

# Happy to Help

## Bloomer Man Finding Rewards as he Volunteers in Peace Corps

Chris Vetter

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As a boy Edward Wynimko was an adventurer, looking for challenges. He was in the Boy Scouts – eventually earning his Eagle Scout award – and was an avid outdoorsman.

Wynimko, 26, of Bloomer, has taken his love for adventure half a world away. He volunteers for the Peace Corps in the Republic of Namibia, Africa, on the southern part of the continent along the Atlantic Ocean.

“I wanted to give back to others less fortunate,” Wynimko said in an e-mail exchange. “I wanted to learn

other cultures. I wanted to get more life experiences. I wanted to see other parts of the world.”

Wynimko works with the Namibia Red Cross Society in the Orphans and Vulnerable Children program in Opuwo, the Kunene Region in northwest Namibia. He has helped residents plant a garden and make it sustainable.

“We will sell the produce to people in the community and use the money to pay for school hostel fees, toiletries, school uniforms and extra education for OVC,” Wynimko said.

Wynimko graduated from Bloomer High School in 2001, then from UW-Stevens Point in 2006 with a degree in health promotion and wellness.

While in California in 2007, he decided to join the Peace Corps. He left for Namibia in November 2007 and will stay there at least through the end of 2009, and perhaps longer, as he is enjoying working with the Namibian people.



Bloomer native Edward Wynimko visited Epupa Falls, a major waterfall about 120 northwest of Namibia, Africa, where Wynimko is stationed while volunteering with the Peace Corps and Namibia Red Cross Society.

“They have had a hard life, and just to put a smile on their face is a great accomplishment,” Wynimko said. “There have been so many cool experiences. One is just living every day in a different country, learning a different culture and living it. Also our first harvest, even though small due to lack of water last year, was a great feeling.”

Wynimko also has been involved in distributing condoms in an attempt to curb the AIDS epidemic that has hit the country hard.

His mother, Sue Wynimko, said Edward always has been an adventurer. His minor in college included getting certified in rock climbing, spelunking (cave exploring) and whitewater rafting.

She encouraged him to take the leap and join the Peace Corps.



“It’s great life experience,” she said, “He’s a very people person, and he likes to help. And it’s something that if you don’t do right out of college, you wait until retirement.”

Sue said she talks to her son once a week through face-to-face webcam chats, and they also e-mail each other regularly. She said her son is enjoying his work.

“He’s not really materialistic – he can get by with little,” she said.

The corn crop is weak but she’s impressed with the pictures she’s seen of the vegetation.

“Any green, leafy vegetable is hard to grow there without the irrigation and even carrots are difficult,” she said.

Joe Wynimko, Edward’s father, said he wasn’t surprised his son got involved in the Peace Corps.

“He wanted to do some exploring and not come back to the small-town atmosphere,” Joe said. “It’s kind of tough to see your hunting buddy take off and not be around for few years.”

Joe said he does have some concerns about Edward being in Africa.

“He’s in a foreign land, and a lot of places don’t have the same respect for life as the United



Children gathered at the Orphans and Vulnerable Children program center in northwest Namibia, Africa, where Edward Wynimko volunteers.

States,” Joe said. “You worry that he’s safe.”

But the positives definitely outweigh the negatives, Joe added. “He’s getting the experience that a lot of people his age are not.”

Sue is thrilled that her son is gaining so much knowledge and helping others.

“I’m extremely proud of him,” she said. “He’s a great kid. This is him. I’m just proud to say he’s my son.”