

# A champion of education offers a final lesson in giving back.

(Neil McBurney, Rwanda, 2008)

Neil McBurney deeply believed in the power of education and its ability to elevate a person's life. His adventurous spirit and passion for teaching, traveling and volunteering took him all over the world, to places such as Norway, the U.K., South Korea, Japan, Germany, Spain and Thailand.

Making Vancouver his home for close to two decades, Neil was an active volunteer in several local non-profit organizations. He was a "language/culture buddy" to many new immigrants. He recorded academic texts for visually-impaired students at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and participated in research studies at UBC Hospital.

But perhaps Neil's most impactful and fulfilling travel and teaching experience took place in 2008, when he volunteered with Cuso International in Rwanda when he was 65. There, he spent six months as an educational volunteer teaching adults English.

"That was very important for him, to volunteer and help people that wanted to help themselves," says Neil's son, Dave. "Nothing meant more to him than seeing somebody progress no matter what part of the world they were from."

While in Rwanda, Neil was moved by the level of poverty and the challenges the local population faced for basic necessities. "It was a real eye-opener for him," says Dave. "But he had just such glowing things to say about his experience. And I know he really took great pride in his spending time there."

After returning home, Neil remained in contact with some of the students he taught in Rwanda and personally supported one through college. He was also continually delighted to receive letters and messages from former students prospering, in large part, because of their education.



The experience was so fulfilling and had such a profound effect on Neil's life, he named Cuso International as the sole beneficiary of his estate. (Neil passed away in 2021 at age 81 from lung cancer.)

He never reached out to share that he was planning to give Cuso International such a generous gift, likely because any acknowledgement and recognition were not important to him. What mattered was that Cuso International continued its work to better people's lives around the world through the gift of education.

**To learn more about how you too can continue to play a vital role in Cuso International's mission by leaving a gift in your Will, please contact Laurie Buske, Director, Resource Development.  
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You too can take action and leave a legacy for generations to come.