

The Quest for Clean Water

In 1998, at the age of six, **Ryan Hreljac** learned that there were people in Africa who didn't have access to clean water. From that day onwards, he decided to do something about it.

Ryan's Story

Ryan first learned about the need for clean, safe water in Grade 1. After listening to his teacher tell his class about kids in Africa without access to clean water, Ryan was motivated to help.



Ryan made presentations to schools, churches, the local Rotary Club, and community groups to raise awareness and money to build a well. His class said, "We'll help you," and held a fundraiser. Then the class down the hall got involved... and eventually the whole school did too. The local paper did a story about Ryan's initiative, and as the news of his efforts spread, people were touched and sent money to help. In 1999, Ryan's first well, which is still in operation today, was built at Angolo Primary School in Uganda, Africa.

That same year, Ryan's teacher arranged for his students to become pen pals with the class at Angolo. Ryan and a boy named Jimmy Akana wrote letters to each other before meeting in person during Ryan's first trip to Uganda in 2000. The boys became good friends.

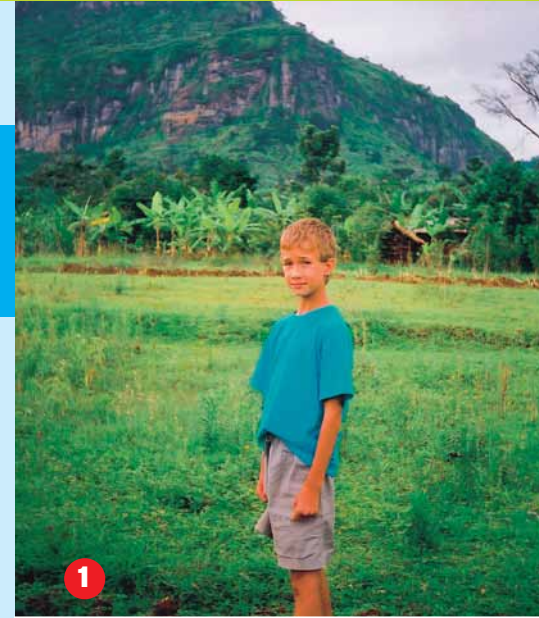
In 2001, the Ryan's Well Foundation was formed. Twelve-year-old Jimmy came to Canada on a visitor's visa and lived with Ryan's family. Eventually he obtained refugee status and became a permanent member of the Hreljac family. Jimmy is now a Canadian citizen and lives in Canada. He helps spread the word about the Ryan's Well Foundation.

Since the foundation started, Ryan's team has helped build over 720 wells and 910 latrines (toilets), bringing safe water and improved sanitation to over 760,500 people.

Here's a snapshot of Ryan's journey through the years.

1. Ryan during his first visit to Uganda in 2000.
2. Ryan walking to Angolo Primary School.
3. Ryan and Jimmy meeting for the first time at the Angolo Primary School's well in Uganda in 2000.
4. Ryan and Jimmy sharing their story in the Netherlands in 2005.
5. Ryan with local kids in Angolo.
6. Ryan returns to Angolo in 2006.
7. The Ryan's Well Foundation team at Angolo in 2007.
8. Ryan and Jimmy give thanks in 2011.
9. Ryan speaking at a conference in 2012.
10. Ryan and Ryan's Well Foundation Director Jane Baird at the CTV Amazing People Gala in 2012.

"It just wasn't fair to me that other kids spent their entire days walking miles upon miles for dirty water. Once I thought that I could do something about it, I just decided to act. I didn't think of it as changing the world but rather trying to make the world a little more fair." - Ryan



"It's really your attitude that makes the difference. I try to stay positive. I remind myself that although these may be small steps, if you keep at it and never give up, the impact of your steps will grow year after year."
- Ryan

