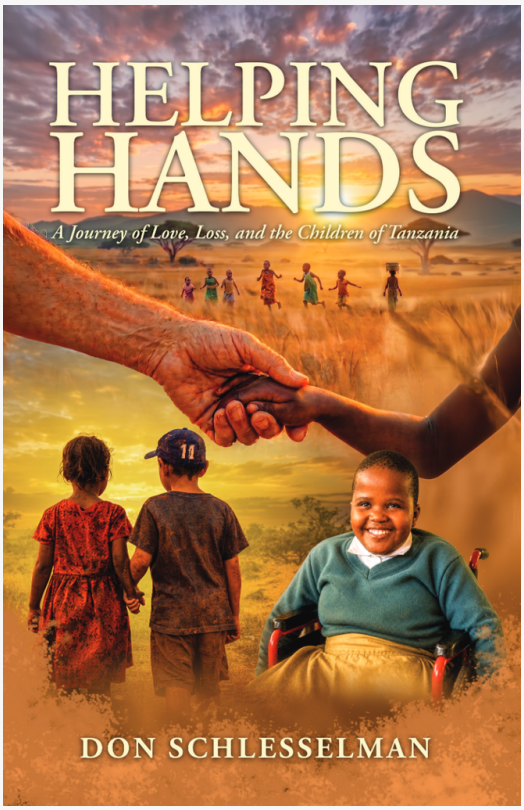
From Tragic Loss to Global Legacy: New Memoir Details One Father's Mission in Tanzania

Don Schlesselman's "Helping Hands" reveals how the heartbreaking loss of his teenage son sparked a transformative cross-continental mission for change.



What if one helping hand could change the world... beginning with your own heart? Available now on Spines.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following the devastating loss of his 15-year-old son, businessman Don Schlesselman sought meaning amidst profound grief. His search led him to East Africa, where he found a renewed purpose that would alter the trajectory of his life. Published by Spines, his new memoir, "Helping Hands: A Journey of Love, Loss, and the Children of Tanzania," chronicles how personal tragedy birthed a lasting legacy of cross-cultural philanthropy.

The Context In 2003, Schlesselman's world shattered when his son, Zachary, passed away unexpectedly. Wrestling with an unimaginable void, he embarked on a trip to Tanzania to meet Pendo, a young girl he had sponsored through Compassion International. That initial encounter, originally intended as a simple visit, ignited a spark that expanded into a life-altering vocation. Instead of remaining a distant benefactor, Schlesselman embedded himself in the local communities, walking the dusty roads, visiting modest schools, and forming deep, trusting partnerships with community leaders like Madam Tondi and Mama Wambura.

Realizing that short-term charity was insufficient for creating long-term impact, he established the ZZ Pendana Foundation. The organization is named in honor of Zachary and a local boy named Zakayo, with "Pendana" meaning "Love One Another" in Swahili. The foundation focuses on providing educational sponsorships, installing clean water filters in schools, and securing safe environments for vulnerable children throughout the Arusha region. Schlesselman's narrative starkly contrasts his demanding life in the American corporate sector with the profound, grounding rhythm of village life in Moshono, illustrating how living between two worlds

expanded his perspective.

The Highlights
• A Journey of Healing: Explores the emotional terrain of navigating grief by investing in the futures of others.
• The Power of Connection: Demonstrates how authentic relationships and local partnerships create sustainable, community-driven change.
• Rose's Legacy: Features the touching story of a young blind girl whose resilience inspired the creation of Rose's Centre, a safe haven for children with disabilities.
• Dignity Over Charity: Emphasizes Schlesselman's core philosophy that providing a "helping hand" offers dignity and empowers children to eventually help themselves.

Author Insight

Reflecting on his experiences and the overarching message of his memoir, Schlesselman shares a profound realization on the nature of giving.
"This is not about offering charity, but extending a genuine helping hand when a child needs it most so they can eventually stand on their own," says Schlesselman. "Losing Zachary broke my world apart, but the children of Tanzania helped put the pieces back together, teaching me that while grief never entirely fades, love can always be multiplied."

"Helping Hands: A Journey of Love, Loss, and the Children of Tanzania" is available now in print-on-demand and eBook formats.

About the Author

Don Schlesselman is an accomplished American businessman, a dedicated father and grandfather, and the founder and president of the ZZ Pendana Foundation. After an extensive career in sales and business management, he now divides his time between the United States and Tanzania. Schlesselman is passionately committed to supporting educational initiatives, clean water projects, and critical programs for children with special needs across East Africa. Through his diligent work and community relationships, he has assisted dozens of students in accessing primary, secondary, vocational, and university education, ensuring that the legacy of his son Zachary continues to inspire hope.

Book Details

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Elizabete Cipul
Spines
bookmarketing@spines.com
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