

Packing with a purpose

WHILE ON AN African safari, Costco member Rebecca Rothney experienced a life-changing "aha!" moment.

Every time she and her husband, Scott, had visited Africa, they were each allowed 45 kg of checked luggage plus a 18 kg carry-on, but were limited to 11 kg once on safari. In 2002, after visiting a local school in Botswana sadly lacking in supplies, Rothney found a creative way to help.

"I thought, 'I've got 200 pounds [90 kg] of free shipping,' so we contacted [tour operator] Wilderness Safaris, asked what the schools needed, and I told friends, 'Don't buy a coffee this week; get some school supplies—I'm going back to Africa,'" recalls Rothney, of Raleigh, North Carolina.

On that trip, the Rothneys brought 63 kg of school supplies and footballs to be distributed locally. Another time, they packed 77 kg of children's clothing for an orphanage. And thus was born Pack for a Purpose (www.packforapurpose.org), a non-profit organisation that has since inspired travellers worldwide to donate more than 4,000 kg of supplies to 275 lodgings that support community-based projects in 45 countries on five continents.

Travellers can scroll through the

organisation's website to find a participating lodging that accepts drop-offs. Supply lists on the site are provided by the community-based projects that will receive them.

The website also features inspirational stories from people who have participated in the programme—and made differences in countless lives.

Rothney is quick to dismiss any praise. She says, "I'm not Mother Teresa; I'm just trying to empower individuals with information so they can make a good choice. If I can do this, anyone can." —Wendy Helfenbaum



Scott and Rebecca Rothney

Dickson Senkunda shares the gift of reading with Ugandan students



Teach the Children

WHAT DICKSON SENKUNDA remembers most about growing up in his native Uganda was the scarcity of books. Even today, many schools in Uganda lack libraries and are lucky to have one textbook for every 20 students, leaving the country with a literacy rate of only 68 per cent.

Senkunda, who eventually emigrated to America, where he completed his education, wants to help children in Uganda have the kind of meaningful lives that books and literacy can provide. Dr. Seuss and Charles Dickens are

helping him do that. Since 2008, Teach the Children, www.teachthechildrenuganda.org, the non-profit organisation Senkunda founded with his wife, Heather, has shipped more than 2,268 kg of books to schools in Uganda from their home in Shoreline, Washington.

One of the proudest moments in his life occurred last year when Senkunda visited one of the 13 schools the programme helps. "Students who couldn't read when we first started the programme were so excited to sit

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down and read to us. It was just amazing," says Senkunda, a senior business analyst for United Health Care. He was even more inspired when he learned that students were bringing books home to share with their families—and then bringing them back in perfect condition.

The group accepts donations of books and/or cash. Teach the Children uses monetary donations to visit schools, build bookshelves and purchase new books. Its main goal now is to provide the schools with up-to-date textbooks.

Running Teach the Children is a challenge for the Senkundas, who work full time and have three daughters under the age of 4, but it is one they embrace wholeheartedly. "To see the light in the eyes of the children and the joy that they experience in learning is the reward," Senkunda says. "They soak it all up, and it is so humbling to be able to watch it all unfold."

—Fran R. Schumer