



# The Why Behind The Give

It's hard to quantify the exact number of lives the ASEA® Advancing Life® Foundation has impacted since its inception. With a mission of breaking cycles of poverty, suffering, and abuse, the Foundation partners with like-minded charities to make a difference in the lives of individuals and families all over the world.

Five years in, Advancing Life® has been involved in diverse endeavors from building schools to helping in the aftermath of natural disasters to fighting exploitation.

The Foundation has funded missions and initiatives that have rescued hundreds of kids from human trafficking. Arrests have been made. Dogs have been trained and put into action. Volunteers have built a vocational school in Ecuador from the ground up. In Cambodia, clean water wells have been installed, schools renovated, and gardens planted. Worldwide, there's been disaster relief. Pandemic relief. And so much more.

It's all possible because of the hundreds of volunteers and donors who just keep serving, each swearing that it's the least they can do and that they come away changed for the better.

**“I really do think that, more than anything, this foundation has to do with the people that contribute their means and their time,” said ASEA Founder Tyler Norton.**

## The Goers



Five-time Advancing Life® expeditioner Beth Wofford is one of those people. “You hear people say that an expedition is a life-changing experience,” she said. “But those words sound trite for what it really feels like. We get so much more than we give.”

When Advancing Life was organized, it filled a niche for Beth, who had been finding ways to serve in her community but just didn't feel like she was giving enough. She has now participated in an expedition to Mexico, three to Ecuador, and one to Cambodia.

“You build an interesting intimacy with people when you're working together for the benefit of others,” Beth observed. “To me, it epitomizes what ASEA® stands for. Our ethos is why I was drawn to ASEA to begin with. These expeditions are very special, and as long as I can, I'm going to continue.”



Hannah Mangum, who has been to Ecuador twice, observed, “There's a bond that forms almost immediately with the people you work with and serve, and the relationships are lasting. Once you've gone on one expedition, you start to crave it.”

## The Doers



Expeditions aren't the only way to get involved with the Foundation, though for Ed Wiens, that's certainly part of it. He and his wife Rebekah went on Advancing Life's first expedition, which was to Mexico, and Ed later took his grandson with him to Ecuador.

“Doing trips like this is part of what I feel my calling is,” Ed explained. “It's in my DNA. Being hands-on

*makes you feel like you're living out your purpose.”*

Ed was one of the first to independently organize a fundraiser for Advancing Life. He held a golf tournament that raised thousands of dollars.



2016 Mexico Expedition



2019 Ecuador Expedition





2020 Cambodia Expedition



Operation Underground Railroad



2015 Nepal Earthquake Relief



2020 Cambodia School

## The Donors



Many ASEA® associates and employees donate regularly and generously to the Advancing Life® Foundation. For Debra Odell, the decision to donate was a spiritual journey that began with a feeling that she should set aside money specifically for clean water wells. She acted on it and started a savings account strictly from her ASEA earnings. “I had no idea where the money would go,” she admitted. “I just knew it was for clean water.”

Then, at last year’s convention, Advancing Life announced its partnership with Vision Cambodia. Debra’s wheels started turning. “I slept on it that night and realized the money would do its job through the Foundation, and I easily turned it over,” she said. “It was so exciting because ASEA matched our donations during the convention, so it literally doubled.”

Debra’s donations have made possible 10 clean water wells in Cambodia.

## The Receivers

The organizations the Advancing Life Foundation joins forces with, including CHOICE Humanitarian, Operation Underground Railroad, the Salvation Army, and many others, help us reach further than we could on our own. These charities are large, but the goal is always to benefit individuals.



“People think they come for a week and help construct a wall or a floor or a ceiling, but they probably don’t know the power and impact that they have on the people here, including me and my staff,” says Raquel Tuston, CHOICE Humanitarian Ecuador Country Manager. “We are now seeing the harvest.”

The Inta-Kara Advancing Life Center, a vocational school in Ecuador that Advancing Life has been involved in constructing since its groundbreaking, opened a year ago. The school is doing more than fulfilling its primary purpose of providing education.

“This partnership has created hope and boosted confidence,” Raquel explains.

When the world went on lockdown as a precaution for the COVID-19 pandemic, Inta-Kara students who had not previously considered themselves the studious type were eager to continue their learning remotely. “That wouldn’t have happened before,” Raquel said. “They now have the confidence to do it online.”

“This partnership has created hope and boosted confidence.”

Women in the community are beginning to realize their abilities as capable businesspeople as they convert their living spaces into rentable rooms for expeditioners.

Even the teachers at Inta-Kara are experiencing something different, as many come from big cities with large classrooms. Here, they get more personal with students who are hungry to learn, and they’re seeing the direct effects of the courses they teach.

## The Impact

The very week the Advancing Life® Foundation was announced, there had been a devastating earthquake in Nepal. ASEA® associates immediately began donating, and the Foundation was able to make a sizable contribution to earthquake relief efforts.



“At the time, we didn’t realize that our donation would help stop human trafficking,” says Advancing Life Chair KimMarie Larsen. “Our donations went toward setting up tarps that served as temporary schools. This alone deterred traffickers who come to ravaged areas with promises to parents of getting their kids out of the rubble and into schools in nearby cities. Since then, we’ve partnered with Operation Underground Railroad and officially joined that fight. We now know that stronger communities mean less trafficking.” This is just one example of how Advancing Life’s efforts to break cycles of poverty, abuse, and suffering comes full circle.

It has happened in Mexico, where the Foundation held its first expedition to build water cisterns, chicken coops, and outdoor ovens, as well as in Ecuador, where volunteers on six expeditions built a vocational center, and in Cambodia, where the Foundation has funded clean water wells and expeditioners cultivated farmlands and repaired a school.

## The Purpose



“The Advancing Life Foundation is not limited to one continent or one cause,” Tyler Norton says. That’s been the case since the organization was introduced during the closing session of ASEA’s convention in 2015. At that time, Tyler explained that the spiritual element of a corporation gives it life, that ASEA’s ethos is the distinguishing spirit of our culture, and that gratitude lies at its core.

“So here’s the question,” Tyler said that day. “How could we at ASEA be grateful for every moment? How can we show more gratitude?”

Now, looking at what the Foundation has accomplished in the five years since he issued that invitation to gratitude, Tyler says, “I certainly hoped Advancing Life would follow the mission of being a force for good in the world, and it has. I’m excited to continue to expand the reach and bring some of that impact even closer to our associate communities.”



2020 Cambodia Newborn Kits