



# A Time to Serve ...



Hayley Bakker is a firm believer that in life, just as in tennis, there is a time for receiving and a time for serving.

And the 25-year old PBI tennis professional was feeling that it was definitely her time to serve. "I've received so much from others. So many people have helped me learn and grow - whether it was when I came from Australia to college in America, or within PBI, or working at Rosewood Little Dix Bay," explained Hayley. She found the perfect opportunity to serve this summer, working with children in a program that aims to bring an end to the destructive cycle of poverty in Namibia, in Southern Africa.

Mondesa Youth Opportunities (MYO) is a non-profit after school enrichment program based in Mondesa, a struggling township of approximately 25,000 people, the vast majority of whom live in poverty. The program was founded upon the belief that, for the first time, the very real possibility exists that poverty in Namibia can be overcome in this lifetime - and that the key to this progress is a quality well-balanced education.

Seeking to supplement the overcrowded and underfunded local schools, MYO uses a combination of academics, athletics and the arts to combat the effects of an impoverished environment. Hayley was impressed by the commitment of the young students, who range from grade four to ten. "These children work so hard. They came to us straight from five hours of public school, had a bit of lunch, and then were ready for three or more hours of math, science, English or reading, plus music and sports in-

struction. The program is effective because, here, the teachers personally go into the neighboring schools to select the most motivated and brightest students to participate."

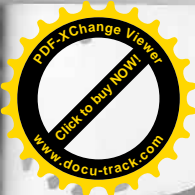
By focusing on academic, social and moral skills with these bright young learners, Mondesa Youth Opportunities is building the foundation for future generations of well-educated and forward-thinking leaders, who will invest in and improve their own communities.

Also critical to the success of this initiative are the staff, a mixture of Namibian teachers and graduate volunteers. "I was deeply touched as I lived and worked alongside these teachers. They have poured out years of their lives working with these children, and you could tell they cared so much for each of the 130 kids who are part of this program," Hayley observed.

It didn't take long for the children to work their way into Hayley's heart as well. "To have the opportunity to get to know these wonderful kids and to serve them was such a blessing," Hayley declared. In sharing her passion and expertise in tennis with them, she found them to be extremely talented players - often even without shoes! Accompanying ten students to a weekend tournament in Windhoek, Namibia's capital city, was a highlight. "They have such high spirits - their singing and laughter filled our van rides. And when they're competing, you see their best efforts, honesty



*PBI professional Hayley Bakker and students of the Mondesa Youth Opportunities program*



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# A Summer to Remember...

and great attitudes both in winning and losing." Not long after her departure from Namibia, Hayley learned that six of the students qualified for the 2009 Masters Tennis Tournament, invited because they were within the top eight in the nation for their age groups.

It was a long journey from the lush surroundings of the British Virgin Islands to the country that took its name

from the Namib Desert, but one that Hayley is so happy to have made. "I'm grateful to PBI and Little Dix Bay for giving me the time to do this, and especially thankful to the wonderful repeat hotel guest here who actually purchased the ticket for the journey when he heard about my dream to go. This was to be my time to give, but I just received so much more from this truly amazing experience."

