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TPF and ETCA help children get off the streets of Mombasa



The lives of street children in Mombasa, Kenya, are being transformed thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Glad's House Caddie Programme, along with the support of the Tour Players Foundation and the European Tour Caddies Association.

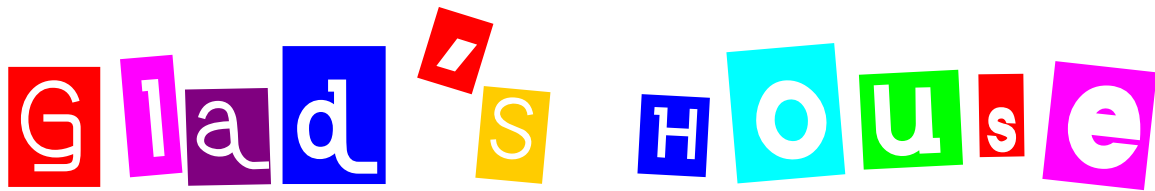
The Tour Players' Foundation, the charitable foundation of The European Tour and its Members, awarded the first grant in its history to Glad's House. The £7,000 grant got the Caddie Project off the ground last year, and it wasn't long before the European Tour Caddie Association (ETCA) added their support.

After the first planned visit was interrupted by the 'Icelandic Ash Cloud Air Travel Disruption', three ETCA Caddies – Paul Cast, Ken Herring and Brian McConnell – travelled to the Vipingo Ridge Resort, some 30km north of the city of Mombasa, this summer, to meet the children and provide training for the caddies involved with the programme.

During the five-day visit, the three caddies, who are normally seen roaming the fairways of The European Tour, saw scenes which both haunted and humbled but ultimately inspired. Not only did the caddies experience the project in full swing at Vipingo but they also visited the 'Streets of Mombasa' where the children had lived before the project started to see firsthand how the initiative had truly transformed lives.

The Glad's House Caddie Programme offers street children in Mombasa an alternative to the poverty and squalor they find themselves. A total of 44 children, 20 from the local village and 24 street children from Mombasa, are being lifted from the poverty trap and away from the life of drugs, glue-sniffing and crime as they learn to a new way of life.

The children involved now get paid regularly, live in the village with a "house mother"
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looking after them and get two meals a day, as well as clean clothes including polo shirts as their uniform. Some are now starting basic reading and writing skills.

Cliff Ferguson, Chairman of Glad's House, said: "I cannot believe the difference in these young people since we were here last – they are happy, content, more confident. They look so different – regular work and meals makes such a difference – and they really enjoy what they are doing. They say it makes them feel worthwhile.

"The training programme has made a significant difference to the way they see themselves."

Among those on the programme is Ahmed Majambo, better known as Medi, who said: "I could never have imagined living like this. It is hard work but I like it a lot."

Mary Mwatu, who is developing into a good golfer as well as being a member of the Kenyan Ladies Boxing Team, is another to benefit and said: "This is a wonderful life where you meet really nice people and have fun."

Simple sentiments, but words which come from the heart for these children.

The trip left a lasting impression on the caddies involved and next year they will return to see how the training is progressing and continue their education.

Paul Cast of the ETCA said: "On behalf of the three of us I would like to say that we have never been more moved, emotionally or spiritually, by anything related to golf, than we were by our trip to Kenya. To visit with the street kids in Mombasa and, thanks to Glad's House and the TPF, to work with some of the ex- street kids in their new caddying environment was one of the most rewarding and very humbling experiences of our lives.

"The Glad's House caddie project is an outstanding humanitarian example of what can be achieved by cooperation, dedication and persistence. We would like to thank all concerned, the TPF, Glad's House, Vipingo Ridge and the caddies for allowing us the privilege of being part of the programme."

The work of the Glad's House programme is receiving international acclaim, with 25 year old Victoria Ferguson awarded the 'Ultimate International Angel' category at The 2010 Cosmopolitan Ultimate Women of the Year Awards in recognition of her inspirational role in setting up the charity while next week, Glad's House is the chosen charity of the NEC Golf Show at the NEC Birmingham, England, from November 26 -28, where more information about the work of Glad's House will be available.

Glad's House are planning on rolling this initiative out at more venues in Kenya. The future is bright and for some of the street children of Mombasa, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

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