

Chuck Underwood '87

Answering a Calling in El Carrizo

At the age of 18, he had it all figured out. First, go to Carolina, then to law school, and then work for the CIA.

Chuck Underwood '87 did graduate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and he did get accepted to Campbell Law School. He did not, however, attend law school or work for the CIA.

Instead, says Underwood, "I started a little design business." That little design business was a part of Metro Productions, the printing company owned and operated by his father after his retirement.

"I was helping out over the summer before law school and it was the beginning of digital design," he said. "Customers wanted us to handle the design and printing of their brochures, and I had a background in art and computers, so I gave it a try and have never looked back."



Offering graphic design was the first step toward full-service, and then the next step came in 1996 when video became available on computer desktops. Metro Productions added video production to its capabilities and was successfully meeting the needs of its customers.

Today, Underwood oversees a dedicated and longtime staff and is proud of the variety of print, web and video work they do. "Eighteen-hundred printers are going out of business each year, but our ability to provide creative and video and now web services has been the key to our success."

Although he is passionate and devoted to his business, Underwood's life is rich in many other ways. He and his wife, Mallory, have three young children, a daughter Bailey, 8, and two sons, Drew, 6, and Jackson, 3. The family is active at First Baptist Church of Raleigh, which has led Underwood to answer a calling to help children in very rural areas of Honduras.

"My church started sending members to Honduras to help with building projects. I went on my first trip in 2006 to build a church, but found myself spending more time using my Spanish skills and talking with the kids," he said. "I went on a nine-day trip for the following three years – each time to a different town. I really made a connection to the families in El Carrizo in southern Honduras, though, and found we could make a lasting impact by doing more than just building structures."





Underwood joined with four other business and church leaders to form Sharefish (www.sharefish.org), a non-profit which works in Southern Honduras. Their focus is on education, and they have established small libraries as well as a sponsorship program which puts children in school.

“Seventy kids are now being sponsored at \$30 a month,” he said. “And they have a great library of Spanish-language books that we were able to purchase through donations. Kids that had never seen a book can now read whenever they like. Other kids who had no chance of ever going to school now have a chance to break their cycle of poverty.”

The yearly commitment to the people of Honduras is not easy for a husband, father and business owner, but Underwood says it renews him and has changed him.

“I’m a better dad, husband and boss when I come back from Honduras,” he said. “Every parent wants a better life for their kids. My children have a fortunate life and I want them to understand that that’s not the case for all children. They see pictures from my trips and they help by writing letters and sending videos to the kids in El Carrizo and by buying books for the library. I’m so grateful to be able to teach my children by example, and I am fortunate to have a family that supports me.

“Looking back, I can see the influence of Ravenscroft has had on my life. The Spanish I learned throughout middle and high school is so important to my volunteer work in Honduras. The great education I received at Ravenscroft allowed me to go to a great college and later got me into a great MBA program. I value that education, and that has motivated me to help the kids in Honduras get an education. 

A SMALL, BUT GLOBAL WORLD

Chuck Underwood '87, one of the founders of the Sharefish organization, checked the list of people who had volunteered for the most recent mission trip to Honduras. He saw one name that he had not seen before, but that seemed so familiar. Could this Wanda Easley be the same Wanda Easley who taught him Spanish in middle school at Ravenscroft in the '80s? Was she volunteering with Sharefish?

He sent her a note introducing himself and asking if indeed she had taught at Ravenscroft.

She wrote back:

¡Hola, Carlos!

I do, indeed, remember you—of course frozen as an adolescent. When I saw that I was receiving an e-mail from “Chuck Underwood,” I immediately thought, can that be the same one I remember? I have good memories of you as a strong student and fun guy to have in class ... What a great thing you folks are doing! And yes, it was a great trip. I loved working with Dr. Van Nichols.

Great to hear from you, and, who knows, maybe we’ll see each other sometime in Honduras, or Raleigh works, too.

Sra. Easley

