

Easing the path to international adoption

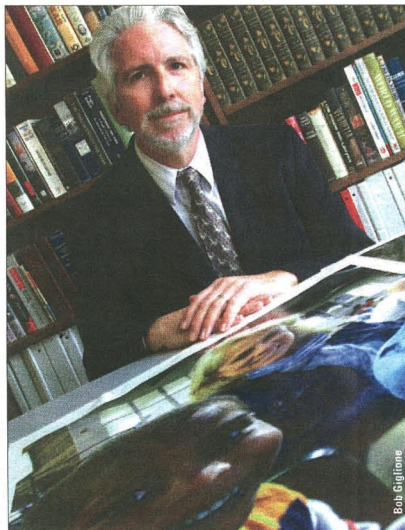
By KENNETH R. CERINI

Rolling away the stone to open the path to a life of opportunity, the Rollstone Foundation is dedicated to raising funds to aid in the adoption of special-needs children from all over the world. With international adoption costing approximately \$20,000 and up, many families are unable to afford it, and many orphans remain alone. Having helped to forge around a dozen families, the foundation has been working on a global level to help bring these children into a loving home for the past five years.

"The true heroes are the parents and families that are willing to adopt a special-needs child," said Michael Dawidziak, board president who started the foundation along with his wife, former Islip Town Councilwoman Pamela Greene. "It is an honor working with individuals and families who choose to take in a child with a developmental disability, physical handicap or HIV, and provide them with a better life — it's nothing short of an amazing experience."

How was the foundation founded? Our daughter has 12 children, with nine being adopted, and most are special-needs children. Through this experience, we learned how expensive it is to adopt a special-needs child, particularly from a Third World country. The second component is that the unfortunate truth is that many individuals who can afford the adoption prefer a healthy child, and those who want to adopt a special-needs child don't have the financial means to do so. We started the foundation to bridge this gap, and help to raise funds for parents willing to adopt these children.

Is it challenging finding children in need of adoption and parents willing to adopt? With over 132 million orphans worldwide, many in Third World countries, there is no shortage of children in need of a home. Also, given that many parents are looking to adopt, and as they became



Michael Dawidziak: Adopting kids from Africa with HIV saves their lives.

aware that our organization actually helps to fund the adoption process, there is no shortage of willing parents, either. Unfortunately, we are limited in how much money we are capable of raising and distributing per year.

Is the foundation working with families primarily on Long Island or throughout the United States? At this time, we haven't had an adoptive parent from Long Island; we've really been working with families throughout the United States. Typically, it's usually a household comprised of one

or more children, and is looking to grow their family. We've never had a childless couple approach us, and typically more affluent people, by and large, want healthy children.

What is a particularly memorable success? Success can be defined by life and death — and by that, I would say every case has been a success. For example, HIV is a chronically controlled disease in the United States. In fact, a child with HIV has a longer life expectancy than a child with juvenile diabetes. For children with HIV in Africa it is a death sentence. They cannot get the drugs they need, and it is a social stigma. So, if you define success by life and death, every child we bring out of their current situation is a life saved.

What is your favorite aspect of being a part of the foundation and its mission? My favorite aspect is helping to save these children in need of a family and a future, and unite them with the courageous family that is willing to provide them with this opportunity. We pride ourselves on helping to roll the stone away for these children, and working to help touch the lives of so many people from so many parts of the world.

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Paid staff 0
Annual budget \$28,500
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