

# Calgarian helps homeless in Africa

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ANDREA COX  
CALGARY HERALD

**P**eggy Bell is living a long-awaited dream and at the same time helping to provide affordable and sustainable housing for children and families in need.

This retired investment banker was born and raised in Rhodesia (it is now called Zambia) to Canadian-born parents and has always wanted to return to the country and continent that has captured her heart.

"I've always longed to go back but have never had the means or the wherewithal," Bell says.

But the world opened up when Bell began volunteering for the Calgary chapter of Habitat for Humanity. It was here that she became aware of the organization's Global Village program, an initiative that invests Canadian volunteer talent in more than 30 developing countries worldwide to help build sustainable and affordable housing.

"I saw that there was a build going to Zambia through Habitat for Humanity International, so I got my two sisters and another good friend to sign up with me and we were accepted on to the team," Bell says. "We had the most amazing experience."

So amazing, in fact that, that upon her return to Canada, Bell contacted the Global Village program and asked if she could lead a team the following year back to Zambia through the Canadian arm of the program.

"I don't know what it is, but Africa stays with you. Its beauty, it's people, it gets into your soul," Bell says.

Habitat's Canadian Global Village program agreed and Bell has since led two teams to Zambia — one in 2011 and one most recently in May of this year.

The team chose to build under Zambia's orphan and vulnerable children program which provides housing for children or families that are at risk and have no visible means of support.

On the most recent trip Bell and her team, which included her husband, **Richard**, and sister **Louisa**, built a home for a woman looking after eight children.

"She had no means of support and she tried to make a living by breaking rock to sell to people for materials for landscaping. She grew her own vegetables and dug her own well. Her strength of



Courtesy, Anne Russ

Peggy Bell was born in Zambia and has returned with the Habitat for Humanity to build shelters for orphans

being is incredible," says Bell, who is so grateful that she now has an opportunity to get to know the people of Zambia.

"Growing up in colonial times the country was very segregated. The whites lived in town and the blacks came into town to work in the homes, but lived on the outskirts of the city and absolutely no co-mingling was allowed."

Habitat for Humanity's Global Village program is celebrating its seventh year in Canada. The organization sent out 20 volunteers in 2005. That number grew to 600 volunteers in 2006 and this year more than 1,700 Canadians will volunteer abroad building homes for those less fortunate.

"Canadians have a huge appetite for doing good in the world," says **Rick Tait**, director of Habitat for Humanity's Canadian Global Village Program.

Over the past seven years, more than 8,000 volunteers have built more than 600 homes and donated more than \$3 million.

No experience is necessary to volunteer.

Participants can be as young as 15, as long as they are accompanied by a parent or guardian, and the sky is the limit on the upper age range.

Volunteers must fundraise or donate the cost of their airfare, plus accommodation, meals, health insurance and the cost of the build. Tait says that usually equates to around \$1,600 to \$2,000 plus the cost of airfare. No worries though,

Habitat makes the fundraising easy with an online giving tool.

If you are interested in volunteering and would like more information, please click on [www.habitat.ca](http://www.habitat.ca) and follow the Global Village link.