

Fall 2020

**INGEAR**  
THE NEWSLETTER OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS

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THE NEWSLETTER OF SEWING PEACE

## Rags2Riches, Philippines: New Partner in 2020

By Reese Fernandez-Ruiz

Fall 2020 Newsletter

*[This is an introduction to our newest partner, Rags2Riches of the Philippines. We met because of a partnership between Rolex and the Washington Post, described here.]*

Rags2Riches, Inc. (R2R) is a fashion and design house empowering community artisans in the Philippines. We create fashion and home accessories out of upcycled fashion waste materials and indigenous fabrics. We sell our products and share our stories through our Philippine-based online store ThingsThatMatter.ph as well as our recently launched online store for North America, R2RShop.com.

Our goal is to be a life and livelihood partner to artisans from communities who do not have access to opportunities that will help lift their lives and families out of poverty. We do this through an end-to-end inclusive supply chain that reaches out to various urban and rural poor artisan communities that have no regular market access or opportunities for employment. We work with these communities through providing them with regular training (that we call our Artisan Academy), access to upcycled fashion waste materials, design direction and collaboration, and reliable livelihood.

For the past 13 years, we have provided sustainable livelihood to about 200 community artisans fairly and consistently. In the Philippines and in various parts of the world, artisan livelihood is intermittent, inconsistent, and seasonal. Thus, 13 years with monthly job orders is considered a huge milestone and the longest standing livelihood for the communities that we are in. We have the community building tools, learning modules, design translation expertise, and dedicated team to make R2R truly a life and livelihood partner for artisans for the long-term.

Through this partnership with P4P, we'll be able to provide more sewing machines for our artisans who are now mostly working remotely. Our artisans are used to weaving but with the help of sewing machines, they can create other products that can further supplement their income and provide for their families especially during this challenging time. ♦



# Cape to Cape: 12,000 Miles in 365 Days on a Bike

By David Loveland

Fall 2020 Newsletter

As I began reflecting on the completion, 25 years ago, of my bicycle journey from Cape Town, South Africa, to the North Cape of Norway, I felt the urge to reach out to those who helped me. The very first of those people was David Schweidenback, as he was the first person to not only help me but to believe that I could pull off this journey. I need to go back to 1992 to explain.

In July of that year, I arrived in Malawi as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Malawi is a small (less than 20 million people), landlocked, impoverished (perennially ranking in the bottom 5 in the world in terms of GDP) country in southeastern Africa. I was sent as a math teacher and was stationed in Namitambo, a remote village, with no running water or electricity, 5 miles from the nearest 2-lane, albeit dirt, road. In addition to teaching high school math, commerce, and world history to classes of 200+ students, I took on projects building teacher houses (one being my own) and installing wells to provide safe drinking water to the local villages.



In such a remote setting, transportation, as my Malawian friends would say, was a problem. While there was a market in my village on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, where I could buy fresh tomatoes, cabbage, onions, and leafy vegetables as well as choose which part I wanted of the cow or goat slaughtered in front of me, nearly all other supplies could be bought only in the city of Blantyre, nearly 25 miles away. The typical routine for getting from Namitambo to Blantyre consisted of walking the 5 miles of foot paths and dirt tracks to the main road to wait for a bus, van, or other vehicle. Always crowded with people, diaperless babies, chickens, and the

occasional goat, the buses and vans would slowly bounce their way along the rough road, stopping for passengers until not a single inch of space remained. From the door of my house to the bus station in Blantyre was, on average, a 2-hour ordeal. And the return trip was far worse, as I would have to carry whatever I bought the 5 miles home from the bus stop.

Not surprisingly, I was overjoyed when Peace Corps gave me a new mountain bike. It was cheap, with fragile components, but immediately became my primary mode of transportation. I could leave my house on the bicycle and be in Blantyre in a couple of hours. I attached a basket to the rear

rack, made myself toe clips out of strips of old inner tubes, and became an expert at maintaining and repairing the temperamental machine.

