



Kenny (back row), Roger (left) and Bosco (right) each have an amazing story of courage to tell. Nadine was instrumental in changing the course of their lives and lives of many still living in Uganda.

Nadine Hart

Bringing
hope thanks to
one life

By **Julie Koerber**

Photography by **Gregory Miller** and courtesy of **Nadine Hart**

When Nadine Hart, a physician's assistant with St. Vincent Healthcare, travels overseas to the far reaches of Uganda, the sights and sounds are worlds apart from her first visit seven years ago.

Once emaciated children and adults are now vibrant families with big smiles and a sparkle in their eyes. Contaminated waterholes, that brought sickness and death, have been replaced with deep water wells and irrigation systems. Families who worried about their next meal now help run empowerment farms to sustain them and bring income for their families. Because of her humble nature, Nadine Hart will be the last to admit she played a big part in all of this. Others will tell you that her first trip to Uganda planted the seeds to bring hope to parts of Uganda that were once ravaged by poverty and war.

"I just think there is room for love wherever you go," Nadine says today. "Hearts are as large as the world can be."

If you connect the dots of Nadine's past, you're sure to find a few miracles. It began in 2003 when Nadine realized she had reached a professional crossroads in life. After devoting much of her career to geriatric care, she found herself working part time

in nursing home care and realized, "It was time for a little change."

With dreams of bringing her medical background to those desperate for care, Nadine heard the Peace Corps calling her name. She had learned Spanish thinking she would end up in South America. But, come to find out, the Peace Corps

the country and the people." She was readying herself for the trip when she hit a snag with one of the medical tests needed. "I had a TB test done. With my microbiology background in Florida, I had done a lot of work with HIV/AIDS. I did testing and set up a lot of TB cultures, so I turned up positive for TB exposure.

The government didn't like that."

What could have been seen as the end of the road actually fueled Nadine all the more. She went to her higher-ups at St. Vincent Healthcare for advice and they urged her to take a three-month leave of absence to follow her heart. She says today, "How could I pass up an opportunity like that?" Nadine adds with passion in her voice, "It was almost as if God was telling

me there was another path I needed to go on and he was carrying me in a different direction." Nadine knew deep in her heart that she needed to travel to Uganda.

It was just such an incredible experience. The families would bring these children to me from all over. It was very different from people having a very long life and then helping them die with dignity that way.

had other plans. Nadine explains, "They assigned me to the country of Uganda, which I had never heard of before. I researched it and I just fell in love with

The path to Africa is one few of us could travel. Nadine aligned herself with an organization volunteering end-of-life care for children dying of AIDS. Tiny and frail children would come to her in their last painful days. With tears in her eyes, she shares, "It was just such an

the dark just lying there most of the time because he was hurting too bad to even walk." Nadine promised she'd be back for him.

When she returned to Billings, friends and colleagues kept asking to hear the stories from her trip. "I had this picture up on one of my picture boards of Kenny with his hurt hips and everything. One of the orthopedic surgeons said out of the blue that he would be willing to operate on him. I went to St. Vincent's and they said, 'absolutely.'"

In 2004 at 21 years of age, Kenny made the trek to the United States. "He had two total hip replacements, generously donated by

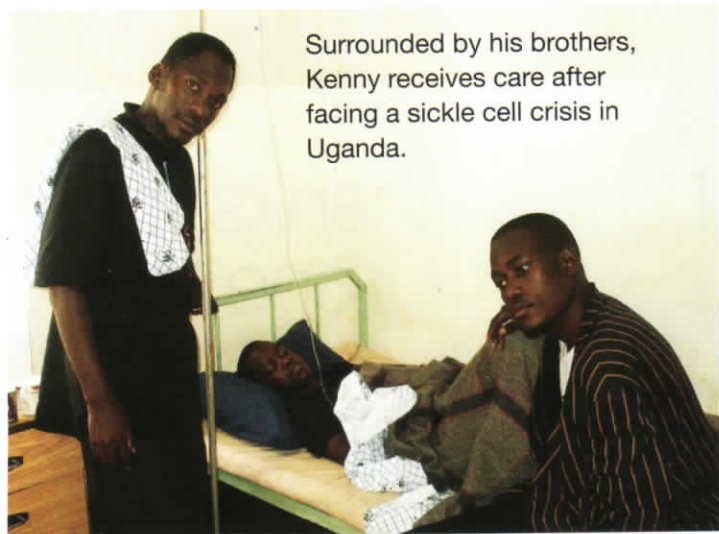
ups and downs. After a second surgery, he was in an incredible amount of pain. "I felt like I was failing," Nadine says. "I went to church and I was just sitting in the back praying. I kept saying, 'Oh help Kenny, please. Let me know what to do.' And as I was praying, here was this man talking from Far Reaching Ministries." The man, a visiting speaker, was there to talk about his work in Northern Uganda with the children displaced by the horrific acts of violence at the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army, a brutal regime whose goal was to overthrow the Ugandan government. Nadine had no idea the man would be there that day. It didn't take long for Nadine to realize, "There was some reason why this was happening. I knew I needed to go back to Uganda and help those people."

