



FOUNDERS' STORY

The Global Orphan Project ("GO Project") provides holistic care for thousands of vulnerable children in some of the poorest areas on earth. *GO Project's* mission? "Transforming lives through orphan care." Interestingly, the first lives transformed in this ministry were not those of hurting children a world away, but of its founders who seemed to already have it all.

Meet Mike and Beth Fox.

Snapshots in time with Mike and Beth reveal much. If it's 1992, you'd see a grinding salesman, certain he can make it big in his own business. You'd then see him start and lose a business, hurting in a failed marriage, and living a rotation from apartment to office couch.

If it's September 1993, you'd see a down man get back up courtesy of an amazing woman. In a few short years, his new job will blossom into unimaginable opportunity. He'll become a leader and minority owner in Inergy, an anchor company in the propane gas business. And you'd see his newlywed, Beth, beautiful in every way, in a successful career of her own in the pharmaceutical industry. The world seems their oyster.

If it's just a year later, you'd see another crash. You'd see Mike and Beth at the hospital. Beth has a brain hemorrhage and minimal chance of survival. The nurses are ready to wheel her away from Mike into surgery. You'd see Mike kissing her "goodbye," knowing it might be the last time.

And if it's January 2010, guess where you'd see them? In Port au Prince, Haiti, after an earthquake that has claimed the lives of 300,000 plus people. They're not in ivory tower meetings swapping platitudes with UN officials. They're among the poor; caring for kids who lost their parents. You'd see Beth – who bears a physical reminder of a vanity lost – taking a walk, hand in hand, with a 13 year old girl who'd been orphaned, enslaved, impregnated by rape, and alone on the streets when the quake hit. And you'd see an uplifting aura of grace raising that little girl's countenance. That's just Mike and Beth. That's the radical love of Christ lived out, and not just talked about. And that's the DNA of *GO Project*.

How in the world did they get from the hospital to hurting children?

Here's Mike's take: "I trusted Jesus Christ with my life, and found a joy beyond my circumstances. Beth survived. And I resolved to drop my pride and take a risk, to live and love in a way that I'd never known. That's taken us to fatherless children in the poorest corners of the earth. In them we've found riches money cannot buy."

Beth more than survived. She gained a joy in living a full life each minute of each day, and ignited a flame in Mike. Inergy, where Mike worked, continued to grow and prosper. Mike and Beth had it made, financially. They had the house, cars, vacation home in Florida. Once upon a time, such status would have defined them. Not anymore. They were after something beyond themselves.

That something started in 2003 with a \$750 check for a small shanty for 17 Karen orphans in a refugee camp on the Thai/Myanmar border.

That little seed sprouted and grew in their hearts. Mike found himself focusing more on the 17 than his work and growing fortune. There was nothing wrong with business life. It was and remains a huge blessing. He worked with a great company with great friends. But the strange compulsion was undeniable.

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In August 2003, with the blessing of his friends at Inergy, Mike did something radical for him. He packed his bags and went to South Asia to visit those 17 little ones. Beth slipped him a note:

You're embarking on a journey, Mike, and we don't know where you're going and we don't know how God is going to use you. But wherever it is, I'm there 100% in support. I've never been so proud of you. I've never been so excited about our future.

Days later in Thailand, Mike's moment of truth approached. He was set to meet the 17. Unusually nervous, the business guy did what he thought best: he brought 17 gift packages for the children. What else could he offer? He walked through a gate, into the refugee camp, and into the little hut. And there they were. Kids lined-up, smiling, sitting patiently on the floor. One by one, the caretakers called them forward to meet their visitor. One by one they greeted Mike, graciously accepted their gifts, and returned to their spots on the floor.

But there was a problem. Mike brought 17 gifts, and there were 19 kids. Unbeknownst to Mike, the caretakers had stretched the money sent for 17 to keep 2 more kids alive. The 17 just ate a little less rice and beans. So 2 sat there empty handed, and Mike sat there embarrassed. Then he looked closer. Were those 2 upset that they didn't get gifts? No! Not at all. They were content. Home. Fed. Full of joy. Full of song. Blessed. God used those children to teach Mike an unforgettable lesson in love and humility that trades in currency far more reliable than greenbacks.

Beth was right. There was no way to know where this journey would take her and Mike – and now so many others. There are many millions of orphans in the world, like the 2 extra in Thailand, waiting for a shot to come into a loving home. They don't need gifts or extravagance. The basics will do. In 2004, Mike and Beth started a 501(c)(3) non-profit, C3 Missions International, Inc., to do something more in the lives of children still outside on their own. (C3H8 is propane gas. It's called "C3" in the propane business. Mike and Beth named the ministry C3 to remind them how God launched this ministry.) They dreamed that one day, maybe, they could fund 10 homes or so.

Mike and Beth invited some friends to engage. 2 homes became 4, 4 became 10, then 50, then 100. One beautiful child at a time. Friends wanted to fund homes, food, beds, you name it, with the full measure of their hearts. Then people Mike and Beth had never met (who heard about it). Then their friends. Then churches and businesses started sponsoring entire villages. Orphans in the far reaches of the world dynamically changed relationships and hearts here. C3, Mike and Beth's "something more," exploded into *The Global Orphan Project*.

In 2010, C3 formally changed its name to *The Global Orphan Project, Inc.*

GO Project launches children's villages around the world where local churches care for orphaned and vulnerable children. They just need some help to do it. *GO Project* engages groups here to provide that help, and links the "here" and the "there." Families, schools, businesses, and churches give, go, and virally spread what has become a grassroots movement to care for orphans. They're sponsoring children's homes, schools, and even entire villages impacting several hundred kids – and exhorting others to join in.

Today, Mike and Beth lead *GO Project's* board and, along with other private investors, fund all of *GO Project's* overhead. 100% of a *GO Project* orphan care donation goes to orphan care. As Mike puts it, "we want to share this amazing journey and become a footnote to how this started. We fund the overhead to encourage many more to give their hearts and engage. All are welcome, whether Christians or not."

Mike and Beth have known despair and joy. They've seen money come and go. They've been refined in faith. And they've gained much wisdom. Now a growing movement of so many experiences a lesson Mike and Beth learned: hurting children dying in poverty need help, but they also offer riches to us that our economy cannot compute. Did Mike and Beth Fox have it all through stuff? No. That's the myth of strivers. Actually, children with nothing have shown them the secret of being content.

The Global Orphan Project: transforming lives through orphan care.