

# The Ledger

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## Investing in the Community

### Benevolence in Bellevue

#### Invest in Others

The path to being an independent financial advisor varies, but a lot of advisors

wouldn't attempt to go independent without first building a substantial client base. That wasn't the case for Michael Boone, whose modest beginnings have fueled a passion for helping others.

After only nine months into his financial career, Michael decided to go independent and founded MWBoone and Associates in Bellevue, Washington. Not having many industry contacts or clients meant that the early years on his own were lean. For example, he reports his gross revenue was \$5,900 his first year in business.

"My blessing starting out was that I could afford to starve. I had very few needs," he says. It was probably a blessing, too, that he can appreciate what its like to struggle. As his practice has grown, he has at times donated over 50% of the firm's yearly profit to charity to support people who are struggling much worse than he ever did.

Michael looks back with fondness, as he has successfully turned his meager startup into a thriving practice with a client base that consists largely of high-tech gurus from the likes of Microsoft, Amazon.com and Google. He currently employs three CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ practitioners and two Chartered Financial Analysts who offer fee-only financial planning and investment management (primarily through the Strategic Asset Management platform). His wife, Elizabeth, also works for the firm as the office manager.

Asked about the dynamics of working with his wife, Michael jokes, "We're still married," adding that their working relationship has strengthened their marriage. Their partnership has taken the couple to great heights giving back on the world stage.



Michael and Elizabeth Boone in the Silembe, Zambia orphanage with the children and a local mother. Some of these children are infected with HIV.

#### A Worldwide Imprint

Michael sees a strong parallelism between financial planning and giving back, something he recommends other advisors to cultivate. As he says, "Financial planning and donating to charity are about getting the best return on investment." So when he heard about the huge impact he could make in Africa with minimal investment, he took charge—literally.

In 2000, Michael co-led a group of 22 people to Zambia, Africa. Elizabeth happily accompanied him to remote villages struggling with AIDS, famine and disease.

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“Life expectancy in Zambia is 37 years, and that’s mostly because AIDS is rampant,” says Michael. “We didn’t go in with the idea that we were going to cure AIDS. The children are heavily impacted whether they have AIDS or not, and they need help today.”

During that trip, Michael and his group built a school with railroad rails and tried to teach Western ideas of leadership to village headmasters. The trip was a real eye-opener, and the Boone’s have since led another trip to Africa in 2008 and committed themselves to a couple of organizations that support African children and widows.

According to Michael, “The per-capita income in the African bush amounts to about \$1 a day, so it doesn’t take a whole lot of our money to make a significant difference if you apply it where it’s needed.”

One of the biggest needs, he and Elizabeth discovered, is building orphanages. Through their affiliation with Global Orphan Relief, they have helped make sure that these orphanages are not only built, but that they center on a central theme—family.

“In the African culture, being an orphan has a negative connotation,” Michael says. “The family is everything, particularly in central Africa.”

Global Orphan Relief’s mission is building 900-square foot orphanages that house eight to 12 children. Instead of staffing these orphanages with Western volunteers, the organization puts house “mothers” in charge. These mothers are African widows who have typically lost their



Elizabeth Boone holds Agnes in the community cookhouse. The majority of all items needed for constructing and sustaining the schools and orphanage are purchased locally to support Zambian businesses and workers.

spouses to AIDS. Becoming a house mother in one of these orphanages is life-changing. It’s a chance for these women to build a family unit and not become ostracized within their community.

### Creating r120.org

Michael and Elizabeth also support a woman in the Congo. In addition to her basic needs, she was able buy an internet modem, something that we take for granted in the United States.

In addition to taking trips to Africa, Michael and Elizabeth have led groups to Europe, the Middle East, Greece and Israel to experience the cultures and lend a helping hand. Earlier this year, the couple started the application process to form their own nonprofit, [r120.org](http://r120.org), named after the Romans 1:20 biblical verse in which Paul asserts that we can understand who God is through the created world. Michael says that he wants teenagers and adults to be connected to the natural world and to people who are less fortunate through experience and service.

Michael’s philosophy behind starting his own nonprofit is simple: “A lot of our best learning experiences don’t happen in school, and a lot of our best spiritual moments don’t happen in church.”

Do you have a community outreach story to share? We’d love to hear from you. Please visit the [BranchNet Resource Center | Business Development | Marketing | Programs | Invest In Others | Share Your Story](#) to submit your story and upload a photo.



Elizabeth and Michael Boone and their friends Sheri, Mike and Linda Jones are working with World Orphan Relief to build and manage orphanages, schools and churches in Kalomo, Zambia.