

## Solving The Problem Of Hunger One Family At A Time

# A Gift Of Hope — A Gift Of Life

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NEW WINDSOR, MD — For half of the human race, the world is a hungry place. Every 24 hours, hunger and starvation kills 35,000 people — 24 every minute.

Many people, although sympathetic toward the plight of the hungry, feel frustrated by not knowing how to help the hungry.

In 1930, an Indiana farmer, Dan West, helped distribute powdered milk to those suffering from the destruction of the Spanish Civil War.

He believed that handouts made people more dependent upon outside help. He sensed the humiliation and despair the people felt as they waited in line each day for their daily rations.

West reasoned that the best way to help others is to find ways for them to help themselves.

"If the people had their own cow, they could care for it, milk it and feed themselves," he said.

His idea birthed the Heifer Project International, a non-profit, interfaith organization helping to alleviate world hunger, one family at a time.

According to the Project's rules, the recipient must pass on the heifer's first female offspring to a neighbor in need.

In 1944, the first shipment of heifers was sent to a country in need. Since then, the Heifer Project International has provided over 90,000 animals; 1,350,000 fowl; 5,000 bee hives and 1,300,000 fish fingerlings to impoverished families throughout the world.

Gifts have been sent to 110 countries and 33 states in the U.S.

Sue Richardson, associate for the volunteer activities, recently accompanied a shipment to Uganda. "When you see the difference this project makes — it gives parents hope, allows children to attend schools — you are never the

same," she said.

The Heifer Project is a thoroughly researched program that not only gives animals, but provides training and breeding assistance along with a self-governing community group. A training program is carried on by VIVA, Vets In Volunteer Assistance.

Each request for animals is thoroughly examined. Some are denied. The Project's Department of Global Services examines each request carefully and works with sponsoring groups to complete formal proposals. Final approval of projects is made by the board of directors on basis of need, adequate facilities, training of participants and a plan for passing on a gift.

When Richardson accompanied the Uganda shipment, she said the recipients needed to have prepared a zero-grazing area.

"Part of the problem has been with the nomadic nature of the Ugandians," Richardson said. "The grazing cattle have destroyed the environment. For that reason, we require that recipients prepare a zero-grazing area to house the animal. These vary in style from place to place, but typically are built with sticks and grass-thatched roofs.

Elephant grass needs to be planted so that the animal can be hand-fed. This requires the family to have access to a plot of land. Sometimes families will walk three miles to an available plot to gather elephant grass for their animals.

"Time and distance mean nothing to the African people," Richardson said. "They are so thrilled to get an animal, that they generally do a terrific job of caring for it."

