

SignatureGENEROSITY: Helping Our Children Learn Firsthand the Impact of Generosity

By Blair Cunningham, Partner, Director of SignatureGENEROSITY

As parents we strive in many different ways to help our children grow and mature. For many of our children, they have had opportunities—educational, cultural, travel—that we could never have imagined when we were their age. In the midst of these opportunities, there is a desire as parents to pass along values that will shape their character for the good. Sometimes, it is possible for a single experience to teach a great lesson that has a transformational impact on a child's life while validating the very guidance that may have been expressed by a parent for many years.

This past summer my 19-year-old daughter, McKenzie, had the opportunity to work with an organization that has been building homes for the families still living in tents nearly six years after the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti. Her job was to capture, in the written word, the stories of these families in order to give others a glimpse into these survivors' lives and how we can be a part of making a difference.

This is McKenzie's story in her own words. She takes you right into the Francois family's tent, which had been pieced together from scraps and was one of the worst in the village. While McKenzie came to share with them that they would be getting a new home soon, she received a gift as well—seeing the beginning of a life transformation for the family, and the picture of "true thanksgiving and humility no matter what the circumstance."

Sharing stories like this is one way that SignatureGENEROSITY encourages people to explore how to connect what they are passionate about with what they uniquely have to give to the people or causes that are most important to them.



“ Standing in the middle of the tent village, in front of a family in need, I can't describe the joy of watching life transformation begin and knowing that I got to play a small part in it.”

We hope that you enjoy these brief glimpses into the lives of those who are truly experiencing transformational generosity.

“I Have Never Owned a House Before”

My family has wanted to help build a house in some third-world country for a year now, so when I became the Lead Storyteller for [New Story](#), we decided it would be a perfect fit.

We chose to fund the next family on the list: the Francois family, made up of mother and father Jonesse and Elina, and their six kids.

“You know that we took your photo, put your family on a website, to find a sponsor,” Rachel, our translator, told Elina as two of her daughters and son stood by.

“*Oui, oui.*”

“The family of *mademoiselle* decided to sponsor you,” Rachel continued, and all of their eyes turned to me.

With the sweetest smile on her face, Elina said, “*Merci, merci.* I want to say thank you very, very much, because after God, you have done so much for me.”

Standing in the middle of the tent village, in front of a family in need, I can’t describe the joy of watching life transformation begin and knowing that I got to play a small part in it.

We asked for permission to enter her tent, and she willingly agreed. Inside, Elina gave us more details on their living situation.

“I roll out a mat on the floor and my husband and I sleep on it, then my kids sleep in the bed.” Flies buzzed around as she spoke.

In one corner is a bed, with a table, pots and other random items lining the four walls.

“I had a tent, but then I got really sick and I sold it to pay for medicine. That was the only hope I had, to sell the tent. I was so, so sick.”

Without a tent, the family had to piece together a shelter with whatever scraps they could find—it was one of the worst tents in the village. After just a few minutes in the place they call home, sweat was dripping down our faces—the heat was unbearable.



“After God, it is you who have given me **life**,” Elina said, beginning her speech that was the most beautiful expression of gratitude and humility.

“You who have given me **hope**, and now I feel like I really have hope.”

“I have never owned my own house ever. But God had a plan for me: we found the tent first [after the earthquake]. I always wanted to rent a house after the tent but never could.”

“*Merci.*”

To be the receiver of such gratitude is the greatest gift. Not every person giving to New Story gets the experience that I had, but I know that each family exudes this gratitude for a new life and opportunity for every sponsor.

What a gift Elina and her family gave me that day! In just the few moments that I spent with them, they taught me true thanksgiving and humility no matter the circumstance.

I cannot wait to see how Elina, Jonesse, and their family start their new lives—*their new stories*.

About SignatureGENEROSITY

For many of us, the ability to make a difference brings meaning and purpose to our lives. Whether you are a parent or grandparent, child, humanitarian, co-worker, mentor, advisor, coach or friend, you have something to give—be it your time, skills, strengths, influence, wisdom or financial resources. Embracing a spirit of generosity is a way to live a more fulfilled, vibrant life and can trigger surprising ripple effects, transforming your life and the lives of others in ways you may never have imagined. SignatureGENEROSITY is SignatureFD's way to help you explore and define your own vision of generosity. For information about SignatureGENEROSITY, please contact Blair Cunningham, Partner and Director of SignatureGENEROSITY, at blair.cunningham@signaturefd.com.

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