

# Painted shoes pave the way to AFRICA

Katy Steele  
JOURNALISM

When a friend asked sophomore Cate LeSourd if she would help lead a fundraising campaign in support of a summer service trip to Africa, Cate immediately thought, "Man, I wish I could go with her."

Four months later, and she is.

On the surface, LeSourd fits the mold of your typical, enthusiastic Elon student—assuredly overcommitted, yet wildly successful. As a double major in Human Services and Strategic Communications and a leader in Greek life, Cate LeSourd was the ideal candidate for sophomore Hannah Wilson's request. Wilson was just looking for someone to partner with who was media savvy, had connections and could lead a marketing campaign to sell painted canvas shoes in hopes of paying for her trip to Africa. LeSourd agreed to help, but it didn't take long for her offer to become something more.

The two realized the cards were falling into place when they were assigned to the same car to ride in for more than three hours together for a weekend retreat. It was there Wilson talked about her study abroad trip to South Africa this spring, and LeSourd shared her passion for the country after a service trip she had taken years back.

"We started rattling," LeSourd said. "This is when she laughed and said, 'Cate here's a crazy idea, would you want to come visit me in South Africa?' My gut reaction was yes, absolutely."

From there the two began dreaming. LeSourd had been considering apply-

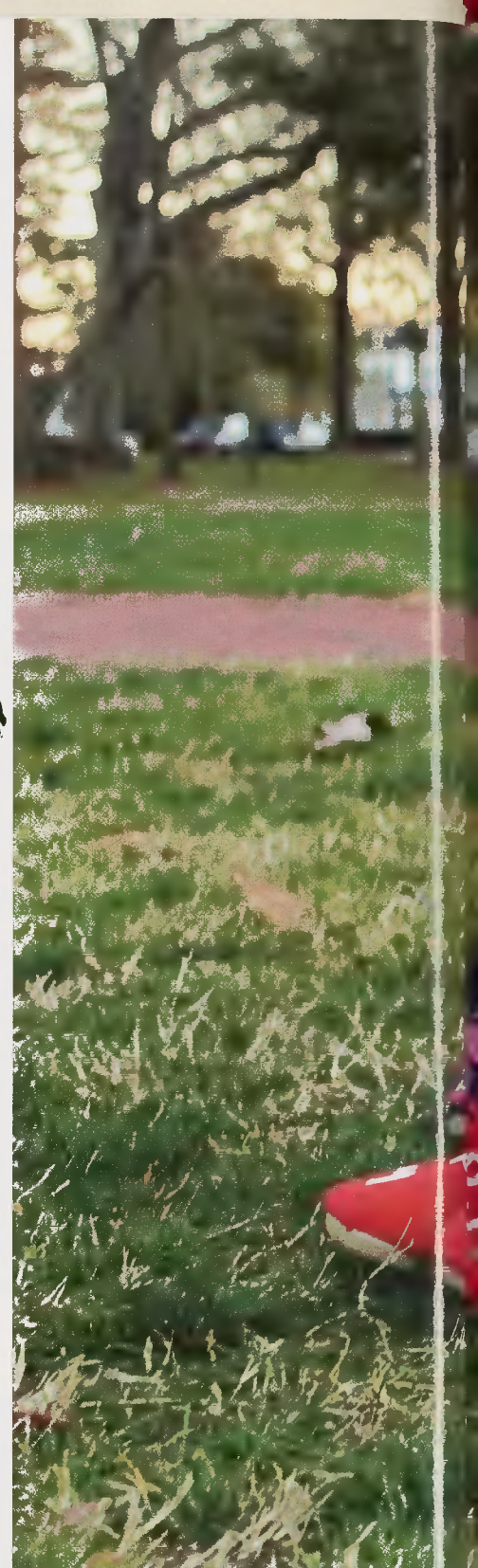
ing for the Lumen prize, a \$15,000 award to fund juniors and seniors completing ambitious, intellectual projects, as she wanted to fund research on nonprofits in Africa. LeSourd, whose faith is an integral part of her life, had specifically prayed for a partner and a connection to Africa.

"Everything just seemed to be falling into place," LeSourd said.

Ultimately, the girls' goal is for LeSourd to meet Wilson in Cape Town, where they would like to serve for three weeks at a local orphanage. The next leg of the journey involves flying to Uganda to join a group of volunteers from Wilson's home church whose youth group raised \$10,000 in 2008 to build a well in Pugwini, Uganda. For two weeks, LeSourd and Wilson will build relationships with the villagers, see first-hand how water has transformed the community, and build a new well to provide more clean water—a crucial need across Africa.

"We take for granted having clean water at our fingertips, but not having water changes everything," LeSourd said.

And she's right. Water is scarce across Africa. Many times it is left to women and children to walk miles just to transport water back to their village, a task that leaves them vulnerable and puts them in danger. People in Africa spend 40 billion hours every year just walking to get water, according to the non-profit Charity Water, which works to bring safe water to developing nations. Even so, the water available is often contaminated and causes disease. Overall, providing access to safe drinking water helps create a sustainable and



healthy community. For example, when children don't have to spend time collecting water, they have the opportunity to use that time to receive an education.

"It's all about community empowerment," LeSourd said.

Despite the girls' big dreams and desire to make a difference, there have been challenges. To overcome the financial barrier that comes with flying internationally, the girls began a project called Walk in Love. They have five customizable designs they paint on canvas shoes and sell for \$25 each. The girls have sold more than 30 pairs so far, and hope to keep selling more.

"It's funny to meet people outside of my apartment and they give me money and I give them shoes," LeSourd said. "I feel like I'm running a business. But it's