

REVIEW

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ALUMNI FEATURES



Treva Brown Mathur, Class of '62, and her husband, Balbir Mathur, head the organization known as Trees for Life.

IT'S ABOUT LIFE

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Two lives influenced by different cultures and different religions – working together toward one goal. For 20 years McPherson College graduate Treva Brown Mathur, Class of '62, and her husband, Balbir Mathur, have been committed to serving others and have touched millions of

lives with what they call their “movement.”

As founders of the internationally known Trees for Life organization, the Mathurs ultimately worked to empower the people of developing countries through education and the spread of knowledge.

Their global outreach originates in Wichita, Kan., where staff volunteers contribute a variety of skills and backgrounds toward projects that are designed to promote community and self worth among the poor in countries such as Cambodia, Haiti, and Guatemala.

Projects are often piloted in Balbir's native homeland of India.

"Our work is not because we think we can change the world, but because we serve. We are one hundred percent servants," said Balbir. "When five, ten, or 15 people can work and lock their minds as one, they can literally create miracles."

Those miracles include teaching the poor how to improve their diets by planting food-bearing trees native to their homelands, producing efficient wood cooking stoves in Guatemala, introducing American students to the role of trees in the ecosystem, and most recently, developing an educational software to communicate to large numbers of people.

The Global Circle of Knowledge software project

"Villages in India and around the world lack funding, teachers, and educational infrastructures," explained David Kimble, Trees for Life executive director. "We're taking advantage of technology to introduce communication tools that can be used to create educational platforms and ultimately provide empowerment and hope for many people."

McPherson College graduate Adam Smith, Class of '94, recently worked on the educational project while serving as a full-time volunteer. He assisted with the presentation details that can be found at www.globalcircle.org. "Global Circle of Knowledge is yet another fulcrum by which Trees for

participants can teach and learn in their own learning style," he said.

Those involved directly with Trees for Life also experience transformation as the Mathurs strive to empower their volunteers by providing a healthy, supportive work environment. Located in a renovated elementary school, Trees for Life is composed of offices, workrooms, and living quarters where volunteers

Treehouse, provide a family-like atmosphere for volunteers who receive \$60 per month for their professional contributions. Through morning meditations, noontime meals, and "who we are" meetings, volunteers discover the true meaning of community.

Smith compares his experience to a "gravity sling," a maneuver NASA uses to boost its spacecraft to new places and new paths. Mission designers use the maneuver to send craft to places that simple rockets could never take them to without an enormous amount of starting resources.

"It was serendipity that brought me close to Trees for Life," reflected Smith. "The 'spirit sling' I experienced while living with Trees for



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- Adam Smith, Class of '94

was the inspiration of Trees for Life volunteers who recognized the importance of education for poor people to empower themselves. By using modern technology, team members are developing a program that will enable people worldwide to create and share educational lessons tailored to various cultures, languages, and styles of learning.

Life does what it is famous for: demonstrating that anyone can help themselves," he said.

Smith noted the concept of education "trickling down" from rich to poor can be eliminated with Global Circle of Knowledge as it allows education to spread from anyone to anyone. "Regardless of their location, physical wealth, cultural background, or language,

collaborate to make the "movement" happen.

They travel across the world to engage in Trees for Life activities – artists, bankers, church leaders, computer programmers, educators, retirees, and writers experience firsthand the rewards of collaboration and service.

Housing arrangements, affectionately known as the

Life has sped me along an amazing new path, and without their influence, I would have not had the courage to return to school." Smith is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

"Trees for Life is not about trees," concluded Treva and Balbir. "It's about life. It's a community of people who wish to grow through service."

