

From Convergence to Kenya: A Story of Giving Thanks During the Holidays



As 2009 starts to wind down and we begin the holiday season, I reflect on our year here at Convergence Training and marvel at all that has been accomplished – it has truly been a remarkable year. We have seen an amazing amount of growth during tough economic times and we are truly grateful for those clients who have recognized our efforts by giving us the honor of serving them. Some big changes and opportunities are just on the horizon for our group and I look forward to sharing some of the business news in the coming days. It is truly an exciting time for us.

However, the purpose of this writing is not to focus on the business details of Convergence Training, but instead to share a simple success story about friendship and water. This story starts with a group of friends with a common connection to a water sport and ends with water flowing from a tap on the other side of the planet. It seems particularly appropriate that this story that has come full-circle as we enter the Holiday season. Allow me to explain.

A Passion for Waterskiing

Some of you may know that one of my passions in life is waterskiing. I was introduced to the thrill of blasting across the water at high speeds as a chubby boy growing up in Ketchikan, Alaska. The moment I stood up on top of the water for the first time and experienced that rush, I was hooked for life. In my teens, I would beg my father to take me skiing at any time, regardless of the water temperature or skiing conditions, just to get another chance to spend time in and around the water.

With time, college and then career responsibilities took priority over my connection with the water, until I met Dr. Gerald “Gerri” Fujii at local park in a pick-up basketball game. Now, to understand where this story is headed, you must understand that one critical component is that my friend, Gerri, LOVES water skiing. He will literally ask anyone, anywhere, at any time to go waterskiing with him. It is also extremely important to know that Dr. Fujii is not a big fan of the word “No.” So inevitably, the next morning at 5:55 AM, I found myself standing at the dock where Gerri keeps his boat, careful to be there early since Gerri is famous for leaving many a sleepy-eyed skier on the dock watching the stern of the ski boat head out to glassy water at 6:02 AM less one tardy skier.



Dr. Gerri Fujii Taking His Turn

Soon Gerri had me completely hooked again. My wife began to see signs of my obsession start to pop up



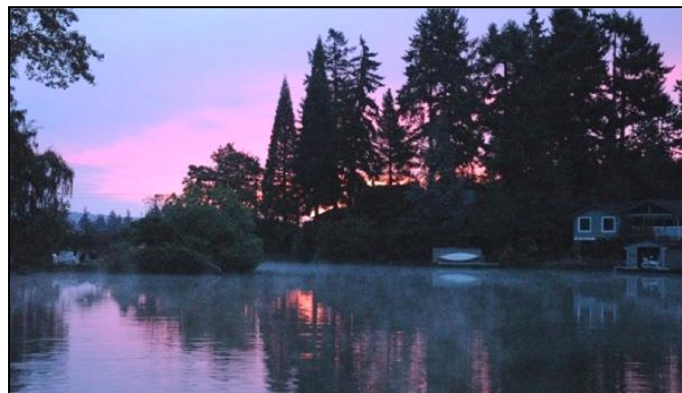
Out for an Early Morning Ski

around the house. First it was a few ski magazines, then some gear, and ultimately a competition level ski boat. There was no going back. I had become a full member and solid contributor to the Dr. Gerri Fujii ski team. While I consider myself very fortunate to have the resources to enjoy the sport to its fullest, I had no idea how the simplest and most critical element of water skiing would soon draw such clear lines between my entertainment and the misfortune of others.

Building the “Ski Team”

For those of you not familiar with the sport, building your local “ski team” is essential to achieving a state of water ski nirvana. Since most regulations require that you have at least two people in the boat while a skier is in the water (3 total minimum), you have to have enough people and a suitable rotation that allows you to consistently beat all the other boats onto the lake in the morning and capture the water in its most peaceful state – when it provides a mirrored reflection of the rising sun that is just starting to peak over the horizon of a new day. Building a network of like-minded people is one of the key components - and often underestimated details - of the sport. Without it you will likely find yourself on a beautiful Saturday morning looking over the water like a sad puppy that has had his new squeaky toy stolen mid-chew. Over time and through Gerri’s relentless recruitment, we grew our little ski group to a reliable and committed team of individuals willing to brave often frigid conditions just to experience that water-based thrill that I cannot fully describe to you (you must actually experience it to fully appreciate it).

Now that you have the background for the real story about to follow, I think you will fully appreciate how this story developed and how ironic it is that it centers around one single element - water.



Peaceful Water at 6 AM

Kara Joins the Team

The real story actually begins the day that Gerri announced that he recruited a new ski partner and as he is fond of saying with a giant smile "...she is smoking!" (in Gerri talk that means he thinks she is attractive, not that she is going to show up with a pack of Camels rolled into her sleeve and one "smoke" tucked neatly behind her ear for quick and easy access should the urge to light up arise). At the time, my main concern was "Would she actually show up and be on time?" Gerri assured me that she would. Sure enough, the first day Kara arrived right on time. It was obvious from the beginning that she was also hooked on the thrill of waterskiing and she had whatever it is inside those rare people that drag them out of a cozy bed early in the morning for the promise of skiing, even when the prior evening may have just finished a few hours before.



Kara Water Skiing

Kara Leaves to Volunteer in Nakuru Orphanage, Kenya

Another benefit of early morning skiing is its therapeutic nature. Something about the peacefulness of being on a placid lake combined with the scenery, nature, hot coffee and cold feet makes for a unique and cathartic combination. So, as we learned more about waterskiing over the course of that summer we also learned more about each other through conversation on the water and at post skiing breakfasts. It had turned out that Kara had recently been engaged to be married and it had not worked out in a



Kara Volunteering in Kenya

rather sudden fashion in the late stages. It was obvious that it was a difficult time for her as she searched for how to move forward. It was soon revealed that she had planned something of a personal journey, where she would embark on a long trip to Europe followed by an extended stay as a volunteer worker at a Kenyan orphanage. This being her first trip to Kenya, she was both a little excited and nervous about her upcoming adventure. When it came time for Kara to leave for her trip we all wished her well and of course we looked forward to her return so she could gain her spot back in the

ski team rotation and tell us all about her adventures abroad.