One day, as I was riding home from a shopping trip to Blantyre, I entered that area of the road where pedestrian traffic far outnumbers vehicles. Bicycle bells constantly rang out to clear pedestrians from the middle of the road. I had no bell, so I relied on my voice, politely saying “zikomo” (literally “thank you” but also used to say “excuse me”) to warn walkers of my approach.

On this particular day, I was riding along, daydreaming of where I would like to travel when my two-year service ended. I approached an elderly Malawian man and called out my “zikomo” warning. This old man, dressed in his formal brown suit, turned his head slowly to see who was coming. His eyes popped open in disbelief when he saw me. He quickly regained his composure and his friendly, open face lit up the road with a smile.

“Ah, aaaaahhhh!” he exclaimed.

“Moni, abambo,” (hello, father) I said. “Muli bwanji?” (How are you?).

“Ah, aaaaahhhh!” he exhaled again. “I am fine. And how are you?”

“I am also fine, father”

“You speak Chichewa very well, my son,” he said, continuing in his native tongue.

“No. No. Only a little bit, father,” I replied.

He motioned for me to stop and we spoke for a few minutes. That short conversation changed the course of my life. It was nothing that either one of us said that convinced me that bicycling was the way for me to travel. It was the fact that we were having this conversation at all. It was because I was riding a bicycle and not driving a car or motorcycle that I met this wonderful old man.

“Yendani bwino,” (travel well) he said as I rode away.

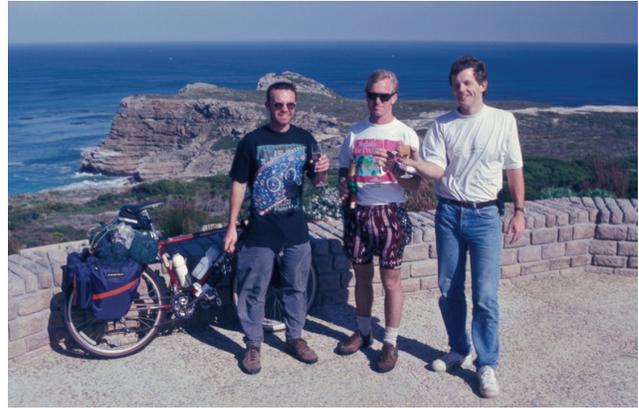
Never before had those words, heard so often, meant so much to me.

Moving the pedals was now effortless. I was thrilled to be who I was, where I was. Everything around me took on a new light. The din of a scratchy record blaring out of a run-down bottle store mingled with the drunken sounds of friendship inside was beautiful, life-affirming music. The children waved to me with their hands, their smiles, and their shining eyes.

I decided then and there that the bicycle was the mode of transportation for me. When I finished my two years of Peace Corps service, I would get a bicycle and ride somewhere. Looking at my world map made choosing the somewhere easy. I was in southern Africa. I would start at the bottom of Africa and head north. I wanted to see the Middle East and Eastern Europe, so the top of Europe was also a logical choice. Besides, I am an engineer turned math teacher. From the bottom of one continent to the top of another made simple, symmetrical sense.

I wrote over a hundred letters from my little house in Namitambo, looking for sponsorship and support, and Dave Schweidenback was one of the few who answered. There were times when I thought he was more excited about my trip than I was, and his enthusiasm helped sustain my own. He worked tirelessly to help me in any way he could and was able to get me sponsorship where I failed. He convinced Bell Sports to donate a Trek bicycle and he provided bags, tools, and accessories for me to use. His many contacts provided me with support, comfort, and friendship along my route, as well.

I left Cape Town, South Africa, on August 1, 1994. The route took me up the eastern side of Africa through Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. As I had hoped, being on the bicycle exposed me to friendly people, wild animals, amazing food, and warm hospitality. The sights, sounds, and smells of everyday African life permeated and became part of my own.



With the Sudan/Egypt border closed, I took a ferry from Eritrea, across the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia. There, I was required to take a bus out of

the country as they kind of frowned on blond foreigners cycling alone through their kingdom and I wasn't too keen on the prospect of endless sand for hundreds of miles, myself.



