

Emily's Promise

Monroe M. Diefendorf Jr., CLU, C3DWP, learned a life-changing lesson from his daughter Emily, who joined him on the Main Platform stage. "It is not about one's education or position," the 30-year MDRT member from Locust Valley, New York, told members of the audience. "It's not about one's money and status. But it is about one's heart."

Diefendorf learned about heart while on a family trip to Africa. Emily had convinced her father to travel to Africa and bring the rest of their family to share the experience she'd had on previous trips. "It will change your life," she promised him.

Emily first became interested in a journey to Africa when she learned about an appeal to raise money to provide shoes to orphans in Zambia. Through her family's charitable fund, Emily was allowed \$500 in granting authority for the year. She decided to provide the orphans with 100 pairs of shoes at \$4.50 per pair.

Not satisfied with just sending the money, Emily wanted to go to Africa to personally hand out the shoes. "This was a more difficult hurdle to get over," Emily said. "I handled each of my parent's objections one by one and ultimately closed the sale."

Emily spent two weeks that summer with the Zambian orphans. One day, however, stood out: shoe day. "We handed out shoes to every child, many of whom had never owned a pair of shoes and walked miles in bare feet just to be with us," Emily said. "Experiencing this gave me an entirely new perspective on the cultural differences at home and abroad."

Diefendorf said the orphans' lives were changed by receiving their first pair of shoes, but his daughter's life was changed forever by the experience. "Shoes will come and go, but the heart of one child has been super-sized," he said. "For her to understand that one person can make a difference is the best \$450 investment a dad could ever make."

Emily returned to Africa three more times. For her fourth trip, she convinced her father that the entire family should accompany her. She promised him the trip would change his life.

After days of working with the orphans,



Diefendorf learned about their lives and hardships. He experienced shoe day. Still, he said, he awaited the life-changing moment his daughter promised.

Diefendorf said the life-changing experience came courtesy of a 5-year-old girl who stepped forward to speak in front of a crowd of more than 1,000 orphans and volunteers. "What I saw was amazing," he said of her small stature commanding all of that attention. "She had no education, no position, no power and no status. Yet, that day she had a great deal of influence. Despite having nothing, she had the world.

"If you and I would have the heart of a child like this one, we too, would have influence and significance."

Emily challenged attendees to get their families involved in charitable endeavors to have their own life-changing experiences. "Who would have thought that a pair of shoes would have blossomed into such a life-changing event for my whole family?" she said. **RTT**