



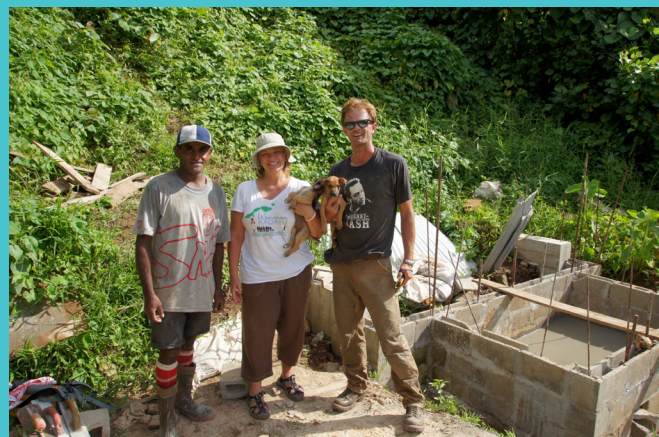
# Wananavu Kadavu

WRITTEN BY Kylee Treece | PHOTOS BY Nancy Thompson Mahler

My family has made annual trips to Fiji for years, but this year we went to Kadavu, an island that was even more remote than previous trips. It's remoteness was one of the things that drew us to Kadavu, but that meant amenities weren't as available as in other places we have visited. We lived pretty "green" for the remainder of the vacation, since this was an eco-friendly resort.

Fresh water was not at hand like one would imagine while in Fiji. You're probably thinking just like I did, "well then where does Fiji water come from?" Well, yes, they do in fact have beautiful fresh springs and waterfalls, but it is not fresh by the time it makes it down the hillside.

We met a lovely woman named Nancy Thompson Mahler and her son one day at the resort. They were out visiting resorts to help make visitors to the area aware of the problem that the local villages are facing: a shortage of drinkable water. It turns out Nancy is also from Utah, and we started talking and she told us her story – how they have created a non-profit foundation to help these local villages build water systems to provide them with fresh drinking water with the water sources they have so readily available.







The foundation is called Wananavu Kadavu – wananavu means “everything is good” in Fijian. Nancy’s inspiration can best be described in her own words:

*“I went to Fiji for a visit and fell in love with the people. My sons Ben and Scott Sorensen had lived in Fiji for several months working on another project. The Fijian people took them in and treated them like family. When I went to Fiji the people in the villages of Navuatu and Drue became like family to me, too. We wanted to do something for our new friends and thought that a library might be a good project. To my surprise, we were told that one of the greatest needs of the rural villagers was clean water. We were then asked if we could build a fresh water system. I thought that our family could finance one water system for the village of Navuatu on Kadavu Island. I sent over my grocery money and my son Ben to begin building the water system with help from the local villagers. Soon it became obvious that the needs were greater than our resources and we formed a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation called Wananavu Kadavu so that we could seek donations.*

*“We finished an uncompleted system in the Nuku Settlement and put in a brand new system in Navuatu/Drue. The water systems are gravity fed. We find a source of clean spring water in the mountains, a dam is built around the spring and is then piped down to storage tanks in the village. Our current project is bringing fresh water to the Kavala Health Center and surrounding villages in Kavala Bay. The Health Center serves thousands of people on Kadavu Island. Having fresh water at the clinic will be a great benefit.”*

Launching the foundation wasn’t all fun and games. As with most charitable organizations, fundraising has been the biggest obstacle. So far funds have been collected from Nancy’s family and from friends. A golf tournament was held last year with help from golf pro Joseph Summerhays and the Summerhays family, which helped raise funds to complete the Kavala Health Clinic. A second golf tournament is planned for August 1 at Valley View Golf Course in Layton, Utah, which hopefully will raise enough funds to continue the work.

Some obstacles the foundation has faced are literally forces of nature. “We have faced adverse weather conditions such as rain storms and hurricanes, which make it difficult to stay on schedule,” says Nancy. Also, all parts and equipment must be shipped by boat, which is both time consuming and expensive.

Fortunately, Wananavu Kadavu has garnered a lot of support. Nancy’s son, Ben, has been working as project manager for the organization and he has met with local chiefs and members of the Ministry of Health and the Prime Minister’s office. They have now become acquainted with the organization and work. “The support of these government officials over the last year has been very helpful,” says Nancy.



Nancy says her husband, Heinz Mahler, has been her biggest supporter from the start and the group’s current Board of Directors & Advisory Board include people from all over the United States: Craig Jacobson of Colorado, Kelly Wilson of Utah, Rebeca Bishop of New York, Kim Kohler of Utah, Serena Martineau of Utah, Bruce Bishop of Utah, and Dr. Russell Howorth of Fiji. Wananavu Kadavu also has garnered support from sponsors from around the world, including The New Yorker Restaurant and Active Care, and has appreciated the local support from Utah Rotary District #2493.

“This has been a great blessing to all involved,” she says. “One village at a time, together we can ...”*é*

### Interested in More Information?

To learn more about Wananavu Kadavu, visit [www.wananavukadavu.org](http://www.wananavukadavu.org)



Kylee Treece is the office administrator for Élan Woman. Kylee loves living in St. George and enjoys the lifestyle it offers. She and her husband, Kyle, enjoy many outdoor activities together, love to travel, and adore their little sidekick, their Pug, Von Kruz.