

Seeing a Brighter Future in Haiti and at Home

Stephen Puryear and his daughter are providing hundreds of people with eyeglasses through “Haiti Sees” project

By Roger Graves, Senior Writer

As a Certified PGA Professional in Teaching and Golf Operations, Stephen Puryear’s typical “missions” involve teaching fundamentals to golfers young and old, building or rebuilding swings, and managing the daily business of a golf facility. But Puryear’s latest mission in life stretches far beyond the practice tee or clubhouse, touching thousands of less-fortunate souls in Haiti and Alabama – literally helping them see the light.



Two years ago, the 48-year-old Puryear decided it was time to check off a few items on his bucket list. After serving as PGA Head Professional at Wynlakes Golf & Country Club in Montgomery, Alabama, under 2007 PGA Golf Professional of the Year Brent Krause, and serving in the same position at Decatur Country Club and Canebrake Golf Club in Alabama, Puryear decided to focus on golf instruction. In addition to starting his own company, P.U.R.E. Golf, the 2014 Dixie PGA Section Teacher of the Year was looking for an opportunity to spend meaningful time with his daughter through a service project. That’s when the ideal “mission” presented itself.

“A mission trip was always on my bucket list, but so were Hawaii, Pebble Beach and Whistling Straits,” admits Puryear, who was elected to PGA membership in 1994 after graduating from the PGM program at Mississippi State University. “My daughter, Callie, wanted to go on a mission trip. That trip to Haiti left both Callie and myself wanting to do more.”

Following their initial trip to Haiti in 2015, where their volunteering included assisting at a medical clinic, Puryear and his daughter yearned to make more of a difference in Haiti. They recognized that dental and vision care were among the most pressing needs of the island nation and vowed to reconnect with and assist the Haitian people, who have been wracked by natural disasters, disease and poverty for decades.

“We knew we could not provide dental care, but we thought maybe we could take glasses back and make a difference with vision care,” says Puryear. “As we researched what other mission teams had done, I found a gentleman in Louisville, Kentucky, who had a ministry that collected glasses, supplied equipment and trained mission teams to go out and



fit glasses. His name is Holland Kendall, and he was an answered prayer.” Thus, the mission project “Haiti Sees” came into focus.

Today, the “Haiti Sees” Project has more than 3,000 eyeglasses in stock, and rents the fitting equipment from Kendall Optometry Ministry. Puryear and 17-year-old Callie were back in Haiti fitting the less fortunate with glasses and helping hundreds as recently as June.

What ultimately motivated or inspired Puryear to pour his time and expertise into “Haiti Sees”? He thinks it comes back to the mindset of being a PGA Professional.

“I think most golf professionals want to help other people, either by sharing the game they love or by creating a truly unique environment of hospitality and customer service,” Puryear says. “We all want to make a difference where we can.”

The “Haiti Sees” mission has also inspired Puryear, his daughter and several of Puryear’s junior golfers to organize a local eyeglasses clinic in their hometown of Decatur, hosted by the Decatur-Morgan County Free Clinic in February of 2017.

“I was worried no one would show up,” says Puryear, who credits Krause and PGA Professionals Jim Hardy and Chris O’Connell for shaping his love for golf instruction. “But we fit over 150 prescription glasses and 50 readers. These people cannot afford glasses, or they have broken glasses and can’t afford to fix them. They put off buying glasses or going to the eye doctor because they have more pressing issues.”

One by one, Stephen Puryear, daughter Callie and the “Haiti Sees” mission are working minor miracles and helping the less fortunate see a brighter future. While Puryear’s main mission may be golf instruction, he takes great pride in focusing on helping others beyond the lesson tee. ■

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PGA Professional Stephen Puryear and his daughter Callie assist many Haitians through their mission.