

Steve James' Story: From Tragedy to Triumph

Steve James was inspired by the generosity of his daughter, Brittney. In 1998, then-16-year-old Brittney chose to sponsor a Kenyan boy, Newton, through the Christian Children's Fund. She hoped one day to meet the young boy in person. But she never made it to Kenya. In 2001, Brittney was discovered dead in her apartment. She was only 19.

To honor her memory, Steve went to Kenya to meet Newton six months later. He also gathered supplies and medical equipment to take on his trip. As a certified registered nurse anesthetist, Steve wanted to use his medical skills to help Kenyan patients.

But he wasn't prepared for the scope of the suffering he encountered. When he returned to the US, he told everyone about the problem of unmet medical needs in Kenya. Steve and his wife, Greta, founded Kenya Relief to help.

"There were times when we would pass out medicine from the back of a van," remembers Steve. "On one trip, we saw 800 patients a day, a total of 2,400 people . . . Unfortunately, we were unable to fully care for them because of limited resources."

A decade later, James and his team created Brittney's Home of Grace, a 60-acre orphanage outside of Migori, Kenya. Dozens of children are cared for there. Even adults receive medical care. Kenya Relief kept expanding with separate dormitories for boys and girls, a library, a cafeteria, and more. Steve was also determined to build a school and a hospital.

"There's no better place to leave a legacy than Kenya," said Steve. It's a sure bet that his daughter would agree.