



A Business Vision for Missions



Photos courtesy of Ira Lippke

Scott McAlvany, above at Vanguard; at left with orphan children in Kuta, Indonesia; at right in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, working with a tsunami relief team. "My goal is to create an environment where the kids [at the Kuta orphanage] are involved every day in business," he says. "When they graduate they can do all the accounting and understand entrepreneurial development."



Photo: Maunacey Bayes



Recent graduate Scott McAlvany '05, led two lives at VU, one as an everyday student, one as a missionary-entrepreneur. After receiving his degree in May he headed to Indonesia on a one-way ticket to volunteer at the orphanage he has supported for four years.

"I've got energy and passion to do this," he says. "I want to leave a mark on the world other than working in a corporation. I love these kids, and I love a life of adventure and danger. Why not put myself in that?"

McAlvany won many admirers at VU because of his leadership abilities, his ascetic lifestyle and his business-minded approach to missions.

"He has the most innate leadership skills," says business professor Ed Westbrook, who recruited McAlvany to be the advance man for the first VESPA (Vanguard European Study Program Abroad) program. McAlvany and a partner blazed a trail through Europe, setting up hotel arrangements and meeting places.

"People follow him because in difficult situations he's confident and self-assured," Westbrook says. "The more impossible the job, the more he thrives. He is mature and unflappable. I'm his biggest fan."

But before he found his path, McAlvany was on the brink of losing his freedom. In spite of a strong Christian upbringing in Durango, Colorado, he was facing prison time for underage drinking, disturbing the peace and eluding the police.

"I remember saying, 'God, I need to change. I don't know if you're out there, but if you are, throw something to me,'" McAlvany says.

That "something" was a Youth With A Mission program in Australia which his probation officers let him attend. There he went through the most "painful and productive time in my life."

"I said, 'Oh my gosh, I've been living every area of my life completely wrong,'" he says.

Back in Durango he apologized personally to the police and sheriff. The judge had mercy and let him attend VU while on probation.

"I wanted to say good-bye to that life," McAlvany says. "It was like starting over out here."

He quickly made the best of the opportunity and became a stand-out in the business department. But he yearned to return to Kuta, Indonesia, where he had ministered in an orphanage as part of his YWAM experience. Kuta, a land of volcanoes, lush jungles and the world's best surfing beaches, has been transformed by western

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Scenes from the aftermath of Indonesia's tsunami. McAlvany and friends arrived days after the disaster to assist with medical care and clean-up.



Photos courtesy of Frank Hoke

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tourism into a haven of prostitution, gambling and drugs. The streets of Kuta teem with thousands of abandoned children, McAlvany says.

He wanted to use business principles to help the orphanage, but first he had to pay his way there. He began working full-time while attending VU to cover his airfare and expenses in Kuta. For a while he lived in a friend's camper to save money. While in Kuta he built beds and furniture for the children, and during his sophomore year he recruited friends to work with him at the orphanage. Five VU students stayed nearly a month and led early-morning prayer and worship with the kids, prepared them for school, surfed until noon, then taught the kids English and prepared dinner.

"By 8 p.m. you're beat," McAlvany says. "You tuck the kids in and do it all again the next day."

McAlvany returned to Kuta every summer and Christmas while he was a student, and financed his trips by bringing rolls of covered high-quality fiberglass to sell to surf shops in Kuta, which use it for repairing

surfboards. On trips back to the U.S., he brought bagloads of bracelets, jewelry and handicrafts to sell to fashion-conscious young people in Orange County. His entrepreneurial bent comes from his father who owns an investment firm, he says.

The Kuta orphanage has grown from five to 25 children, and McAlvany now manages a second house where he teaches the kids to build small businesses as they host teams of American workers.

"My goal is to create an environment where the kids are involved every day in business," he says. "When they graduate they can do all the accounting and understand entrepreneurial development."

His VU education dovetailed nicely with his missions activities.

"Everything I lived in Kuta, I had learned in anthropology at VU," he says. "It made my education come alive and gave me a context to learn in. VU has been a key, foundational place for me. It provided me with four years of organized structure of due dates and education. I see it helping me in so many ways."

In December 2004, McAlvany was in Kuta

when the tsunami hit. He and two friends talked their way into Banda Aceh, the worst-hit area, and brought water purifiers which provided the only clean water in the makeshift hospital. McAlvany cleaned wounds, helped with on-the-spot surgeries and amputations, and hauled away dead bodies.

"I saw horrible things, but what sticks in my mind are the families and individuals who were so grateful and didn't want us to go," he says.

His mother Molly calls Scott her "carpe diem, because he seizes every day."

"He loves adventure," she says. "While he was finding his own faith he zigged and zagged, but we knew he would come back. I have some women who pray Psalm 91 for Scott, and when he goes to Asia we really ramp up the prayers. Not long ago, after our family attended the symphony, which Scott loves, he sat his father and I down in Starbucks and said, 'I want to hear your personal goals for the next 5 to 10 years. I don't want you to become stagnant.' He has added that kind of spark to the family." ■