

From Planting Trees in the Wetlands of Louisiana to Volunteering at an Orphanage in Rwanda

– CMO Jeffrey Glueck Helps Redefine Tourism for Travelocity

BY JEFFREY G LUECK

From community outreach such as building homes and schools to environmental-related projects, people are simply looking for ways to give back and get more involved in important causes. Catastrophic events such as 9/11, the tsunami in Southeast Asia and Hurricane Katrina have inspired people around the world to give more of themselves.

But with demanding work schedules and hectic lifestyles, many are forced to get creative when it comes to finding the time to volunteer. Call it modern day multi-tasking, but an emerging trend is surfacing throughout the world as community members are now choosing to give back while actually on vacation, immersing themselves in unique cultures while at the same time giving back to cultures that have given so much.

One corporation has extended this philosophy company-wide. From the ground up, Travelocity is passionate about giving back and that extends to executives and employees alike. In fact, chief marketing officer, Jeffrey Glueck feels so passionate about volunteer efforts that he chose to spend part of his honeymoon in Rwanda helping orphans in need.

The Inspiration

Before getting married Jeff and his fiancé Amy Ziff dreamed of how they could create a truly unforgettable honeymoon experience. Originally they had their sights set on a destination neither one had experienced before, but to do something that represented who they are as a couple -- something that would enrich them as well as others. They abandoned thoughts of exotic places with luxurious hotels catering to their every whim and opted instead to focus on a less traditional kind of vacation. They decided to volunteer on their honeymoon.



“You don’t often get several weeks away from the office in our busy lives. We really wanted to see Africa as it really is, and meet local peoples, and give something back. It was something that spoke to both of us,” said Jeffrey Glueck, chief marketing officer for Travelocity.

They chose Rwanda as their destination of choice and began working with a group called Orphans of Rwanda (ORI) based in the capital city of Kigali. ORI is dedicated to helping orphans and vulnerable children in Rwanda of all ages, from toddlers to high school students. ORI is the first to fund university scholarships for orphans who could not otherwise afford college in Rwanda. These kids are those who have survived both diseases like tuberculosis common in Rwanda and the genocide of more than a decade ago. Their self-sufficiency and strength make them the potential future leaders for their country. ORI provides holistic support, including school fees, health care and housing, to ensure students have everything they need to excel.

With kids ranging from pre-school to high school, there were numerous ways to make a difference -- from playing, reading, talking and laughing with the children. Jeff and Amy brought along a bag full of books, games and toys which were met with incredible enthusiasm. “The kids mastered whiffle ball in minutes,” said Jeff.

“All around Rwanda we were reminded of how blessed our lives are in the US, and at the same time impressed by the determination and even the eager enthusiasm of these kids for learning and making a life for themselves. The kids are so full of life and energy. We were simply floored,” said Glueck.

Volunteering provided a glimpse into the Rwandan culture recovering from the atrocities of genocide, in ways no other experience possibly could have. While the past is grim and sobering, and certainly not the typical honeymoon, the newlyweds left feeling hopeful and confident about the future of Africa’s smallest nation.

“We found that a little money goes very far in Africa and a little love goes even further,” said Glueck. “It was truly the best way to start a marriage between two people committed to making the world a better place not just for our own family but for others.”

Bringing It All Home

As Glueck planned his own volunteer vacation, he realized how lucky he was to have had the opportunity to work with ORI as they typically only accept volunteers for longer multi-month stays. He and his fiancé were able to participate only because they had an old friend who was on the Board of the orphanage, due to his leading the local UN Development Program.

Jeff recognized that most travelers don't necessarily have these kinds of connections but many say they are very interested in volunteering for at least part of their vacations, but don't know where to start. Travelocity, with approximately one million visitors a day, had a bully pulpit that could help.

Glueck, along with a number of Travelocity employees, formed an internal committee to evaluate how the company could take a more proactive role in promoting voluntourism and making it easy for ordinary citizens to find well-vetted opportunities.



rebuilding forests, wetlands and other elements of nature, Travelocity was the first major online travel company in North America to allow customers to purchase “carbon offsets” when they buy a vacation package.

Go Zero allows customers to effectively “zero out” or offset the carbon emissions generated by their flight, hotel, or car usage through a donation to The Conservation Fund, which then plants trees that absorb carbon dioxide. The carbon offsets are

program. The program makes it easy for volunteers to find opportunities through a partnership with top volunteer organizations, including Cross-Cultural Solutions, Earthwatch, Globe Aware and Take Pride in America, all of which can be accessed through the Travelocity Web site at www.travelocity.com/travelforgood or from a link on the Travelocity home page.

Although Travelocity's members for the most part can afford a volunteer expedition as an alternative to their traditional family vacation, Travelocity recognized that there are many people who could not afford to go on their own. So Travelocity has since announced Change Ambassadors grants will be awarded each quarter. Travelocity will award two \$5,000 grants per quarter to customers and one \$5,000 grant per quarter to an employee.



travel for goodSM
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Travel For GoodSM

The result was a multifaceted initiative called Travel For GoodSM. The program is comprised of two main components:

- Go Zero: a carbon offset program
- Change Ambassadors: A volunteer vacation program

To support the growing number of customers concerned with the prospect of climate change or simply interested in

offered as an option that customers can add during check-out when booking a vacation package on Travelocity. Through their efforts with The Conservation Fund, Travelocity has planted over 9,000 trees in the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge, located just outside of New Orleans, that will offset over 21 million pounds of carbon over their lifetime.

Additionally, to help bring the idea of “voluntourism” to a broader audience, Travelocity launched its Change Ambassador

“The Travel for Good initiative came from passionate employees who believe in our role promoting responsible tourism and giving back,” said Glueck. “We think traveling responsibly doesn't just help the communities it touches, but also gives a deeper experience to the volunteer—a chance to see local cultures and challenges from the inside, a fresh perspective, and the joy of sweat equity. Problems like reforestation and climate change or rebuilding homes in New Orleans demand something from each of us. It's really a good thing no matter which way you look at it.”