Nadine has since partnered with Far Reaching Ministries to bring new life to war torn areas of Northern Uganda. While the scars of violence remain, projects there have helped children attend school. Families are learning to farm. Women are generating income with paper bead and purse projects. Nadine says, "Oh, it is just incredible from one year to the next! More than anything, the people we are helping feel worthy – like someone cares about them. We have given them hope."

Since 2003, there has been a steady stream of mission trips to all parts of Uganda. On the second trip, Nadine and a team of others manned a village clinic to try to turn the tides of malaria. Nadine knew clean drinking water, not medicine, was the only real solution. "Those children were dying all the time because of a lack of clean water. They were drinking out of a muddy pond," she says.

When the team got home back to Montana, they immediately started fundraising for a deep water well. A surprise call also awaited Nadine. "Here comes someone who knows of a foundation that gives grant money to water projects. They called and said, 'We heard about your project and we want to fund your water well.'" Nadine laughs and says, "That call just came out of the sky. I said, 'OK, I'll write the grant!'" That \$10,000 paid for a deep water well that instantly impacted up to 6,000 lives.

Surrounded by his brothers, Kenny receives care after facing a sickle cell crisis in Uganda.



incredible experience. The families would bring these children to me from all over." With a sobering look, she admits, "It was very different from people having a very long life and then helping them die with dignity that way."

While traveling through some of the roughest and most remote parts of Uganda, a young man named John was often her guide. He suffered from Sickle Cell Anemia – a potentially deadly disease which causes misshapen red blood cells and prevents the proper blood flow to a person's organs. As her stay in Uganda was about to wrap up, Nadine told John it was time for her to care for him. She says she was surprised when he looked at her with emotion in his eyes and said, "No, if you can only help one person, then you need to help my brother, Kenny. He is so much worse off than I am."

"Kenny wasn't deemed worthy of living by most people," Nadine says today. When John led Nadine to him, he was bedridden, crippled from the side effects of sickle cell. Having been orphaned at a young age, "His brothers did everything possible to take care of him, but they could barely squeak out a meager existence themselves. He was left alone in

Dr. Dean Sukin, and now walks perfectly," Nadine shares. With the surgery came an opportunity for an education that Kenny never had before. Private tutoring helped him to get his GED in three years and Nadine says, "He is at college in Computer Science at Rocky Mountain College!"

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When Nadine looks back at all the hoops she jumped through to get Kenny care, she says simply, "He was the one that I could help – out of all the children that were dying in front of me." She adds, "One life is important. His life is important and if I can only help one life - that is where I am starting."

While Kenny was on the road to recovery, it didn't come without a few

It was just the start of many blessings to come.

That led Nadine to the next chapter in her life, when she began the work that would one day become Hope 2 One Life – a faith-based, non-profit organization aimed at providing clean water and education for impoverished people living in under-developed countries. Hope 2 One Life began by those who were touched by Kenny's life with hopes of helping others just like him.

With the momentum building, Nadine soon dreamt about raising awareness about the world's water crisis right in her own hometown. She wanted people to know that nearly one billion people, one in eight, lack access to clean water and that thousands die each day because of it. "I got this idea that we were going to do a World Water Day event in Billings and Walk for Water," she says. In 2008, she launched the first event. It raised enough money to support two projects in Uganda, two in Tanzania and one in Rwanda. And now, every March she rallies those in the community for a Walk for Water event.

"Through those steps, I met different medical professionals and water experts. It's only strengthened the mission to help clean water flow to the poorest parts of the world," Nadine admits.

She's witnessed a ripple effect. Through AIDSpirit USA in Billings, 43 Ugandan children orphaned by AIDS have had their education and care sponsored. A group of St. Vincent Healthcare nurses traveled with Nadine a year and a half ago and ended up spearheading the construction of a medical clinic in a small Ugandan village. Nadine smiles and says, "It's up to the walls and almost completed!" Another project brought drip irrigation bucket kits to help spark gardening projects. Vision Beyond Borders, based in Sheridan, Wyoming, jumped in and donated all the seeds to get the farms started. When a warehouse of medical equipment was donated from Provision International, Nadine says, "Here comes, out of the blue, these nice 'electronics guys' from Grace Bible Church in Laurel." The men were able to revamp an x-ray machine and help ready other medical equipment ready for a trip overseas. That equipment



Nadine visits with children of Katamarwa school in Rakayata village after the children received a shipment of books and donated back packs from Billings. To find out how to donate to the cause, see "Pack Up Some Love" on page 38.

was delivered during a mission trip last February.

