

# Otis McAllister

Social Responsibility Newsletter  
April 2009, Volume III

There are constantly new stories about ordinary individuals doing extraordinary things – creating microfinance organizations that fund millions micro-loans worldwide, opening dozens of schools in remote villages, and educating thousands of veiled-women, hidden from the view of religious fundamentalists. We idolize these figures and strive to accomplish something as meaningful as they have.

However, we often overlook the fact that these extraordinary heroes all began the same way – as ordinary individuals who saw an opportunity for improvement and made the move to instill change. And what we sometimes don't realize is that for every acclaimed hero, there are ten individuals working just as tirelessly to improve the lives in some other community. They go relatively unnoticed by the general population because we don't have a best-selling novel to read or a television interview to watch. Only the population affected by their actions, walking in their circles, sees the change.

At Otis McAllister, we walk in the circles of people who are trying to make changes and often times, we are fortunate enough to be able to team up with the organizations and offer our support. In some cases, support means funding a new program or providing funds to purchase land. In other cases, support is as simple as putting forth money to partially fund an individual who intends to continue implementing the change that he has initiated, with or without proper funding. These are the types of people we try to support. The ordinary individual doing extraordinary things.

## **Addison Embrey and ASDIR**

One such example is Addison Embrey, 2008 undergraduate of University of the Pacific. During his junior year, Addison studied in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, focusing on Mayan literature and history. Upon graduation he returned to Guatemala to work as an intern for ASDIR (Association for the Development of Rural Communities) – a Mayan community-based organization. During his six-month term as an intern (and the first non-Mayan to work for ASDIR), he helped develop a youth entrepreneurship program and initiated several projects. When his term was over, ASDIR was so satisfied with his work that it invited him to return for another eight months as the Youth Entrepreneurship Program Officer to fully implement the youth program.

Since its foundation in 1988 by Mayan community members, ASDIR has worked with locals to develop the communities of Totonicapán, Guatemala. Today, as a member of the Katalysis Bootstrap Fund and KIVA network, the five offices of ASDIR provide loans, services and educational programs to more than 2,500 clients.<sup>1</sup> ASDIR is staffed with a group of men and women from the Totonicapán region who speak both Spanish and K'iche and strive to create an atmosphere of acceptance and warmth for the locals that have been heavily marginalized in Guatemala's history.

As a member of Katalysis Bootstrap Fund, ASDIR was required to have a youth program by 2010 and thus the Youth Entrepreneurship Program was born.



*Above: Youth participating in the first group activity*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.kiva.org/about/aboutPartner?id=113>

The first student-designed project was to distribute and install communal garbage cans around three communities in order to address the accumulation of garbage in the streets and nearby river. Students devised the project plan and budget, contacted local authorities for permission to execute the project and presented the project to the ASDIR Board of Directors for financing. The project was designed in December 2008 and completed in mid-February 2009. Since the completion of the project, several families have followed the model and placed public garbage cans in front of their own family stores. Local authorities have decided to charge families and businesses a nominal fee to maintain the garbage cans and empty twice each month, as well as instituted a hefty fine for any family caught misusing the community garbage cans.



*Above: Addison and youth program members installing trash cans around the communities*

In April, Addison returned to Guatemala to continue with ASDIR and Otis McAllister has agreed to fund part of his budget so that he can carry on his work in Tonicapán.

To learn more about the program, or to make a donation, visit [addisonembrey.wordpress.com](http://addisonembrey.wordpress.com).

## ***Save Girls and FotoKids<sup>2</sup>***

*FotoKids* is another organization which started off with one individual's yearning to make a change and has grown into a successful organization which teaches children technological and artistic skills so that they can make a living.



*Above: Nancy McGirr and the original group, 1991*

The newest program of Fotokids, *Saving Girls*, completed its first semester of instruction in December and began the second semester in early February. Sixteen girls were selected from more than thirty applicants, based on results of various tests and academic recommendations. During the first semester, the girls met twice weekly, completing 130 hours of instruction.