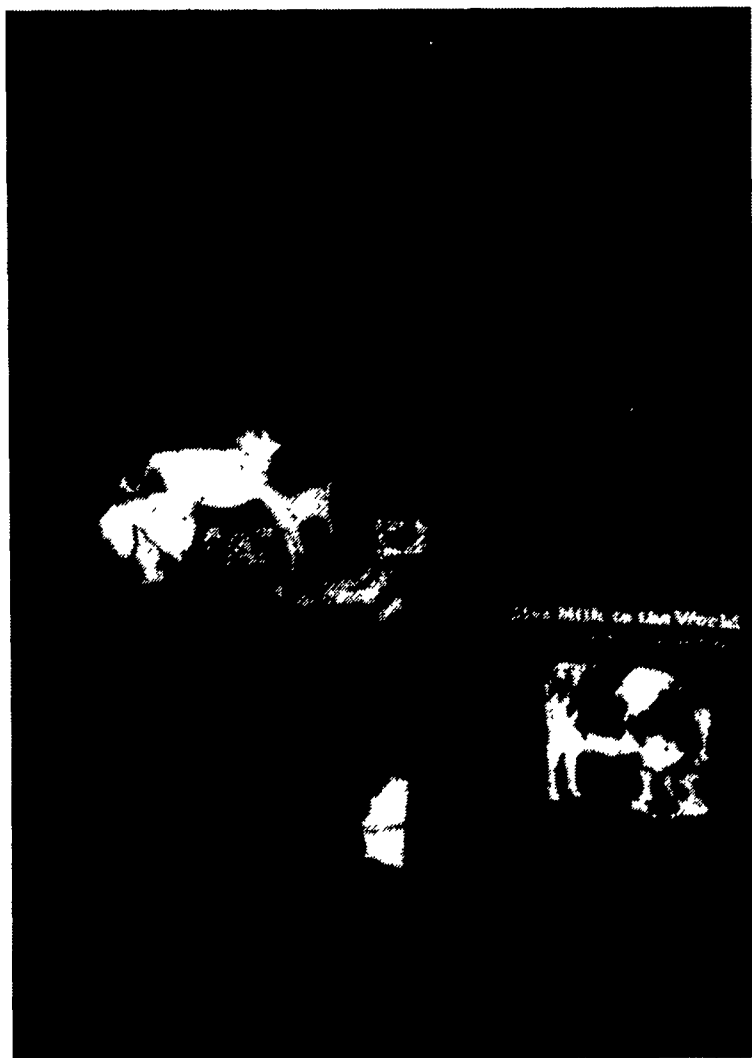
If they don't, a self-governing committee appointed by the community decides whether or not the animal should be taken away and given to another family.



The first female offspring will be passed on to another person in need by the recipient of this heifer.



These children will now have milk to drink because someone cared enough to send them a cow.



Sue Richardson, associate for volunteer activities at the Heifer Project New Windsor Office, wears and holds samples of sweatshirts sold to promote helping others help themselves by giving a cow.

If an animal dies, the committee decides if it has died through neglect.

Richardson tells about a community that had been given a bull. They were warned that it needed to be fed more to remain healthy. The community ignored the warnings and the bull died. Distraught the community begged the Project for another. "We have cows, but we cannot breed them. Please send us another bull."

They were told that the bull was their responsibility and since it died, it was the community's responsibility to replace it. By saving a percentage from the sales of milk, the community eventually collected enough money to purchase another bull. This time, their care keeps the bull quite healthy.

"The experience taught them to become independent," Richardson remarked. "And that is the purpose of the project. We do not want them to look to us for handouts."

Not only is milk an essential part of the diet, but the manure is used to improve soil quality. Recipients

are taught to build a trough made with mud and clay to collect the manure until ready to spread. Pictures show the difference between the scrawny corn and the tall, verdant leaves of those fertilized.

After each shipment, extensive records are kept to show what happens to families who receive a cow. In addition to increasing their nutritional intake, families benefit economically by selling excess milk to neighbors.

For example, in 1984, Emmanuel Pallangyo of Mulala village earned less than one dollar a day. He lived on subsistence farming that barely provided for his family's needs. Then he received a pregnant heifer that has provided 13 liters per day average during the early months of each three lactations. This has provided him with an income of approximately \$4 to \$5 per day over and above what his family consumes. From the sale of milk, he has been able to build a house with a cement foundation, oil-treated lumber, and a corrugated steel roof. He has purchased a second cow and been able to buy

an additional one-half acre land. He has passed on a heifer calf to his neighbor who was selected by the project committee.

"It's unbelievable — the amount of red tape required to transport animals to another country," Richardson said.

In Harrisburg, donated animals are quarantined in a holding barn for 30 days. When a shipment is loaded in a cargo plane, care must be given to load it so that it is balanced.

### Current needs

Richardson said that only high quality milk producing cows are sent to other countries. Currently, the Project needs 110 Holstein heifers and six bulls for a shipment to Jordan. Jerseys are needed for a project in North Carolina and Kentucky.

For those who cannot donate a whole heifer, shares can be purchased. Gifts are tax deductible.

For more information, write to Sue Richardson or John Dieterly, P.O. Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776 or call (301) 635-6161 or (800) 422-0474.