

# behind the scenes



Feed the hungry. Plant trees. Supply clean water. These efforts and more go on every day, worldwide, supported by the Hy-Vee One Step program and sales of select cereals, bottled water, potatoes and paper products. To show the remarkable and true story of how customers and employees help people in need, Hy-Vee sent cinematographer Toby Phillips to South Africa to capture the story of how a Hy-Vee One Step well impacts a community.

WATCH THE COMMERCIAL AT  
[hy-vee.com/corporate/our-company/one-step/](http://hy-vee.com/corporate/our-company/one-step/)

## good works through the lens

Toby Phillips has spent decades directing and filming movies, music videos and television commercials. His work shines in the films *Edward Scissorhands*, *The War of the Roses* and *The Doors*; music videos for Michael Jackson, David Bowie and the Rolling Stones; and ad campaigns for Hilton Hotels, Ford, Merrill Lynch and Disney.

When Hy-Vee decided to film a commercial about its work drilling a water well near impoverished Sekgakgapeng in northern South Africa, it turned to the freelance Australian cinematographer known for his storytelling skills.

"Cinematography is part of the storytelling," says Phillips. "Working with Hy-Vee, where we collaborate creatively, we're telling the story together. I thrive on being able to tell the story no matter what." Showing the hardships some people endure just to get water is key to telling the story. "What you see in the commercial is absolutely real. The people had no electricity; they had no running water," Phillips says.

"I found it quite amazing that Johannesburg was an advanced-looking city ... but how quickly things changed when I got out of the city. An hour north of Johannesburg, people were in really squalid conditions," he says. "Somehow their livelihoods were self-sustaining in very old-fashioned ways, where they're trading and not dealing with money. They're all growing some kind of food in their backyards. The huts that they lived in were often just some simple frame with bits of metal tacked up to it, with literally no furniture inside. No electricity. No water. No toilet."

Phillips has filmed in other impoverished areas, including those in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Nigeria, but says the One Step commercial was "the hardest job of my life, because of all the

challenges," which included hours and hours of driving, the lack of interpreters who knew English and the scarcity of general amenities. But it was illuminating as well. "The country is beautiful. It reminds me a lot of Australia," Phillips says. "The fact that they now have water wells makes for a big difference. Water is the key to life."

When he first arrived in South Africa, Phillips connected with Blessman International Inc., a nonprofit founded by Iowans Dr. Jim Blessman and his wife, Beth Blessman, based in Limpopo Province. Blessman International builds and runs schools and provides meals to South Africans in need. It uses One Step money donations from Hy-Vee to drill water wells.

The Hy-Vee One Step commercial depicts the long treks taken by so many in Limpopo Province to collect water, often from contaminated creeks. The opening of the commercial shows a young girl and her aunt leaving their hut at 5 a.m., jugs in hand, to walk to a creek to collect water. The second vignette shows kids from an adjacent school, gathered around the spigot of a newly drilled well, eagerly filling containers with sparkling clean water. Nearby stands a large green water tank and a handwashing station.

"The aunt actually cooks the meals for the kids at the school," Phillips says. "The kids who go to that school, some of them ride the bus for two hours to get there and two hours to go back home." Each gets a cooked meal, supplied by Blessman International, then after school they fill the containers they brought with them with water from the spigot. Other people come to collect water as well. "They put (the containers) on their heads ... It's a lot of work," Phillips says. Some lug the water home in donkey carts or trucks.



WHAT YOU SEE IN THE COMMERCIAL IS ABSOLUTELY REAL.



TOP: Toby Phillips, cinematographer, chats with local school children in Limpopo Province. ABOVE: A film crew films local women. BELOW: A new water tank, provided by Hy-Vee One Step, Blessman International and Rotary International, stands on a scaffold near a school in Limpopo Province.

**3.4**  
**MILLION**  
people, mostly  
children, die  
each year from  
water-related  
diseases due to  
contaminated  
drinking water  
and poor  
sanitation.

- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION





Toby Phillips, director and cinematographer for a Hy-Vee One Step commercial about providing water wells in South Africa, films as clean water pours from a spigot attached to a new water well.



A boy fills his cup with drinking water from a new well near his school. The well and large green tank were built with donations from the Hy-Vee One Step program.



ABOVE: Local residents wash their hands at a new handwashing station. BELOW: Dustin Blessman, right, president of Blessman International in South Africa, with a local worker.



## blesman international: help for south africa

**W**hen Dr. Jim Blessman, a family physician in Urbandale, Iowa, began donating time and expertise on mission work during the 1990s, he developed close relationships with people in Limpopo Province in South Africa. In 2001, desiring to make a long-lasting difference to the poor in the area, he set up a home base there to provide meals, agricultural support, education, computer training, clean water and sanitation.

Blessman International, a nonprofit with administrative offices in Iowa, works with

African organizations to assess the greatest needs, then makes donation requests to partners, including Hy-Vee. The requests are reviewed by the Hy-Vee Board of Directors. For water wells, Blessman International works up geology reports to locate successful drill sites; gathers quotes from local drillers; hires the driller and oversees the project. The goal for every site is to set up a complete water system—tanks, pumps and handwashing stations. The water is tested to ensure it's safe for consumption.

