

HP residents start charity in South Africa

KELLY PAGE, Editorial Intern

meaningful and happy life.”

For Highland Park residents in high school, evenings are often filled with sports practices, music lessons, clubs and other different activities. Some may not realize that having such a wealth of extracurricular activities is a privilege that many students around the globe do not have access to, including in certain areas of Cape Town, South Africa.

That’s why Highland Park resident Steve Davis and his son Ben started a charity called Practical Preparation for Progress, P3, which, among other educational programs, will start a soccer league for students in Cape Town, South Africa who would not otherwise have an opportunity to play.

“We all have the same need for involvement, physical activity, learning how to be teammates,” Steve said.

The father and son first travelled to South Africa to go on a safari after Ben graduated from Highland Park High School in 2017. Ben wanted to explore the world rather than heading straight into college, and Steve had recently retired from the business world. Freed from the obligations they had been living with, both of them were searching for something more out of life.

“I was done with [business],” Steve said. “It was a lifestyle that created a lot of stress, anxiety and unhappiness and I’ve been looking to unload the business for a number of years. It took me quite a few years to get out but when I did it was a second chance at having a fun,

“Unlike the majority of my graduating class, who go on to college post high school graduation, I chose a different path for myself,” Ben said in an email to *The Landmark*. “A path that I believe is a great option for me and perhaps for many students to take. This decision was based on many reasons, which include, my being unsure of what I wanted for my future, not wanting to waste the insane cost of tuition without knowing I will get any value from it.”

While exploring the southeast coast of South Africa, the two saw many South African residents who did not have the privileges they were used to on the North Shore.

“We went to Africa originally for the wildlife, and we chose that because my father and I both have a passion for wildlife so we wanted to experience that together,” Ben said. “So the two of us went on a trip, we did a small safari, and we knew that since we were in Africa for an extended period of time, that the lifestyle there of many many people living in extreme poverty is the exact opposite of what we have been given here in Highland Park which is privilege and a luxurious upbringing.”

This is why, during their trip, Steve and Ben decided to do something to help out.

“We felt empathy for these students, and we actually started working with them, students about my age, high school,” Ben said. “My dad and I decided that we wanted to give back to these students who



Highland Park resident Ben Davis (right) with a group of teens from South Africa in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa. PHOTOS SUBMITTED



Steve Davis stands in front of a small business shop in an informal settlement in Cape Town.

don’t have all the HP privileges that we have.”

The Davises ended up in Cape Town and it was there that they decided

to start P3 to provide resources to many students there who lived in these “informal settlements.”

Throughout the informal settlements, the Da-

small homes made out of sheet metal where many live in poverty.

well.

vises saw children playing soccer, and so they chose to start out by creating a soccer program because of its prevalence in South African culture.

“When we walk around their neighborhoods, they’re standing around their streets playing with a ball because they’re kids,” Steve said. “No matter where you are, a kid is a kid and a kid wants to play.”

After hiring an intern from the University of Cape Town who helped connect them to local communities, Ben and Steve returned to Highland Park to fundraise, mostly by presenting their plan for P3 to friends and acquaintances. Steve likes to let people know that all of the money donated to the program goes directly to helping children — he pays for his and Ben’s transportation and housing fees himself. Additionally, the Deerfield Chipotle recently held a fundraiser for P3.

Starting in August, with the help of several coaches and referees from the University of Cape Town, P3’s soccer program will commence. The Davises will provide soccer equipment and daily soccer training to students who would never otherwise be able to play the sport seriously. Additionally, they hope to provide their players with dinner after every practice and Steve plans to give them “important practical developmental teachings” from his time in business which he hopes will set up the students for success. Eventually, Ben hopes to create an art program for Cape Town students as well.