Saving Girls students are taught how to use the cameras and given a point-and-shoot film camera to keep at home. In order to complete the assignments, negatives from the assignments are scanned and used in the classroom. Digital point-and-shoot cameras are used in the classroom. All assignments are followed by a peer critique to reinforce the correction of common photography errors.

Some of the class assignments include photographing neighborhood surroundings and various portraits and creating a personal page by using images to depict and

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<sup>2</sup> From *Saving Girls/Fundación de Niños Artistas de Guatemala Six Month Summary July 2008-December 2008*

describe each student. The personal pages were created in Photoshop and the girls are taught the function of each tool. Each student has her own laptop and self-portrait to practice with as well as handout to work from.

The object of the program is to help the girls develop personal goals and foster self-esteem. Consequently, assignments are designed to help girls set personal goals and develop a strong sense of identity. Throughout the semester it became apparent that the girls needed to practice developing writing skills. Classes were adjusted to emphasize how to write in a more expressive manner and different ways to tell a story.



*Above: Seattle Designer Jason Campbell lectures the FotoKids Design4Kids workshop*

Several students have moved on from Saving Girls and FotoKids to participate in workshops with media professionals in the fields of graphic design and visual digital story telling. Two girls, Jessica Lopez and Stephanie Salazar have joined Jakaramba, a Fotokids student-run design studio in Guatemala City that has produced work for the UN, Save the Children®, Pura Vida Coffee Inc, and George Lucas...just to name a few. Two other girls, Ana Yax and Juanita Gaspar, participated in a week-long workshop with Bridges to Understanding, a non-profit organization based in Seattle, WA that trains students in digital story telling using Adobe premiere software. The students produced a video about an indigenous midwife. The video will be shared with children from South Africa, the village of Dharamsala and available online at [www.bridgesweb.org](http://www.bridgesweb.org)

For more information about FotoKids or to make a tax-deductible donation, go to [www.fotokids.com](http://www.fotokids.com)

### ***Children of Faith Ministries in Vizag, India***

Anand Thandu is yet another example of an ordinary individual doing something extraordinary. As a college student in India, Anand watched threadbare children, walking barefoot in the streets, begging for grains of rice to fill their empty stomachs. Although he was eager to do something to help, Anand was short of funds and decided to continue to pursue his education, which inevitably led him to the US. In 2000, Anand was married and soon realized that his wife shared his same dreams of helping orphans. Thus, Anand returned to India with his wife Rosie and began Children of Faith Ministries (COFM).

Otis McAllister, Inc continues working COFM in Vizag, India. We've been able to find an affordable supply of rice to feed 50 children and 8 adult staff for 2009. For about \$4,200 a year, the children and staff are guaranteed three nutritious meals a day. In these times of global crisis, a small donation can make huge difference for organizations such as COFM. By helping to alleviate part of costs to provide food, the organizations' limited funds can be invested in other areas. One unique characteristic of COFM is that its ultimate goal to create a community school that will generate income, enabling the organization to be self-sustainable. By Otis McAllister providing these small donations, COFM can invest its funds into the orphanage to work toward making itself a self-sustaining organization.



*Above: Family affair as children of COFM pick up the supply of rice*



Another project that Otis McAllister is considering for 2009 is the sponsorship of six children who live at the orphanage but lack sponsors. Most of the children who live full-time at COFM are sponsored by private individuals. For \$30 per month, the cost of feeding, clothing and educating each child becomes significantly more manageable. In sponsoring these six children at COFM, Otis McAllister hopes to again help to defray the costs for the orphanage.



*Lavanya*



*Amos*



*Revathi*



*Prasanna*



*Naveen*



*Varalakshmi*

If you are interested in sponsoring any of these children or would like more information on anything in this newsletter, please contact Jessica at [jbrownlow@otismcallister.com](mailto:jbrownlow@otismcallister.com) or visit us online at [www.otismcallister.com](http://www.otismcallister.com)