip to Central Mexico's Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve "to witness one of the most exhilarating displays in nature." Their next trip is February 23 to March 3, 2013 — timed to coincide with the arrival of millions of Monarch butterflies from Canada and the northeastern United States. The forest highlands are their winter haven, but the harvesting of trees for fuel wood threatens this habitat. Since 2004, Ecolife Foundation has installed over 500 fuel-efficient stoves and planted over 62,000 trees in and around the butterfly overwintering site, which protects the lives of the indigenous people as well as the butterfly habitat. You can download the trip brochure from the Ecolife Web site. From time to time, Toone and his wife take a small group to Kenya and Uganda to witness wildlife and learn about more of the organization's conservation projects. >>



<< ([www.ecolifefoundation.org](http://www.ecolifefoundation.org))

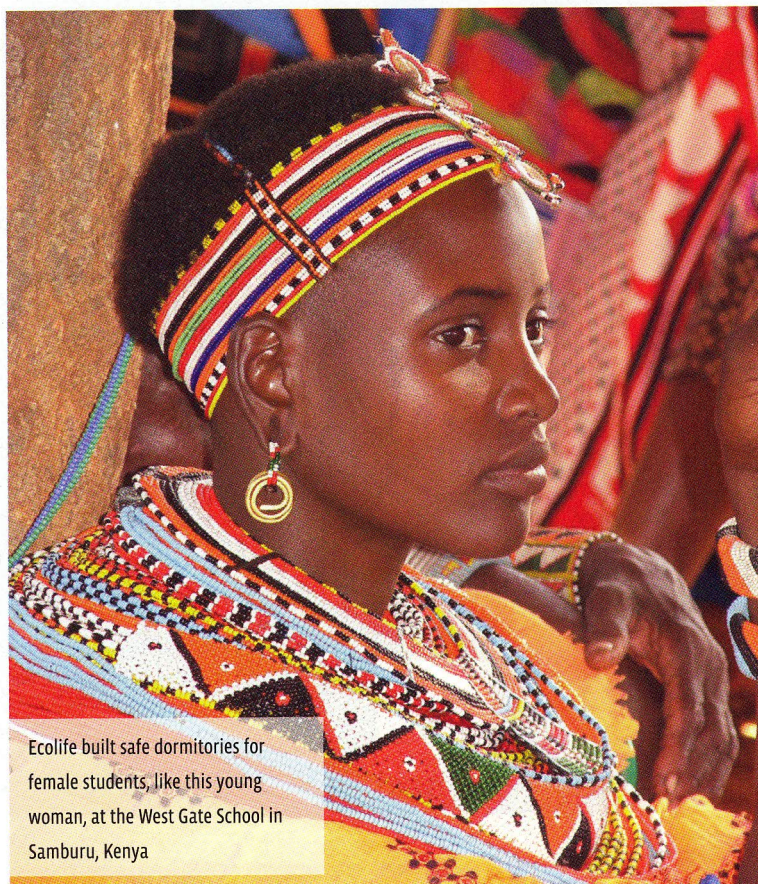
Several years ago when I visited Africa, &Beyond (formerly CC Africa) won a special place in my heart because the organization introduced me to the concept of giving back. This company is renowned for its philosophy of caring for the land, its wildlife, and its people. When we made arrangements to stay at Phinda Private Game Reserve in South Africa, &Beyond suggested I might want to bring school supplies to donate in the neighboring community. ([www.andbeyond.com](http://www.andbeyond.com))

That experience was so rewarding that I am always on the lookout for similar opportunities. Before starting out from Sapa, Vietnam on a photography excursion, we stopped at a public market and loaded up on notebooks and pencils that we distributed in isolated hill tribe villages.

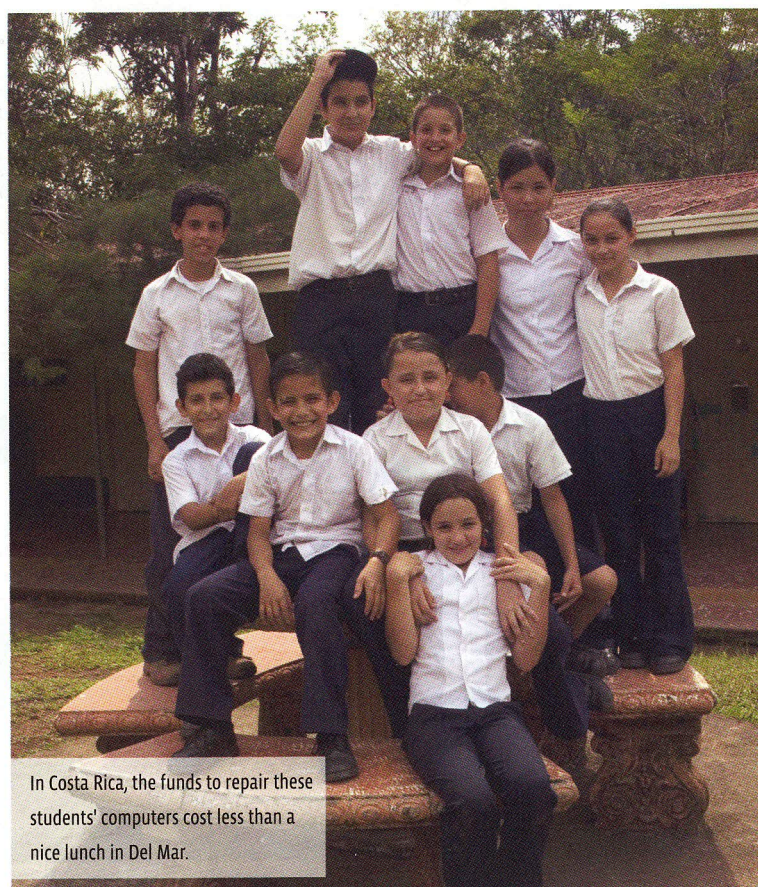
No time to shop? Opportunities for making a difference are everywhere. In Costa Rica, we provided the funds to repair the computers needed for a long-distance learning program for less than the cost of a nice lunch on the North County coast.

In Oman, we learned that our guide was from Nepal. When I asked Ram Sunder Thapa why he was working so far from home, he explained that he and his wife ran a school in Nepal for children who otherwise would be denied an education. His income paid their expenses. I thought about the free education that we take for granted in the U.S. and handed him the gift of a Nepalese teacher's annual salary. It wasn't November, but it was a great thanks-giving day.

ELIZABETH HANSEN



Ecolife built safe dormitories for female students, like this young woman, at the West Gate School in Samburu, Kenya



In Costa Rica, the funds to repair these students' computers cost less than a nice lunch in Del Mar.