

Hungry to Help

Growing up in destitute Haiti, all 10-year-old Marie Louise ever knew was **poverty** and **hunger** pangs. The things most Americans take for granted—sitting at a table to eat a full meal, not to mention the use of utensils—were completely foreign to her and the other children in her village. Instead, she was all too used to scooping a handful of dirt or even cement into her mouth simply to have something in her stomach to keep her from starving to death.

But then God's love, in the form of a Florida-based nonprofit ministry called **Feeding Children Everywhere**, found its way to Marie Louise's village. Through founder Don Campbell's connections with **Open Door Haiti** and its founder, local pastor Wiljean Compere, the young girl now eats three healthy meals each day and has been spared the life of **disease** and hunger for which she was formerly destined.

That's not all. Her story is being replicated by millions around the world as Feeding Children Everywhere (FCE) rapidly expands to make its mark nearly, well, everywhere.

FCE's journey has taken Campbell and his wife, Kristen, from feeding their neighborhood to embarking on seasons in which the couple mobilized **churches** throughout Central Florida, ran a local branch of a Minnesota-based nonprofit and, in 2010, launched into Haiti. Today the organization provides 15 million meals annually to hungry children in the U.S. and around the world, all in the name of Jesus—and with the financial support and volunteer manpower of mega-corporations such as Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, K Force, Johnson & Johnson and many others (including entire sports associations).

Major secular organizations helping to support a ministry? How did that happen?

Small Beginnings From his youth, Campbell always believed his working career would somehow involve food. Forced to become the man of the house at age 10 after his father took his own life, Don became the family chef and learned to cook for his mother and sisters. As he grew up, food and soccer became his passion.

“When I was a kid, I always wanted to be a pro soccer player, and I still play with a group of men,” he says. “But I’ve always had this food thing at the core of me too. I love good food, and I love to entertain. That’s where my heart is. To tell you the truth, I always thought that I would open up a restaurant. But obviously God took me in a different direction—a wonderfully different direction.”

The first steps of that “wonderfully different direction” began when Don served at the Central Florida Dream Center in 2002 and then became a staff pastor at Family Worship Center in Sanford, Fla. But he and his wife, Kristen, weren’t satisfied with simply working with youth on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. They longed to make a bigger impact.

“Jesus was extremely relational in everything He did,” Campbell says, “and we are super relational people as well. We started learning to connect with people and honoring relationships over promotion, if you will. By doing that, we have been promoted.”

The FCE dream started small—just by meeting a community need of feeding neighborhood children from their dining room table. As word began to spread, the Campbells’ work expanded in their community and eventually with a Minnesota-based nonprofit. After years of volunteering and feeding children from their home, the couple took their entire life savings of \$9,000 and rallied friends, family and volunteers—and FCE was officially born.

But it wasn’t until an event no one could have foreseen that

the ministry really took hold. In January 2010, following the devastating 7.0 earthquake in Haiti and the numerous aftershocks that left more than 200,000 dead and hundreds of thousands in need of aid and food, the ministry pushed into deploy mode.

Campbell approached Doug Holliday—a friend who also happens to be the U.S. president of the humanitarian aid organization Open Door Haiti—to explore a partnership for helping destitute children affected by the earthquake. Open Door Haiti became FCE's first international feeding partner, and FCE organized packing events with local churches to raise money to fund the project and ship 250,000 meals to hungry children in the nation.

Explosive Impact According to Campbell's estimates, FCE has grown 200 percent every six months since its inception and is one of the fastest-moving nonprofit organizations in the world. He describes FCE's vertical growth during the past three years as "nothing short of miraculous," and the evidence certainly supports this.

In the last two years, FCE has expanded beyond its corporate headquarters in Longwood, Fla., to include facilities in Hartford, Conn., and Los Angeles—with plans to launch offices in other regions as well. Despite the increasing space and staggering amounts of food passing through these facilities, the ministry staff is kept intentionally lean—FCE currently has 15 full-time employees and 60 interns working at its Florida location—as it continues to prioritize volunteer training.

And yet the rapid growth of the ministry doesn't surprise Campbell. The Holy Spirit's leading through divine business appointments—which is how virtually every corporate connection has come—and the ministry's heart to do things God's way have made FCE an easy sell to corporate partners, he says.

Instead of approaching businesses and asking them simply to write a check, FCE has devised a way for corporate employees to get involved with a hands-on approach to alleviating local and global hunger. In an era in which most companies see the value in blending social justice advocacy with their own corporate values and culture, FCE has found a sweet spot. The nonprofit organizes events and allows corporations to bring teams of individuals to get physically involved in the food-packing process. In turn, employees leave the events with a sense of personal satisfaction, having helped to make a difference in the lives of hungry children across the U.S. and around the world.

"You have companies like JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America—two of the larger companies in this country—that have executives and people that want to do something good and noble from a social responsibility standpoint," Campbell says. "We've found a niche where they can take the dollars they normally contribute and instead use those dollars to mobilize their staff and deploy their donation into their community and ultimately impact the lives of children locally and globally.

"We approached them and told them that we have volunteer opportunities—philanthropic opportunities—that they can attach to their check and give them a feeling of pride that they're doing something to impact the world. You might be surprised at just how eager people are to help when you're asking them for more than simply money."

Eager indeed. Jodie Hardman, senior vice president and market manager for Bank of America, says that when bank employees are asked to gather for a packing event, there is usually a waiting list of at least 150 to 200 people.

