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# Law Students, Professor Join Pros for Africa Mission

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Law students, professor join

# PROS FOR AFRICA MISSION

BY EVIE HOLZER



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n March 8, OU alumnus Reggie Whitten ('80) with Pros For Africa and College of Law Dean Joe Harroz announced the two organizations would collaborate to enhance the nonprofit's mission to assist African children and the College's global educational offerings.

"Our organizations are working together to energize students to experience other cultures, develop a lifetime commitment to meaningful service and prepare for the increasingly global practice of law," Harroz said. "Pros For Africa has an amazing program in place, and we are thrilled to be a part of it."

As part of this collaboration, PFA donated \$100,000 to support OU's participation in this trip and future initiatives by the law school's International Human Rights Clinic. In addition, OU Law Professor Cheryl Wattlely and students Nazareth Haysbert, Courtney Ernston and Brandon Cato joined more than 70 PFA volunteers traveling to Uganda March 14-21 to construct a school, provide medical care and distribute food, water and clothing to children.

"We fed several thousand people, gave out hearing aids to another several thousand people and provided medical attention to thousands more," Haysbert said. "We were there to work, but we also listened to the stories of the women, and we played with the kids."

The trip was a dream-come-true for Whitten, who spearheaded the formation of the nonprofit in January of 2010.

Whitten first visited Uganda in 2002, after his son passed away and a friend invited him to go as a healing experience. While coping with his own personal loss, he was inspired by the African children who were so joyful, even while living in war and poverty.

"You just have to see the faces of these kids in Africa," Whitten said. "The difference between children in Africa and children in America is just luck. My kids live in the greatest country, where they have the right to go to school. Over there, the kids are just as beautiful, but they don't have the infrastructure in place, and they don't have the same rights that we do."



“These programs are a reminder to our students that  
**we are citizens of the world, not just Oklahoma.”**

Professor Cheryl Wattley

After meeting Sister Rosemary and learning about the difference her St. Monica’s School was making in children’s lives in Uganda, Whitten realized with special attention and ongoing assistance, Africa’s younger generation could change the future direction of their country.

Whitten came home with the desire to lead that change, and he began to enlist a team. Jay Mitchel, who was working as an attorney at Whitten Burrage Law Firm in Oklahoma City, agreed to help and garnered support from a few college friends who played football at OU. Soon, Roy Williams and Mark Clayton joined the group. Shortly thereafter, Bill Horn brought Adrian Peterson and Tommie Harris onboard and Jared Mitchel also joined the group, who established PFA in 2010.

Each of the founders plays a hands-on role in PFA and is eager to make the trips to Africa. The March 2011 trip was their second one.

“It’s not about just donating money all the time,” said co-founder and NFL player Roy Williams. “It’s about being there and having a presence. It’s an awesome

sight and experience, being able to serve the citizens of Uganda together.”

Each “pro” volunteer serves an important role in PFA. Professional athletes can attract much-needed media attention. Medical personnel staff clinics and provide important care. Attorneys bring a passion for and unique knowledge of human rights, which is crucial in a place where there are so many injustices.

“One of the wonderful aspects of being a lawyer is that we bring an insight and understanding that is valuable to almost every endeavor,” OU Law Professor Wattley said. “We know the questions to ask, the problems to anticipate and where to go to get answers. By training, lawyers tend to be leaders, focusing on solutions. These programs are a reminder to our students that we are citizens of the world, not just Oklahoma.”

Whitten welcomes professionals of all types. He especially encourages others in the law community to get involved, noting that Africa’s legal system needs much improvement.

OU Law student Nazareth Haysbert dispenses food and supplies to villagers in Uganda.

OU Law student Courtney Ernston assisted the medical clinic by working in the pharmacy.

“There is strength in numbers, and the OU law community can help pave the way,” Whitten said. “It just takes one person to unite others and make a change. Just think of our country – someone had to write the first draft of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence.”

PFA may be going back to Africa as early as August 2011. Whitten admits his vision for the organization is bold and broad.

“Our future is unlimited,” Whitten said. “In 2010, we helped one country. In 2011, we are going to two. In 2012, we’ll add a third, Sudan. Eventually I would like PFA to have a trip a month and a program in each of the countries in Africa. There’s almost an unlimited amount of things to do.”

For more details about PFA and how to get involved, visit [www.prosforafrica.com](http://www.prosforafrica.com). | SL |

## Pros For Africa affiliation benefits International Human Rights Clinic



OU Law Professor Cheryl Wattley helps build a shelter out of recycled plastic bottles with other Pros For Africa volunteers.

OU Law Professor Cheryl Wattley, who is also the director of clinical education in the College of Law, traveled to Uganda last January with the International Human Rights Clinic and applied that knowledge during her return trip to Uganda in March with Pros For Africa.

“Our organizations share the desire to improve life in Africa and provide life-changing global opportunities to Oklahomans at the same time,” said Pros For Africa co-founder and OU Law alumnus Reggie Whitten. “With our unique Uganda connection and so much potential for the future, this affiliation made perfect sense.”

Part of the \$100,000 donation from Pros For Africa will support the International Human Rights Clinic. This clinic identifies one country scheduled for universal periodic review by the United Nations Human Rights Council and coordinates student and faculty travel to the selected country for the purpose of gathering information on selected human rights issues relating to indigenous peoples. Afterward, students submit a comprehensive report of their findings to the Human Rights Council as part of the periodic review process. The Uganda report was submitted this spring.

Through this clinic and to date, students’ findings have been included in official UN reports on Papua New Guinea and Suriname. Student reports are posted on the OU Law website at [www.law.ou.edu/clinic/international.shtml](http://www.law.ou.edu/clinic/international.shtml).