In Gerri Fujii time there is very little reference to seasons as they exist to most people. So to say that summer turned to fall and then to spring would not quite feel right. It would be better to just say that waterski season turned to football\basketball season and back to waterski season again. As the season opened we began by catching up with everyone, including Kara and stories of her adventures at the

Nakuru Orphanage in Kenya. Kara told us many stories about the children, Julius (her running partner while she was there) and others she had met during her time in the area. It was inspiring to us and it had obviously made a big impact on her life as well.



Dan and Kara Anderson

Starbucks near my house and we sat with a cup of coffee while we waited to see if weather conditions would get better. It quickly became evident during the course of our talk that the “friend” thing was destined to be temporary. In fact, Kara admits now that Dan was on something of a trial date that day to see if he could ski as he had claimed. Luckily for Dan and Kara, he is an honest guy and he could in fact ski as reported. Things moved quickly after that and we had another great ski season. Dan soon popped the question and shortly thereafter a wedding was being planned for the following summer.

Once again ski season faded to basketball\football season and back to ski season. As more details started to emerge of the impending nuptials, we learned that Kara and Dan had decided to spend a part of their honeymoon, back in Kenya doing what they could to help the children at the orphanage and visiting with friends in the local Kenyan community.

Dan and Kara

Later that summer, Kara was scheduled to ski with me on my boat and she called one evening to sheepishly ask if she could bring “a friend” (Kara hates asking for anything, so this must have been important). I told her that it wouldn’t be a problem. The next morning it was pouring down rain, but Kara called to say she was on the way nonetheless. I told her that she and her “friend” (his name was Dan) could meet me at Starbucks for an early morning coffee and we could wait to see if the rain would lift. So I met Kara and Dan at a



Children in Kenya

Bad News from Mogoony Village

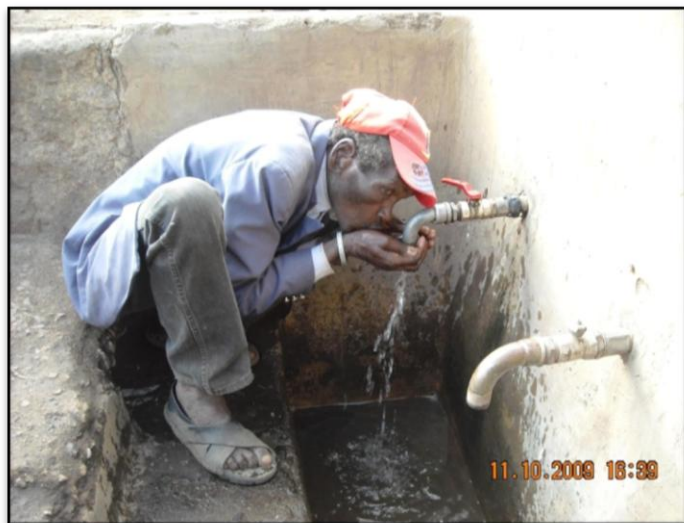
After the marriage and honeymoon, Kara continued to ski with us and we were able to catch up and hear of her travels with Dan as Mr. and Mrs. Anderson. However, they had disturbing news about the Kenyan community which they had visited. It turned out that their main source of water, “the borehole”, had broken down and there was very little hope of raising the money required to fix it with only the village resources. When the borehole broke in February 2009, the village was left completely dependent upon rainfall for maize crops, drinking water for people and animals, and for sanitation purposes. With one of the longest standing droughts in Kenya, the community struggled to hang on for life; schools closed, two seasons of crops didn't produce, disease infiltrated and consequently both animals and people passed away. Without access to water, many fell ill to dehydration, cholera, and many didn't have the immunity to fend off malaria. So while the community around the orphanage was suffering through the absence of water half a world away, we had been drawn together in its abundance for the sheer joy of play. The irony and the opportunity to take action were not lost on us.



Community Members Gather at the Borehole

Convergence Decides to Help

The moment that Kara relayed this story to us, I knew what we had to do. This was our opportunity to return a portion of our good fortune to a community that was so far away, but was connected through such a common element and incredible people. For Convergence Training to pay to have the borehole fixed was the very least we could contribute. I immediately committed the financial resources to have the work completed and Kara rushed into action coordinating local resources and charitable organizations to make sure the money was



Water Flows Again!

used appropriately for its intended purpose.

Weeks later the borehole project was completed and water began to flow again.

For many of us, water is a limitless source of recreation and yet for many others, its scarcity impacts every facet of life. This is especially true in Kenya. Since the borehole has been fixed, schools have been able to reopen and the sick have been able to get water again. Livestock have been able to rehydrate and provide good milk and food and crops can be watered.



Child Waits for Water from the Fixed Borehole

Kara and Dan have consistently deflected praise, when the fact is, everything was coordinated through their efforts and they deserve a great deal of credit. Convergence Training was more than happy to help with financial support and in the end we thank you, our customers for supporting us and making us a successful organization capable of providing help to those in their time of need.

While 2009 has certainly been a banner year for our organization, we count this achievement as one of our most treasured. We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our friends in the Magoon Village in Kenya, Africa. We were happy to provide you with resources needed to make a difference in your community. In turn, you reminded us how blessed we are to have such a wondrously abundant resource available and not to take our everyday good fortune for granted.