I was back in the saddle again from the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt, through Jordan (and the amazing Petra), and Israel. While it was peaceful and safe at the time, Syria was off limits to anyone coming from Israel, so I flew across the Mediterranean to southern Turkey, where I completed the Asian leg of my journey in Istanbul.

Crossing the Bosphorus into Europe, I headed north through Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland, taking advantage of Peace Corps headquarters and volunteers along the way. Cruising through Lithuania, Latvia (where they only gave me a 48-hour visa), and Estonia brought me to the Baltic. Another ferry took me across to Finland where I started my final stretch to Norway, pushing myself to complete what I had started so long ago. I cycled all night, taking advantage of the 24-hours of daylight above the arctic circle in July, to

reach the North Cape on the 365th day of my journey, July 31, 1995, logging over 150 miles in those 24 hours, and putting the finishing touches on nearly 12,000 miles in total.

Thanks in large part to David Schweidenback and Pedals for Progress, that year changed my life forever. I have continued to cycle, riding the same bike around Iceland and the length of Viet Nam, as well as to work nearly every day while working in Malaysia, Brazil, and here in the U.S. Most importantly, my belief in humanity, in the kindness, warmth, and compassion of everyday people, no matter their race, religion, or nationality, was forever cast in stone. ♦



# Corporate Largess and the Cape-to-Cape Trek

Back in the 1990s Pedals for Progress had a relationship with Bell Sports, at the time the largest distributor of bikes and bike parts in the United States and Canada. Bell Sports donated millions of dollars of new bicycle parts, including the bicycle that David Loveland rode from South Cape, South Africa, to North Cape, Norway.

Take a moment and think of yourself as the executive running a massive parts distribution company. How do you know you sold every single part you could have sold? The answer is there must be one left over. If you sell every one of an individual part, how do you know you couldn't have sold more? Therefore it behooves these distributors to have a small amount of excess to prove their efficiency. The problem is that the excess needs to disappear.

Before the Bell-P4P relationship, that excess product would be ground up and put in a landfill at great expense. By donating all of that product to Pedals for Progress, Bell got a tax deduction for the value of the product they gave us. The trick was that the product had to be destroyed.

In this case, destruction means permanent removal from their market. The Bell Sports corporate footprint was the United States and Canada. If the donated products were removed from the United States and Canada, they were theoretically "destroyed".

Over an eight year period, Pedals for Progress received over \$10 million of new parts from Bell Sports.

In 1993 I received an email from David Loveland. He was approaching his close of service as a Peace Corps volunteer serving in Malawi, East Africa. He had a dream of bicycling from South Cape, South Africa, to North Cape, Norway. He was going to fund the trip himself. He just needed a bike. On one hand, this is not what Pedals for Progress does, but on the other hand there was a man with a dream and maybe I could help. I contacted my contact at Bell Sports, Jim Keller, and told him about this young man who wanted to bicycle halfway across the world, south to north. After some mild negotiating, Bell Sports gave us a brand-new Trek bicycle and some accessories, which we got to Malawi. Dave did the rest.

I remember conspiring with his mother to try to convince him to stay safe in the routes he took.

I also remember the story of the danger of frogs on the road in Slovakia. These great big frogs sit out on the road and if you hit one you just slide off the road into the bushes.

I recently heard from David. He still has the bicycle. I had a Cape to Cape T-shirt in a frame at the office and I sent it to him. He wrote a great trip report for this newsletter. ♦



# Guatemala 2020: Serving People far from San Andrés

By FIDESMA

Fall 2020 Newsletter

*[Our partner of longest standing is FIDESMA, located in San Andrés Itzapa, Chimaltenango, Guatemala. Since 1999 we have shipped them more than 10,000 bikes.]*

Besides local people who buy bikes for work, school, errands, or sports, we also have people who travel many kilometers to buy bikes at our ECOLOBICI-FIDESMA store. They buy bikes for their families or to distribute or resell the bikes in their communities to have the same economic impact as we do locally.

Several of these people buy 6 or more bicycles, so we give them a discount. They help us reach families who have no way to get to our store or who live in places too expensive for us to travel to.

We have customers who arrive at our store every 3 or 4 months, sometimes to pick up orders that they have already made, sometimes to look for bikes on hand that they like.