"It fills up pretty quickly," says Hardman, who herself has participated in past packing events. "People don't have to have a special skill or a special gift to give back to the community. Knowing that you're helping others, you feel good,

and it gives you a lot of pride that you're making a difference. It's a great lesson you can teach to your kids."

Hardman says that although there are many worthy charities to choose from, FCE is exactly the type of organization Bank of America looks for in its community investment program.

"It all goes back to the simplicity of their process," she says. "Their events are so spirited. A lot of times when you're asked to do something for the community, it can be a somber event when you're serving. But with FCE, there's a lot of spirit around it. It's fun, and it's fulfilling."

Gospel Bonus But personal fulfillment isn't the only benefit participants receive. When God opens the door—and He frequently does—FCE's staff seizes the opportunity to share His love to whoever will listen.

Ron Johnson, senior pastor at One Church in Longwood, and one of the Campbells' biggest spiritual supporters, says people are more apt to receive the gospel message when they aren't simply listening to a sermon but instead are seeing Jesus' love in action.

"That's the genius of the model, the fact that Don and his people are taking kingdom principles and bridging them while addressing a major need in the world—hunger," he says. "They are reaching people that may never darken the door of a church. The reason it's working is that they don't have to convince people by their words. What they are doing—feeding hungry children—touches the core of our humanity."

For Campbell, the work comes as a direct response to Jesus' frequently quoted but rarely followed words in Matthew 25: "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink" (v. 35).

Campbell says it's clear that feeding people and meals around the table were at the heart of Jesus' ministry. And he

believes that God wants to do great things through His kids using that same model. "If we're willing to move in faith, the Bible says that pleases God," he says. "If you move in big faith, God can do big things."

It's because of the "big things" God is doing through FCE, along with Campbell's personal integrity, that he has earned the respect of many pastors in the Central Florida area. Among those is Jeff Krall, under whom Campbell served as youth and family life pastor at Family Worship Center.

"Don has told me that he has had conversations with people in the secular world, and they look at him and say, 'You're a different kind of Christian,'" Krall says. "They tell him, 'I think you've got the words and actions of life.' The universal appeal of what he is doing with FCE is amazing."

"You see corporations like Apple and IBM that are business icons in this country. ... I believe that there is going to be a time when Feeding Children Everywhere will become an iconic mission organization that will have a major national and international footprint," Krall adds. "God is blessing Don and FCE because what he's doing is embodying the life of Christ; he's incarnational. Jesus just loved people, found needs and met them. That's exactly what Don is doing, and he's such an inspiration."

Johnson agrees. "Don is someone who has a heart after God," he says. "That's why he is someone that can put a plan into action that God can bless. He's a man with vision, and that's an explosive combination."

Shared Vision When devising FCE's innovative business strategy, Campbell says he heavily researched and reviewed the models of similar ministries and even volunteerism. He then combined those concepts with the above-mentioned kingdom principles, and the ministry quickly took off. Now FCE sets the standard for ministries that feed hungry children,

although Campbell says the goal for each ministry is the same.

“Other organizations have come to us and asked us what we are doing, and we’re happy to share what we’ve done because it’s all for the glory of God,” he says. “We’ve been given to freely, and now freely we give back. It’s the greatest level of flattery. ... You don’t want to be in competition with others when it comes to feeding the hungry.

“For us, we’ve adopted the mindset of the Bible that God is never going to run out of blessings. We’re ever mindful that if every other hunger organization in the United States worked together for a month and gave all of its resources collectively, we still couldn’t feed the hungry in the world for that same month. That’s simply unacceptable to us, so we keep working harder for the ultimate goal—to eradicate hunger altogether.”

Jeff Nene, Convoy of Hope’s national spokesperson, echoes Campbell’s sentiments. In addition to disaster relief response and community outreach, Convoy of Hope has made an impact feeding hungry children in the U.S. and around the world for more than 19 years.

“Like Convoy of Hope, [FCE’s] goal is that no child around the world goes hungry,” Nene says. “And that is a very lofty goal. We don’t stand around and simply talk about it. We get our hands and feet dirty feeding one hungry child at a time. Don and his organization are doing the same, and it’s a wonderful thing. It’s wonderful to see them doing so well and reaching so many kids.”

Future Hope With the initiation of its U.S. Hunger project in October 2012—an effort to combat hunger right here in the United States—FCE continues to expand its operations and seek new corporate sponsors in its quest to eradicate world hunger. Campbell says he believes FCE has barely scratched the surface of its potential and that he expects the ministry to provide

as many as 25 million meals in 2014.

But what about Marie Louise?

Since 2010, FCE has continued to work with Open Door Haiti to provide meals for the hungry in Haiti, including more than 1.5 million in 2011. In the last three years, with FCE's help, Open Door Haiti's feeding program has expanded from 250 kids to more than 1,200.

"We are able to feed those kids every day—kids that were accustomed to sitting in the dirt and eating handfuls of dirt because they had nothing else—because of the efforts of Don and Kristen and Feeding Children Everywhere," says Holliday, who is now an FCE board member.

"Literally, those children were living like animals," he adds. "But now, to see the transformation in these kids in just this short amount of time is nothing short of miraculous. They are happy and healthy. To see them sit down for at a table with a plate and a spoon and a cup for their first time in their lives, it melts your heart."

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Watch a video explaining FCE's new initiative to eradicate hunger in America at