



A lack of land surveyors threatened to doom Namibia's effort to resettle urban poor to open lands outside the cities. Attorney Stephen Snively (below) made it his cause to help solve the problem.

An Outlet in Namibia

His quest to do something good leads attorney Stephen Snively to Africa.

Stephen W. Snively says he was inspired one Sunday by a pastor's sermon in praise of the Good Samaritan. The pastor's words — "do what you can, with what you have, from where you are" — stuck with him. A partner at Holland & Knight in Orlando, Snively wanted to do good, but he wasn't sure how. "I'm a transactional real estate lawyer who represents the developers of shopping centers and high-rise office buildings," he says. "There are not that many opportunities for me to take my professional skills and do something good, either in my own community or someplace else in the world."

Then he read a newspaper article about Namibia, a country on the southwest coast of Africa. Plagued by poverty, HIV/AIDS and a legacy of colonialism and apartheid, the country was

struggling to reinvent itself. One major initiative called for resettling many of the country's urban poor to open lands outside the cities, where residents could establish farms, grow their own food and pull themselves out of poverty. The resettlement effort was floundering because of a shortage of land surveyors. There were only 20 in a country more than twice the size of California. "You have to have surveyors because if you can't describe the land, you can't own the land," Snively says. "And if you can't own it, you can't pledge it to a bank for a bank loan and buy goats and seed and fertilizer and all the things that people who

wish to homestead in Namibia need."

He finally had his cause. Initially, Snively considered paying for teams of American surveyors to go to Namibia, but he quickly determined that would cost too much. Then he came up with the idea of creating a scholarship program to enable Namibians to earn land-surveying degrees at Polytechnic of Namibia, one of the country's top colleges. The program's first class has four students, each of whom has agreed to work in Namibia for at least three years after earning the proper credentials. The first class alone will boost Namibia's total number of land surveyors by 20%.

Snively, who named his non-profit program Scholarships for Namibia, is involved in all the details. He travels to Namibia on vacations to meet with government and college officials. He does his Namibian work "off the clock" at home. For months, many of his colleagues didn't even know he was so involved in the cause. "This was something I was very surprised at, yet it's kind of indicative of his personality," says A. Guy Neff, a Holland & Knight partner and leader of the Orlando office's real estate section. "Steve is one of the most creative people that I know. While he's a very methodical and meticulous and focused person, he also really has these very innovative

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Consul Privileges

As Namibia's "honorary consul," Stephen W. Snively has diplomatic privileges and is an official representative of Namibia. His responsibilities include promoting tourism, investment, trade, educational opportunities and cultural exchanges between Florida and Namibia. Namibia has one other honorary consul in the United States: Jean-Michel Malek, a Houston attorney.

➤ Of Counsel

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ways of approaching things.”

Snively’s efforts quickly drew the attention of the Namibian government. Last August, he was named Namibia’s honorary consul for Florida, a position he’ll use to focus attention to his scholarship program and increase awareness of Namibia in the United States. “He’s really quite a hard-working man,” says Morven M. Luswenyo, Namibia’s minister counsellor and deputy

chief of mission at Namibia’s embassy in Washington D.C. “He has done quite a lot for our country already in less than a year.”

At home in Florida, some people wonder why Snively works so hard for a country whose name he couldn’t even pronounce a little more than a year ago. “Originally, there was always a question of what I expected to get out of this,” he says. “But I don’t want anything out of it other than to see the program succeed and see students graduate and help the country. I was trying to take my professional skills and use them where I saw there was a

unique need not being fulfilled. This has been just the right fit for me.”

Neff, who has worked with Snively since 1980, understands completely. “It’s important for those of us who are so focused on the things that we do in our everyday work, trying to help our clients accomplish their objectives, that we have some kind of outlet. This is an outlet for Steve.”

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