

Written by Ashley R. Carlson
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Many Phoenix residents have probably noticed the growing presence of a certain eye-catching fitness center emboldened with bright, cheery colors—Orangetheory Fitness. The franchise is owned by Valley residents Becky and Travis Renner, both athletes for many years, who not only have a passion for health and wellness but a philanthropic streak as well. AFM had the opportunity to discuss their latest charitable efforts: joining with ReturnHope International to raise funds and build a freshwater well in the remote area of Bugiri, Uganda. The Renners have proven that they are not only successful business owners, but have a motto that runs deeper than fitness: when blessed with means and security, it is one's duty to help those less fortunate any way possible.

AFM: Please tell us a bit about Orangetheory Fitness. What sets this fitness center apart from others, and why do you think Valley residents should choose it?

BR/TR: At Orangetheory Fitness, you'll get the energy of a group workout with the attention of an experienced personal trainer. The idea of Orangetheory is simple: a 60-minute workout designed to push you into the Orange Zone. Backed by the science of post-exercise oxygen consumption (EPOC), our heart rate monitored training is designed to keep heart rates in a target zone that stimulates metabolism and increases energy. The result is the Orange Effect—more energy, visible toning and extra calorie-burn for up to 36 hours after your workout!

Top-of the-line equipment, an upbeat atmosphere and motivational staff members are what make the Orangetheory Fitness environment so energetic. It doesn't matter if you are just beginning your fitness journey or are already a top athlete. Orangetheory sessions are made for all fitness levels. You'll switch between treadmills, indoor rowing and weight room/resistance training blocks. We change up the workout, so you'll never get bored and you won't plateau.

AFM: As franchise owners, your schedules must be busy as it is. What made you both decide to get involved with the nonprofit organization, Return Hope International? Why did you feel it important to support this specific organization in bringing freshwater to the residents of Bugiri, Uganda?

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BR/TR: We are in the land of opportunity in America. Here, generally, if you are driven, you can pay your bills. We have easy access to freshwater nearly everywhere we go. In Uganda, this is simply not the case. The residents of Bugiri face many challenges, and when we heard about how hard they have to work just to get freshwater, we couldn't fathom not lending a helping hand. We believe that if you prosper, you must give back; that is our duty as human beings. Building a freshwater well in Bugiri is just the beginning of momentum for them to continue to get closer to self-sustainability. It means so much to us to be able to play a small role in bringing aid and are looking forward to continuing to make this trip again and again.

AFM: Can you tell us about this organization? What actions did you take to raise awareness and funds toward building the water well?

BR/TR: Return Hope International shares a very common vision that we share within our family. Rather than simply donating money to Africa, they take action and use the funds that they collect to help the residents of Bugiri. We believe that instead of just giving money to a victim of circumstance, it is more effective to use the funds to help educate towards self-sustainability. As part of an accountability program at Orangetheory Fitness, we charge our guests a \$10 no-show fee. We find that our members enjoy the accountability program as it gives them extra motivation to make their scheduled workout. Rather than making a profit from our no-show fees, we opted to use these funds toward the nonprofit of our choice.

AFM: After raising funds for the organization, you both decided to travel to this remote part of Uganda earlier in the month. Can you tell us about how that trip was for you both?

BR/TR: We knew that Bugiri was in desperate need of freshwater, and we thought we were mentally prepared for what we were going to see. We talked for weeks about the situation and read many books on the topic. Once we arrived and actually witnessed the desperation of necessity of freshwater, both of us were overtaken with emotion. To see the water they drink and to watch them have to carry water with them one mile each way, was almost too much for us. We've always lived below our means and consider ourselves not to be too high maintenance, but this experience rocked our world. We now know just how fortunate we all are in the United States. We must help our fellow humans who do not have the luxuries that we are so accustomed to. We are looking forward to traveling to Africa every year and we are very excited to see how many fresh water wells we can build in the future. Donating wells is now not only a personal goal, but a business goal as well. The entire Orangetheory team is on board and we couldn't be more thrilled!

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AFM: What would you want people to go away with after reading this article? Anything in particular that you both feel is most important for readers to know, regarding Orangetheory Fitness, and your support of the Return Hope International organization?

BR/TR: We want people to know that the leaders of Orangetheory Fitness Arizona are true social workers. Both of us were scholarship athletes at a Division 1 University, and we both knew even before we met that we wanted to be in the fitness industry. This is our purpose and this is our passion. Running a business as successful as Orangetheory Fitness allows us to give back. We are very fortunate to be doing this. Part of the reason that we have been successful is because it was never about the income; it was never about the revenue for us. We got into the fitness industry to change lives, and now our mission statement has expanded. We want to change lives on a global level and we are trying to do the best we can. It is easy to wake up in the morning when you have a vision and a purpose. We cannot wait to get more fresh water wells in Uganda, and the next time we do it, it will be on a grand scale!

To learn more about Orangetheory Fitness, visit: <http://www.orangetheoryfitness.com/>

To learn more about ReturnHope International and the opportunities to contribute, visit: <http://www.returnhope.com/>