Here are some examples:

- From Quetzaltenango, a distance of 150 kilometers, there is a person who comes to our store and buys many bikes.
- From Cobán, Alta Verapaz, which is 200 kilometers away, a person travels here two or three times a year and carries away many bicycles in his vehicle.
- From San Marcos, 300 kilometers away on the border with Mexico, a customer arrives once or twice a year and buys many bicycles.
- From Sololá, which is 100 kilometers away, we have a person who comes several times a year to buy many bicycles.



All this means that there are many non-local people who benefit from our bicycles: for business, pleasure, and many other everyday activities.

In these times of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the bicycle has been widely used because there is no other transport. Many people are able to buy a bicycle, but there are still many who have not been able to buy one. So we still need more bicycles to help us solve the problems of transportation in Guatemala. ♦

# Thailand #1, 2020

Fall 2020 Newsletter

*On 6 June 2020, staying safe from Covid-19, we loaded our first container bound for Thailand: 472 bikes. Our new partner there is the TVA Community.*

*In October we got this progress report from our partner in Thailand.*

From: <sakhutar@gmail.com>

Subject: RE: Reporting

Date: October 7, 2020 at 3:58:26 AM EDT

To: "David Schweidenback" <dschweidenback@gmail.com>

Cc: "nguyen Van Hanh" <hanh@dariu.com>

Hello David and Hanh,

I'm very sorry for the late response, as we are in a very hectic situation here in Bangkok. Since covid crisis and our country has been locked down, all business activities have been disrupted heavily. Until now the situation still has not improved.

We have the received the donated bicycle container just last month. For the import process, the donation product was fully investigated by our customs department. We are now storing the bicycles in our warehouse.

Though some parts of the country have been slowly opening up from the lock-down, we prefer to wait until the country is fully opened up. Then we will start to distribute the bicycle to areas where they are most needed. We will make sure to take photos and send you an updated report.

Again, very sorry for keeping you waiting for such a long time.

Have a nice day,

Sak



Thailand #1

Trans Valley Asia Association

~~March 28, 2020~~

June 6



Postponed to June 6  
due to  
Covid-19 Pandemic



# Uganda: Report from the Mityana Open Troop Foundation, April–September 2020

By Mathew Yawe

Fall 2020 Newsletter

Mityana Open Troop Foundation is a registered Community Based Organization, with a Vocational Skills Training Centre, which recruits and trains disadvantaged youths, including young girls formerly selling sex for survival and girls expelled from schools due to teenage pregnancies. We teach sustainable vocational skills. Before the closure of all institutions because of Covid-19, the school had a total enrollment of 105. Since we began vocational skills training in 2007, over 801 have graduated; some got jobs while others set up their own workshops.

Every graduating youth is given a sewing machine from Sewing Peace, USA. If we did not award a machine as a benefit of the program, the training would be a waste of time, as 90% of graduates can't afford to buy one.

Learners are trained for 2 years. We offer programs in Sewing & Fashion Design, Hair Dressing & Weaving, and Motor Vehicle Mechanics.

## Irene Nakazzi

Irene Nakazzi is a Sewing & Fashion project graduate of 2018. She has 2 children. After graduating, she and her fellow graduate Agnes Nanyange rented a room in Mityana Town, where they installed their sewing machines. At their shop, they make and sell curtains, mattress covers, and school uniforms. They also sell sodas and water.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, they are making face masks, charging US \$1 for 2 masks. They can make 30 masks a day.



## Achievements

- With the help of Mr. Chris Eldridge of the UK, we are getting another shipment of sewing machines from Pedals for Progress / Sewing Peace, USA.
- We are painting and renovating the Mityana Open Troop Foundation Main Block, sponsored by Mr. Colin Dippie & Mrs. Jane Louise Dippie of the UK.
- We are buying bricks and constructing a septic tank for the boys toilet, sponsored by Mr. Nino Ardizz & M/s Madison Ardizz of Canada.
- To slow the spread of Covid-19, our sewing shop is producing face masks and selling them at a low price.

