

a loving *detour*

How many of us would leave familiar surroundings and travel 8,400 miles to bring hope to the hopeless, while facing a challenge so desperate there's no logical place to begin? This is the true story of a woman who defied her own fear and dread to plunge into an aching breach of body, mind and soul. Her incredible mission will imprint itself on your heart. And she's not about to rest on her laurels.

Six years ago, **Independent Senior Sales Director Rebekah Kiser** of the Emerald Go Give Area was content running her Mary Kay business from her lovely home in Colorado Springs, Colo. She and her husband, Kevin, and their children, James and

Melanie, were making plans for the future. The former president of a construction firm had built a rich life for herself. Then one day she met women who had no life at all, and Becky Kiser would never be the same.

No Way She Could Say No

Her journey began in 2003 when Becky landed in Ethiopia for a tour of ancient Christian sites, eager to experience part of her faith's history. Within a week, her own history was taking a turn – one most would call sacrificial. "My tour guide asked me to accompany his sister, Genet, to the Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa," she recalls. "I agreed, even though I had no idea what fistula was. We walked in, and I was stunned by what I saw and smelled, shocked to be sitting among 50 to 75 girls with this nightmarish condition. There were

flies everywhere, and I wanted to leave. But I also felt compelled to stay, humbled and thankful that I had never suffered such an affliction."

Becky learned that many Ethiopian girls are betrothed as young as 5. Still children when they become pregnant, their small bodies often can't deliver their babies without the medical help they don't have. The pressure of prolonged labor causes grave complications. Many of the babies die, and without surgery, the mothers suffer unnatural elimination. They're called "pariah women," and the World Health Organization estimates there are more than 100,000 cases in Ethiopia alone.

That day, hours passed before Genet finally saw the doctor. Soon she returned sobbing because there was no room for her. She would have to wait two months for surgery and make the trip back to the hospital. Incensed, Becky flew to her feet. "I marched in and demanded her immediate care," she says. "The hospital's founder



Although she has access to a translator, Becky speaks enough Amharic to carry on basic conversations. But there are 81 other languages in Ethiopia, and she's working hard to learn more so she can, as she puts it, "communicate from the heart."



explained why that was impossible. So many were ahead of her." Her determination bordering on panic, Becky took Genet and left. After considering all the options, she decided to rent a place for Genet, and she hired someone to stay with her.

On the 24-hour trip back home, the mental images of Genet and the others at the Fistula Hospital were still vivid. Becky's heart was both broken by what she had seen and held captive by the hope of helping. Conflict tore at her. She had dreamed of growing her Mary Kay business and living a "normal" life. What would such a detour of devotion do to her goals? "Truthfully, I did struggle with that," Becky shares. "But after seeing those sisters, I could no longer sleep in my big master bedroom and enjoy my life. I had to do something."

Help on the Way

So the day came when Becky described to her unit members how the pariah women are shunned by their families, deserted by their husbands,

outcasts with no way to earn a living, considered cursed by God and untouchable by all. They quickly offered to assist any way they could and set a goal to help five women.

It was on her second trip that Becky discovered the risk at which she had placed herself. "Doing this kind of work there without permission is a prisonable offense," she explains. "I didn't want to go to jail, so I embarked on what would be a 2½ year struggle of frustration, worry and determination. First, we had to register as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization here, then I had to work through the Ethiopian government's requirements to obtain the permission I needed to proceed. All the while, those precious people were waiting, not knowing we were trying to help."

Becky held her first meeting to explain her intentions on Mary Kay's birthday, May 12, 2005. Now, through her Women for Women Foundation Inc., the Trampled Rose Outreach establishes and operates shelters for those awaiting fistula surgery.

Volunteers run the Foundation office and maintain the Web site, and Becky employs 16 people at the shelters to care for the women – including the 6 percent who can't be helped by surgery – and to teach skills for which they earn wages. Her efforts have reached nearly 600 women since she opened the first shelter. "Next, we want to go into the countryside and teach the causes and prevention of fistula, to end this travesty. Even so, I'm almost always overwhelmed," she admits, "especially when I realize that ours is the only program of this type we know about. I'm overwhelmed that I don't know a thing about what I'm doing and by the grief that's sometimes more than my heart can bear. But I know 'if it's to be, it's up to me.'"

So Much Left to Do

Today the memories of "red tape," her own fears and the misunderstanding of many, have paled in comparison to the shining eyes of the women Becky has helped, including Genet, who is now healthy and whole. "I've buoyed myself up with the phrase 'Is there any reason why?' so often it made me laugh," she says with a smile. "Through Mary Kay, I learned tenacity by booking when I thought I couldn't and team building when 'red jacket' seemed impossible. I learned how to finish my unit with my goal of 52 team members and how to present myself, because Mary Kay Ash taught that you only have one chance to make a good first impression. And I learned that quitting is the only failure. The Mary Kay sisterhood, including my own sister, **Independent Senior Sales Director Jill Packard**, has supported my goals and dreams and helped make this work a reality."

Trampled Rose Outreach hopes to open a fifth shelter this year. Becky knows there will be thousands of new fistula cases. She's grateful for Mary Kay sales that have paid her way and the flexibility to spend time working on this life-changing mission. "And for our Founder's example," she acknowledges. "Mary Kay didn't quit and neither will I. My work and my heart are now on the same path."



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Trampled Rose Outreach has attracted the attention of media, church groups and even the French Embassy in Ethiopia, where the ambassador's wife led a fundraising event. Twice a year, Becky takes volunteers to work at her shelters.