

feature

ambassador of the year



Mallory Brown

DISTRIBUTES CLOTHING AND RESOURCES TO THOSE IN NEED AROUND THE WORLD

Sometimes all it takes is one travel experience outside of your comfort zone to jumpstart your life's purpose. For Farmington Hills native Mallory Brown, it was backpacking in Southeast Asia after graduating from college that enabled her to see the way others live across the globe.

"I was 21 at the time, and I went for one month to Indonesia, Thailand and Laos, and it just opened my eyes to this whole world that I had never seen before," says Brown, who earned a dual bachelor's degree in French and business from Albion College. "I wanted to go see what everyday life was like and really dive into the cultural side of the experience."

In 2010, two years after her trip to Southeast Asia, she launched World Clothes Line, a "buy one, give one" apparel company that matches every item purchased – a choice of T-shirts, sweatshirts or pants – with a new item for someone in need. "Clothing was something that I chose because it was a void that I saw could be filled," says Brown, who oftentimes during her travels would give away her own personal clothes to those in need.

When she travels to a new country to deliver clothing, the 29-year-old works with a local liaison, someone who can also be her translator and help her locate those in need. "Oftentimes the people in the most need are a little bit hidden," Brown explains.

Since founding World Clothes Line, Brown has distributed clothing in 17 countries, but her charitable outreach has grown even wider in large part through a partnership that began in January 2015 with Crowdrise, a crowdfunding e-commerce company that allows users to raise money for important causes.

Brown has been a part of five Crowdrise fundraisers altogether that have given her the opportunity to give to causes that are outside of her clothing specialty, and four of which she

only had 24 hours to reach her goal. "The first one that I did was this past January in Haiti, and it was a test," Brown explains. "I had never done a 24-hour fundraiser before. Crowdrise had never had a 24-hour fundraiser on the website, so it was a total gamble."

The "86,402 Seconds in Haiti" fundraiser was organized to help a single mother and her five children who lost everything in the devastating earthquake that struck the Caribbean country in 2010. Brown was given the slightly intimidating task of raising \$5,000 in 24 hours to help the family move into a permanent home with basic living essentials and to get the children into school.

"I don't think I slept the night before because I so wanted to help this family," she recalls. "I was so nervous and then the donations just started pouring in, and it was the coolest day. I couldn't believe how quickly people donated."

Brown ended up more than doubling her goal, raising nearly \$11,000 for the family and far exceeding her initial expectations. "We implement all of the money immediately and film that (process), so the donor can see exactly where their donation went, and how it helped and whom it helped," she says. "It's really a significant campaign to (not only) inspire people, but also to show we can change people's lives overnight."

Since then, Brown has run 24-hour fundraisers in Mexico, where she helped a community that lives within a garbage dump gain access to education and supplies; in Honduras, where she empowered a fellow Crowdrise user and worked behind the scenes to help three children in desperate need of life-altering surgeries; and even back home in Detroit, where she raised funds to ensure the CommuniD BBQ for the homeless could continue as an annual gathering for those in

need of food and support.

"You can directly impact someone's life, and this is a really cool opportunity to do so," she says. "It's been incredible for me to do so many of these this year. Every time it grows, and the donors love it. The people who we're helping, this is seriously life-changing for them."

Even earlier this year when Nepal was hit by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake, Brown flew head first into the tragedy. "I had never done disaster relief before, and I was flying into a very unstable environment, but I still went," says Brown, whose original plan before the earthquake hit was to bring electricity to a remote village in Nepal.

With more than 8,500 killed and thousands left stranded, Brown and her team raised nearly \$25,000 through Crowdrise to expand health and sanitation efforts.

"I've learned so much about the human spirit," Brown says. "I mean, I know that sounds all dramatic, but it's true. I meet people on an everyday basis who are struggling to survive, and they've been through things that I can't even imagine and yet they push on. I find people who live in poverty are often some of the kindest people on the planet and the most generous."

As World Clothes Line grows, so does Brown's travel list. This year, she's been traveling every other month and takes about six trips annually. But when she's home in Ferndale, you can still find her sharing her message, whether it's on college campuses or at this past October's TEDxDetroit.

"The more I travel, the more I realize how incredible people are and that we're really all the same," she says. "Regardless of what religion you practice or what language you speak, everybody is human." 🙏 — Audrey LaForest