## Challenges / Limitations!

- All training institutions have been under lockdown since March 2020 and cannot reopen until 2021. This has caused serious loss of income at the vocational project, as trainees pay some school fees!
- Since January 2020, we have had a shortage of sewing machines for sale, so we have nothing to sell the many schools and tailors who come to buy machines.

- We still have trouble raising funds for shipping sewing machines from Sewing Peace.
- We lack a computer, printer, and photocopier, which would make it easier to print our end-of-term exams and other office work. Currently all computer work is taken to town.
- The project requires a new embroidery machine that is faster and more reliable than the one we have.
- The organization requires a staff office and office furniture; for now our instructors don't have a place to sit and keep their kits.
- The Training Center is short of clean water. Our 2000-liter water tank is emptied in 2 days. Then students have to walk 1 km to get water from unprotected water sources.
- There are many malaria cases among project trainees, as they lack mosquito nets.
- There is a great need to renovate the leaking roofs of our training halls.

## Way Forward & Recommendations

- We are fundraising for a 2-classroom block, to enable us to create a conducive training environment and to accommodate more students.
- We wish to repair the roof of the Tyne Hall workshop, for our programs in hair dressing and weaving.
- We hope to renovate and paint the girls dormitories, sewing workshop, and Tyne Hall.
- We need to build a Boys Toilet. Boys currently share with girls, which is not recommended!
- We are asking for donation of embroidery machines, as the one we have is slow and requires mechanical servicing all the time!
- We welcome volunteers who can teach sustainable skills to our youths. We would like to partner with similar vocational training institutions elsewhere in the world. This will help us learn how they operate. Plus it will help our Ugandan youths create friendships with fellow youths and learn about their cultures.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I thank Mr. Chris Eldridge, Mr. David Schewdeinback, president of Sewing Peace, Mr. Colin Dippie & Mrs. Jane Louise Deppie, Mr. Nino Ardizz & M/s. Madison Ardizz, who have been so supportive to our organization, especially now during the pandemic. This has been and still is a very challenging season of limited funds and people losing their jobs.

I extend our thanks to the generous communities in the USA, who have been donating their used sewing machines to our needy Ugandan communities. Please, the used sewing machines, which seem not important in the USA, have really uplifted our Ugandan communities, changing peoples' lives by raising their income.

Finally, I am calling upon who ever can enable us to construct at least a 2-classroom block and who ever wishes to sponsor some needy Ugandan youths to acquire sustainable vocational skills. For each training term, each trainee requires at least US \$95, to cater for all working materials, food, and school-maintenance fees.

The struggle continues and we really would love more in-kind and financial support to enable us to deliver services to needy communities. Please continue giving a hand up, not a handout. Thanks.

Stay safe from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Yours,

Rev. Mathew Yawe

Executive Director, Mityana Open Troop Foundation

# Donation from Grandma Betty

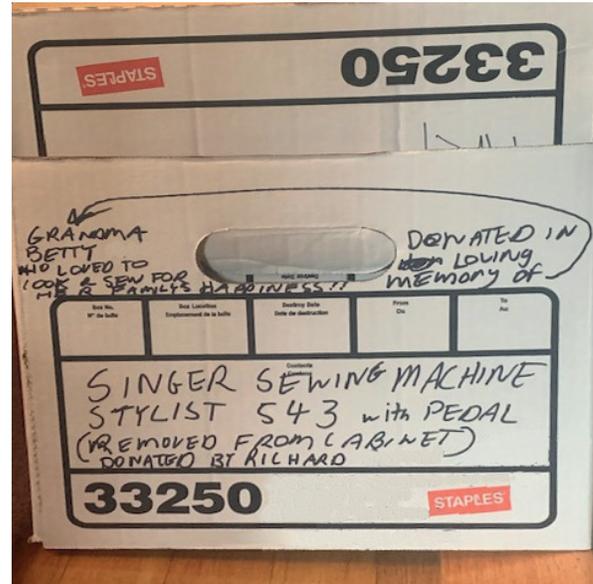
By Richard Ravin

Fall 2020 Newsletter

*[We got a sewing machine with a lovely personal message written on the box it came in. Here's the note we got when we asked the donor about Grandma Betty.]*

Dear Pedals For Progress and Sewing Peace:

Thank you for accepting the donation of the Singer sewing machine. The donation is made in the loving memory of my Grandma Betty Ravin, who used the machine to make and mend things for her family. Nothing gave my grandmother more pleasure than doing things for her grandchildren and other relatives, such as sewing, but most of all, cooking and baking, especially on the high holidays (oh, how I miss her gefilte fish!).



