



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Making Change Makers, One Dirt Road at a Time

[Prescott, Arizona] Today at the Overland Expo, Alice Gugelev and Jay Shapiro launched **The Muskoka Foundation**, a new non-profit foundation, which creates programs and partnerships for global travelers to “do good as they go”. By creating a network of volunteers the foundation will help to drive sustainable development in what is being called **The Muskoka Villages**.

By helping global travelers to identify their personal areas of expertise and interest, The Muskoka Foundation will then match them with one of the foundation’s programs. Currently, there are programs in the areas of:

- Supporting entrepreneurs in their communities
- Creating coaches for children’s’ sports
- Empowering musicians and artists to reach new markets
- Extending the reach of healthcare professionals through training & resources
- Leveraging technology to enrich education & communications



The driving intent of these programs is to “*make change makers*” in each Muskoka Village, who can then impact their broader communities. The programs themselves are in critical development areas that are easy for the traveler to teach and the local village leaders to learn and leverage for development. These programs typically include 3 key components:

1. a “kit” of relevant development materials that the traveler can hand out during their travels,
2. training workshops that the traveler would learn and then teach,
3. Connections to on-the-ground partners that the travelers can liaise with prior to their arrival

It is ironic that many of the truly incredible travel destinations on our planet –places like: Machu Pichu, Kilimanjaro, Angkor Wat- are all located in the most beautiful, yet poorest countries in the world. When traveling to these amazing places, many travelers share a similar experience: Exposed to the contrast between the beauty of the surroundings, and the poorest of the poor, we say to ourselves: “what difference will a few dollars make, how can I help in a truly sustainable way?”

The Muskoka Foundation was created to answer that question.



If a traveler has a business background, the foundation will pair them with a microfinance partner and prepare them to teach the Muskoka “Village MBA” course to local entrepreneurs. Travelers interested in IT can teach a tech workshop to a group of school children, helping them to make better use of their OLPC laptops. For those interested in sports, the Muskoka Foundation offers a workshop and drill materials (such as soccer balls & wickets) to help local coaches create soccer and cricket programs.

The Muskoka Foundation has already achieved early success through **The Eyes of Hope Project** in Rwanda. Traveler and photographer Linda Smith visited the Kagugu School in Kigali, Rwanda where she set up the program teaching orphaned children to take sophisticated photographs. These photos are now being shown in exhibitions in New York City and have been made into calendars generating over \$1,000 in sales for the children. The photography program is now being extended to other Muskoka Villages around the world, providing workshops and a prepared “kit” with digital cameras, printers and paper.



The Muskoka Villages are spread across 6 continents, with each one positioned near a major travel; travelers can select which villages and which programs best suit their travel plans and interests. Target travelers for the Muskoka programs are those that are planning to spend significant time in a country getting to know the people and culture. Typically, these travelers are overlanders (by 4x4, motorcycle, bicycle) all tied together by a desire to personally help the communities they are visiting and make a lasting impact.

Founder Alice Gugelev, an ex-corporate banker, strategy consultant and Harvard Business School graduate believes that the foundation addresses a big need amongst frustrated professionals and travelers. “We heard one too many times our friends saying, I wish that there was something more that we can do, but how do we just show up and make a difference?” she remembers. Working together with her partner and successful entrepreneur, Jay Shapiro, the two set out to create a meaningful foundation with established partners and programs, to make it easy for interested travelers to get involved. Through the foundation travelers can sign up online, train on the materials and start making a sustainable difference as they go.

Alice continues, “we've had an amazing response, much more than we expected. There is clearly a large group of people who are feeling frustrated and disenchanted with the corporate world, and want to find a way to make a positive impact, while doing what they love.”



Travelers interested in participating, or local NGO's interested in partnering should contact the foundation through: www.TheMuskokaFoundation.org/contact

Contacts & Images

A full library of hi-resolution images of the Muskoka Foundation are available at:

www.TheMuskokaFoundation.org/photos

For more information about the Muskoka Foundation, please visit: www.TheMuskokaFoundation.org or contact:

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About The Muskoka Foundation

Founded in 2008, The Muskoka Foundation was created with the mission to help global overland travelers "do good as they go". By providing programs, training, and local partnerships to aid in sustainable international development, the foundation makes it easy for travelers to leverage their own passions and experiences for the benefit of the communities they are already visiting. Founders Alice Gugelev and Jay Shapiro bring a unique mix of entrepreneurial, technology, banking, strategy and non-profit know-how to develop programs suited to global travelers' interests and developing countries needs. The foundation is based in the New York City area and welcomes all inquiries from global overland travelers and dreamers at www.TheMuskokaFoundation.org