Looking at how a few seeds from Nadine's first trip have grown into a flourishing mission to help others who never would have otherwise connected, Nadine says simply, "These arms just kind of grow, you know, and really lovely people just come together."

And, that leads to Nadine's next big adventure. Just a little more than a year

ago, Nadine got a call from Kenny's anesthesiologist, Debbie Jones. The doctor's daughter, Rachel, while attending Will James Middle School, was inspired after hearing the stories of the Ugandan children and how few even own one book. That resulted in a book drive with thousands of books raised from Billings children for Ugandan children.

"I am working to get, not only their books to them, but how do you give a child

Pack Up Some Love

Drive hopes to raise up to 1,000 packs for Ugandan kids

When Ugandan children earn a chance toward an education, they need a whole lot more than brains to get them through. They need their own books, a uniform, pens and pencils and more before they can even step foot inside the school. Hope 2 One Life is holding a drive to raise enough money to outfit up to 1,000 children with so-called love packs. Each pack contains:

- A book
- 12 pens, 12 pencils, pencil sharpener
- 12 subject books
- School uniforms
- 3 pairs of underwear
- A "Love Covers ...T-shirt
- A mosquito net
- Blanket
- Toothbrush, toothpaste and soap

If you'd like to help pack up some love for these children, please contact Nadine Hart at 861-3166 or deliver your 100% tax deductible donation to: Hope 2 One Life Attn: "Love Packs", P.O. Box 21112, Billings, MT 59104.

a book but not give them an opportunity to attend school?" Nadine asks. "Over there, you have to have a uniform. You have to have shoes. You have to have pens and pencils. You have to have your subject books. In order to prevent malaria for them to be able to attend school, we want to give them a mosquito net. We want to give them a blanket so that they can stay warm at night and we want to give them soap and a toothbrush too." Package it all together and it's called a "love pack." Each one costs roughly \$35 to put together. In addition to trying to help up to 900 children by giving them a love pack Nadine adds, "The ladies who are actually sewing the uniforms – they will get a sewing machine when they are done, so that they can start their own little income generating projects."

If you ask those who have partnered with Nadine to bring these projects to life, they have nothing less than admiration for the woman who pounds the pavement daily to make a difference. Tom Osborne, water expert and owner of Hydrosolutions in Billings, joined


Nadine on one mission trip in 2008. He says to say Nadine is courageous is an understatement. "She has gone from refugee camp to refugee camp looking for the families of lost children, enduring 12-hour bus rides on dusty, dirty roads in blistering heat, facing malaria and all kinds of things that are hazardous. She just jumps in and the rest of us hang on." Tom says seeing this ministry in action, "You realize it really is bigger than you."

Dr. Marty Lucas, a physician with Hematology and Oncology Centers of the Northern Rockies, met Nadine when she began caring for Kenny. She's since joined Nadine on a mission, and is now President of the Hope 2 One Life organization. "Nadine has a love for the people of Uganda and it is so intense that she will give the shirt off her back if she has to," Dr. Lucas says. "When she makes a promise, she keeps it. Even if it means driving through roads marked with land mines to bring a cow to a family, she will do it."

As Nadine looks forward to future mission trips to Uganda, she knows that one day Kenny will make the trek with her from Montana, but this time, he won't be coming back. He'll be going to stay in Uganda. Nadine says, "He has missed so much in life that he wants to fast forward a little. Here he is, 26 years old, and he is still struggling to get through." And while she knows it will be tough to watch him return to his home country



permanently, she says he has a gift that he wants to share with the children of his village. "He wants to teach children things that he never was taught. He wants to teach them computers. He wants to teach them how to read with books on tape." Nadine chuckles when she says, "We have gobs of books on tape that he won't let me give away because he can teach the kids in Uganda to read with books on tape."

Kenny is looking to graduate in two years from Rocky and at that point, he'll have a year before his Student Visa runs out. It's precious time that Nadine will cherish. With a warm smile she knows that one life – Kenny's life – has ignited hearts both here in Billings and thousands of miles away to the lands of Uganda. As she looks to life without her "son", she says, "I just take it one day at a time. I just live for the day and that's how I get through. I am just grateful for every single moment of it. It's just a huge blessing. It's a miracle really" she pauses and adds in a very humble voice, "and it's not about me." 

Editor's Note: If you'd like to learn more about Nadine's work and what projects she is working on, please visit www.hope2oneline.org.

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