I have held on to the sewing machine for 25 years, during which time it got very little use. I am very happy that it will find a new home. Grandma Betty would have been very pleased to know that her sewing machine will be getting a second life that will help enable those in need to help support themselves and their family through use of her donated Singer Stylist 543, and thus perpetuating her credo – love of family.

Thank you for your charitable work that means so much to so many people in need around the world, and congratulations on redistributing more than 5,000 sewing machines and nearly 160,000 bicycles to date!

Richard Ravin

September 23, 2020

# Judy Strong, Sewing Peace Collector

Fall 2020 Newsletter

Judy Strong lives in Asheville, North Carolina. For the past several years she has been collecting sewing machines and shipping them to us via FedEx. Judy found us on the web. Here are a couple of her notes. ♦

Dear Dave,  
I have been blessed. I was poor most of my life. But I was lucky enough to be helped by others. For the past 10 years, the opportunity to help a person I will never meet make a life for themselves gives me such a high. Thank you David Schweidenback. I am giving back. I find sewing machines at yard sales, friends, Salvation Army, Goodwill... anywhere. I make boxes & take the boxed machines to FedEx. I have a new skill - I can make boxes to fit.  
Judy Strong

Hi Dave,  
Thought you could get foot pedals from the manufacturer or from broken machines. I'll be sure to only send sewing machines with foot pedals. I've sent close to 15 machines over about 7 years. Don't worry about FedEx. One less thing for you to hassle. I'm only 71. I'll keep sending them for as long as I can.  
Be well,  
Judy Strong

120-1917

# Thank you, FedEx!

Fall 2020 Newsletter

FedEx has been a supporter of Pedals for Progress since the 1990s.

They continue to support us today: For several years FedEx has shipped Judy Strong's sewing machines from North Carolina to our trailers in New Jersey. And since 1999 they've shipped us bicycles and sewing machines from the Green Mountain Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (GMRPCVs) of Burlington, Vermont. In fact, on 13 October 2020 we got a FedEx shipment of 115 sewing machines and 138 bikes, including their 4000th bike, from the GMRPCVs.

In the 1990s, the FedEx Spotlight Program produced ads featuring their customers. Here's an excerpt from their original ad featuring Pedals for Progress. ♦



**FedEx**  
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celebrating  
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*Pedals for Progress provides workers in developing countries with affordable, environmentally sound transportation. You can visit Pedals for Progress at [www.p4p.org](http://www.p4p.org).*

*El Salvador farmer. Photo by Eric Schenk.*

# P4P/SP Active Partnerships as of October 2020

ALBANIA, Tirana, PASS/EcoVolis, community development

GUATEMALA, Chimaltenango, Fundacion Integral de Desarrollo Sostenible y Medio Ambiente (FIDESMA), small-business promotion

KOSOVO, Kastriot, GoBike, community development

PHILIPPINES, Manila, Rags2Riches, economic development

SOUTH AFRICA, Pretoria, More Care International, community development

TANZANIA, Arusha, The Norbert and Friends Foundation, community development

THAILAND, Bangkok, TVA Community, community development

TOGO, Vogon, Association Défi et Révolution de la Vie Rurale, economic development

UGANDA, Mityana, Mityana Open Troop Foundation, community development

## 2020 Major Contributors

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Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School  
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Temple Beth-El Brotherhood  
Tohickon Middle School Team Infinity  
Totowa Public Library  
Westfield Rotary Club

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Bicycle Grand Total since 1991: 160,098

Sewing Machine Grand Total since 1999: 5,261

This is the hardcopy version of the HTML newsletter available on our website,  
www.p4p.org.

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