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Corporate responsibility, learning experiences highlight peopleCare mission in Ghana

Monday, October 20, 2014 -- AxiomNews

A group of staff members from peopleCare Inc. returned from a goodwill mission to Ghana in September that attested to the organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility.

The 12 representatives from peopleCare, which owns four Ontario long-term care homes and manages two others, travelled to the west African country to participate in the Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) project, an initiative of the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA).

MEDA, an organization peopleCare CEO Brent Gingerich describes as his "favourite international development agency," has a long track record of fostering entrepreneurship in developing countries to help communities grow out of poverty.

While in Ghana, the peopleCare team observed the results of the project they have supported through fundraising which helps women soybean farmers increase their yields and profits.

"I think this was an amazing opportunity for us as a team," says peopleCare project co-ordinator Dale Shantz. "We saw firsthand what MEDA is doing in Ghana and we were able to interact with the people in the villages who are planting soybeans, and we could hear directly from them what benefits they were seeing; the fact that they were improving the lives of their families (and) that they were able to sell their soybeans and have some extra income.

"We saw the strength of some of these women who were farming and how empowered they were by this advantage that they have."

PeopleCare launched a fundraising initiative for MEDA which brought in \$40,000. The Canadian government matched \$9 for every \$1 raised, bringing the total money raised to almost \$400,000.

Andrea Brissette, peopleCare's director of clinical services, says the experience even provided an opportunity for peopleCare to align its operations of long-term care communities with the methodology embraced by the program in Ghana.

"One of the things that we can bring back is that the people in the villages realized that people can't come in and do things for them; they need to learn skills," she says. "That's how they're making improvements. We're talking about how we need to bring that back to our homes and not necessarily parachute in and do things for people, but teach them and empower them to do things themselves."

Gingerich explains why peopleCare participated in this initiative.

"As an organization, peopleCare has a staff consisting of predominantly women. This led us to support a project that would reflect who we are as an organization," he says. "We are excited to support the GROW project and have a positive impact on the lives of women in Africa."

Writer: Deron Hamel

If you have any feedback on this story, please contact the newsroom at 800-294-0051, ext. 23, or e-mail [deron\(at\)axiomnews.com](mailto:deron(at)axiomnews.com).

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