



“Rescuing Starfish,”

ONE AT A TIME

It’s an overwhelming task to imagine: picking up a stranded starfish on the sand in front of you and tossing it back into the ocean when miles and miles of starfish-littered beachfront stretch ahead. As the story goes, you may not be able to save them all, but you made a difference to one. That’s the philosophy behind Priscilla (Pasquale ‘99) Daeger and Jenny (Dyer ‘99) McGee’s Starfish Project, a ministry dedicated to rescuing exploited women in Asia.

When Priscilla and her husband Nate (‘98) Daeger left the mission field to return to the United States in 2006, she felt torn. Little did she know that coming home would prove essential to the new ministry that God was preparing for her.

“When we came home from Asia I really struggled with my purpose. I knew that it was time for us to come home — the Lord had made that really clear to us, but I felt like ‘What am I supposed to be doing here?’ because my heart is just to really help the people of this nation,” Daeger says.

Back in Asia, Daeger’s best friend and college roommate Jenny McGee was paving the way. Prompted by their Bible study, she and another missionary wife felt compelled to reach out to the women of the red light district. They befriended them, took them out for coffee and medical checkups, and discovered that this was a human trafficking situation.


Sold into prostitution by their families or husbands, the women were desperate to get out but essentially owned by their bosses. They had nowhere to go and no means of financial provision. McGee was determined to change that.

She opened the Starfish Project — a shelter

in Asia for trafficked women — in 2006. McGee knew that in order for the project to work, they had to provide an alternate means of income for these women. So, she created a jewelry-making business in Asia.

When Daeger heard that McGee needed people in the U.S. to help sell the jewelry, she jumped at the chance. “I so wanted to be on the front lines; to stay in Asia and work there. I felt like God was saying, ‘Well, that’s not in my plan for you now, but here’s this. You can still be involved in ministry in Asia,’” Daeger says.

In early 2008, McGee, with Daeger’s help, founded a business in the U.S. for jewelry sales. From her home in Elkhart, Ind., Daeger fills orders that come through the Web site and ships them. She handles all inventory and recruits volunteers to sell the jewelry at churches and craft shows. “Not everyone can go overseas and be on the front lines, but I think with plights like human trafficking, we think, ‘It’s so far away. What can I even do to help?’ This [the Starfish Project] is something so realistic.”

 *To learn more about the Starfish Project or to order jewelry online, go to www.BethelCollege.edu/Alumni.*

— ELIZABETH GRASHORN (‘07)

INSET PHOTO: THOUGH DAEGER (LEFT) STUDIED MUSIC AND MCGEE (RIGHT) STUDIED ENGLISH AT BETHEL, BOTH DEVELOPED A PASSION FOR ASIA WHILE STUDYING ABROAD IN 1997.





STARFISH SUCCESS

Today the shelter provides a place to live, medical care, employment, Christian counseling and vocational training for women once trapped in prostitution. Women come and stay a minimum of one year, but no more than two years, and many have made the decision to follow Christ. In 2008, the first four women successfully graduated from the program and stepped back out into society. One of them recently got married. The other three have jobs.