

VOICES

SECOND ACTS



To give life more meaning, give back

She had a fun, lucrative career—a few, in fact. Then she realized she needed more. How Dayle Haddon found the path to deeper satisfaction **BY SHARON COTLIAR**

DAYLE HADDON

FROM: Supermodel



TO: Founder and CEO of WomenOne

One minute, former *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Harper's Bazaar* cover girl Dayle Haddon (@dayleythought) was living in Paris with a husband and teenage daughter she adored. The next, her husband died unexpectedly, and suddenly, at 38, she was a single mother with no job and no financial cushion. “I lost so much—not only my husband but everything,” says Haddon. “I had to start from zero.”

Returning to the U.S. in 1987, she tried to get assignments as a model. In the '70s she had been a top cover girl, but now her attempts were repeatedly shot down. “They said, ‘You’re so over the hill, you’ll never work again in this industry,’” she recalls.

At first it seemed they might be right. Haddon found work as an ad-agency receptionist, but she mostly made coffee and washed the cups. A coyote hired for an agency commercial earned more money than she did, she recalls. Newly determined, she persuaded Estée Lauder and later L'Oréal to hire her as the representative of their anti-aging lines. She also wrote two best-selling beauty books, became a contributor on CBS-TV's morning news program and started her own company, Dayle Haddon Concepts, to promote beauty, health and wellness at every age.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Kyoko Hamada*

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Still, seven years ago, as she approached her 60th birthday, she found herself “looking for deeper meaning.” She became a UNICEF ambassador, making trips overseas. On a visit to Angola, she had an epiphany about what her future work would be.

At a rural clinic, a doctor asked her if UNICEF could supply two more microscopes so that women who had walked all night to get there didn’t have to wait another day for diagnoses. The request was simple, but when Haddon went to UNICEF, “they said, ‘Dayle, that’s too small for us. We can’t itemize things like that,’” she recalls. “That’s when I realized there was room to start my own nonprofit, one that would do what big organizations like UNICEF couldn’t do.”

Though Haddon had no idea how to run a nonprofit, her experiences as a U.N. volunteer gave her the confidence to try. “One of the striking things about Dayle is her capacity for learning,” says her friend Fran Hauser, a venture capitalist who is an advisory board member of Haddon’s nonprofit, WomenOne (womenone.org). “She really listens. She’s always there with that notebook and pen. Dayle doesn’t leave the research to someone else. She’s on the ground.”

One thing Haddon quickly learned is the difference education can make for women living in poverty. “Studies show that if a woman can read, just read, there is a 50 percent higher chance that her child will live beyond the age of five,” she says. “Occurrences of HIV and AIDS go down. Less violence is committed against women who have an education.” Armed with those facts, she decided education would be her group’s mission.

In 2010, Haddon put up \$10,000 from her savings, and WomenOne officially became a nonprofit. Its first fund-raising project came out of a 2011 trip Haddon took with the charity Free the Children. In Kenya to help build an all-girls high school in a rural, impoverished area, Haddon learned that the girls’ families, many of whom lived on less than \$2 a day, could not begin to afford the \$2,500 annual cost of tuition, room and board.

By tapping into her network of friends and donating money herself, Haddon raised over \$100,000 to help pay for tuition. With the additional media attention she brought to the cause, more than 200 girls were provided with full scholarships. Last January, Haddon says, she and her 13-year-old granddaughter

ON GOING FROM ZERO TO SUCCESS

IT’S SO EASY TO LOSE IT ALL

“I went from being a cover girl to a dishwasher.”

YOU CAN’T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER

“Everyone says no. You have to have the energy to pierce no. Use no as maybe.”



RUNNING THE NUMBERS

100+

Number of magazine covers on which Haddon appeared during her modeling career

18

Number of years she served as a L’Oréal spokeswoman

\$25

Annual cost of a girl’s personal supplies for school in East Africa, such as soap, toilet paper and sanitary pads

\$100

Cost of schoolbooks for eight girls for a year in East Africa

350

Number of girls in Kenya and Turkey whose high school education Haddon has helped fund

62 million

Number of girls, globally, who are not in school

attended Kisaruni Secondary School’s first senior-class graduation. “These girls had come so far,” she says. “It moved me to tears.”

In 2013, WomenOne helped fund the education of 119 girls across Turkey. The next year, in partnership with the Duke University Program on Children in Adversity, the group gave cameras to Syrian refugee girls so they could tell their stories—and at the same time acquire valuable marketplace skills. In July 2015, WomenOne offered its first educational program in the U.S., teaching young mothers in the Bronx to cook healthy meals on a limited budget. And last month it partnered with BuildOn to construct schools in Haiti and Senegal and contribute money toward the education of 600 children, girls and boys, while also providing an after-school program for kids who need extra help.

Until May 2014, Haddon was still taking no salary and paying out of her own pocket for most expenses, including travel. She’d kept costs down, but she knew she’d need help to take WomenOne to the next level, so a friend convened a group of experts to brainstorm next steps. That’s how Haddon met Amy Hepburn, a part-time professor at Duke University and George Washington University who has nearly 20 years’ experience studying the most effective ways to provide care and protection to children in emergency situations resulting from natural disasters, armed conflict and poverty. “I brought subject expertise and technical expertise,” says Hepburn, who is also director of the Children in Adversity program. “And Dayle has this tenacious, go-getter attitude. She can sit in a mud hut in Kenya and convince a Hollywood director to take on a cause.”

Working with Hepburn, Haddon secured two grants from the MasterCard Foundation totaling \$500,000, which enabled WomenOne to hire Hepburn, as part-time executive director, and a second, full-time employee. The organization has also opened a D.C. office. (Haddon will continue to work from her home in New York.) “I loved being a model,” she says. “But I feel really good about what I’m doing now, as a human being, making a difference to my brothers and sisters. It hits you in the heart. It makes me go to sleep with a smile on my face.” ☺

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