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“All girls around the world deserve the right to an education.”



Morton Capital Management Celebrates SANTA BARBARA WOMEN MAKING WAVES

Teri Gabrielsen Warrior for Girls' Education

Interviewed by Caroline Harrah



Caroline Harrah is a wealth advisor at Morton Capital Management, a mother of two, and a passionate volunteer serving on multiple non-profit boards and committees in Santa Barbara. Morton Capital Management is a financial advisory and wealth management firm established in 1983 that works with individuals, families, foundations, and businesses to create personalized, goal-driven strategies to empower their vision of the future. At Morton Capital Management, *Your Journey Matters*. Caroline can be reached at 805-259-9379 or CHarrah@MortonCapital.com.

The Journey Matters

A line was literally “drawn in the sand” more than 15 years ago when Teri Gabrielsen and her family were on safari in Kenya. Teri was struck by the sight of what Chief Kamete called his “school,” five Maasai boys under a tree writing the alphabet with a stick in the dirt. Teri recalls, “At that moment, I knew I’d return to Kenya to help Kamete provide an opportunity for these children to go to school. What I hadn’t fully realized was how critical education would be to the essential health and welfare of the Maasai girls.”

Innovation Through Cultural Collaboration

In 2007, Africa Schools of Kenya (ASK) was formed and Teri, a wife, mother and former teacher, began her work in Esiteti, Kenya. Teri quickly realized that education is a privilege reserved primarily for boys in the Maasai culture. For girls, education is prematurely interrupted around puberty when a coming of age ceremony is celebrated involving the ritual of female genital cutting and early marriage. Teri instinctively knew that the key to change would be found in her ability to listen and educate the community about the health risks of the ritual and an individual’s right to an education. “The result,” said Teri, “was a better informed people who, along with the Chief, chose an ‘alternative rite of passage’ that resulted in no cutting and emphasized education as a young woman’s coming of age.”

Wave of the Future

The alternative rite of passage (ARP) program adopted by the Maasai people of Esiteti now takes place three times a year and is facilitated by Maasai women. Since its launch in 2012, there have been over 220 female ARP graduates. “Studies have shown that educating girls is the single most effective way to raise overall economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition, and promote health. We’re encouraged by the participation and believe the ARP model gives both Maasai men and women a personal stake in preserving the health and future of their people. By duplicating the ARP program throughout Kenya, we have the opportunity to reach 13,000 Maasai girls a year! That would be a dream come true,” exclaims Teri.

For more information about Africa Schools of Kenya and the Alternative Rite of Passage, go to www.ASKKenya.org.

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