"We're so thankful and have a lot of gratitude for the partnership that we have with Hy-Vee and their One Step program over the years. We've seen how it's created such an incredible impact on all the communities, not just in South Africa but all over the world," says Dr. Blessman. Blessman International has drilled water wells at 15 schools in Limpopo Province. "What we've found is that 99 percent of the time there's a fence around the school, so there's that security aspect," says Dustin Blessman, Dr. Blessman's son and the organization's

president in South Africa. "Also, a large number of children will benefit from the [well]." More than 4,600 students use One Step wells, Dr. Blessman says. He has witnessed the excitement when clean water spouts from a new well and spigot. "You hear some incredible thank-yous when you're out there getting the job done," he says. "It really is one of the most amazing things—just the absolute gratitude." Blessman International worked with Hy-Vee to organize the One Step commercial and oversaw drilling of the wells shown.

### FILMING CONNECTIONS

While directing the video, cinematographer Toby Phillips learned about daily lives in northern South Africa. "A lot of the kids had never seen [filming] before. At the school, [almost] no one spoke English, so everything had to be done through an interpreter. There was one boy who spoke some English, and he was having the time of his life because he got to practice a little with us."



PHOTOS: Courtesy of Blessman International (this page)



## Q&A: all about the Hy-Vee One Step water program

**Q: How did the Hy-Vee One Step program for safe drinking water get its start?**

**A:** Lack of fresh water is a global crisis, and Hy-Vee wants to help. It is estimated that one in six people worldwide lacks access to safe drinking water. In 2012, Hy-Vee partnered with Rotary International and Blessman International to drill water wells where they are needed.

**Q: How many One Step wells have been drilled, and where?**

**A:** Proceeds from sales of One Step bottled water have helped fund more than 80 clean-water projects: in Haiti, South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Lebanon, Chad and South Africa.

**Q: What is the process for drilling a One Step well?**

**A:** The Hy-Vee Board of Directors reviews detailed requests from other entities in the countries, such as Blessman International and Rotary International, after those groups receive the requests and geographical data from local officials. Hy-Vee grants go toward the use of local drilling rigs and hiring workers for the job, as well as testing the water once it's tapped.

**Q: What was the water situation in Limpopo Province, South Africa—where the Hy-Vee One Step commercial was filmed—before the well was drilled?**

**A:** Families spent hours fetching water from sometimes-contaminated creeks

or rivers. They would need to boil any water they brought home for drinking or cooking.

**Q: How much money has the Hy-Vee One Step water program raised for clean-water wells around the world?**

**A:** Sales of One Step bottled water raised \$976,528 as of 2020.

**Q: What does Hy-Vee hope to achieve with the One Step water program?**

**A:** The One Step program has set a goal of building 10 new community wells in water-stressed areas worldwide each year to improve the health, sanitation and agriculture of people without access to clean water.

# you can make a difference

Be part of the effort! Buy these One Step products at Hy-Vee. Proceeds from sales help finance important projects in the Midwest and around the globe.



Purchasing a box of Hy-Vee One Step cereal or a One Step carton of eggs contributes to feeding one of **800 million hungry people worldwide**. Globally distributed meals include rice, soy protein, vitamins, mineral supplements and dried vegetables. **The One Step program has distributed 9 million meals to those in need across five continents.**



Water-related illness is a leading cause of sickness and suffering throughout the world. An estimated one in six people lacks clean drinking water and two in six lack adequate sanitation. Through purchases of One Step 1-liter bottles and multipacks, **Hy-Vee, along with the Rotary Foundation, has helped fund 87 clean-water projects in 11 countries.**



Trees supply oxygen, food, clean air and shade while lowering energy costs and they improve water quality by reducing runoff and erosion. Purchases of One Step Paper Products or Seventh Generation Cleaning Products have helped Hy-Vee and the Arbor Day Foundation **plant more than 420,000 trees** in parks, neighborhoods and areas damaged by floods or fires.

## RESPONSIBLE SOURCING

**One Step products and packaging—such as paper towels and the boxes for cereal—are made from recycled materials, ensuring that one valuable resource from trees continues its life cycle. Trees are vital to community health and well-being. Hy-Vee aims to package and produce products that make the best use of all resources.**

One Step customers may not see the results of their donation, but communities thousands of miles away feel the benefits. Through the Rotary Foundation, the Tanzanian village of Kigogo received its first water system in 2015, built in part with One Step funds. In addition to building the water system, funds were used to train citizens and local councils to manage the completed systems.

According to a three-year impact assessment, the Kigogo water system is paying dividends. Villagers report that the water system has improved quality of life by reducing domestic conflicts, decreasing waterborne illness, improving personal hygiene and boosting school attendance. It's also created new opportunities for housing and construction jobs and benefited the environment through the planting of trees.

