



Courtesy photos

Karen Lantz, left, stands with Janet Mary, in blue, with her seven children (and three other people, in the background) and their new goat. "Her oldest daughter, who stood beside me, leaned over and said softly with a strong Ugandan accent, 'My mother has a problem. She doesn't have the money for school fees,'" Lantz said. "The sound of her voice stays with me. I just smiled and hugged her." In front in the white bag are supplies, food and goat medications.

Goat ministry helps widows in Uganda

FOOD AND FUTURE: Rapid City woman's goat charity eases poverty and offers hope to women and children.

By Mary Garrigan
 Journal staff

Five years ago, Karen Lantz never would have guessed she would know so much about the reproductive characteristics of goats.

But after launching a charity in 2006 that provides dairy goats to widows in Uganda, Lantz has quickly become well-informed about the differences in the reproductive cycles, multiple birth rates and milk production of Anglo-Nubian dairy goats versus their European counterparts.

The Rapid City woman recently returned from Uganda, where she spent most of the month of May giving away 40 pregnant Anglo-Nubian goats to poor widows through her nonprofit charity, Helping Orphans and Widows. Lantz and two friends, Bonnie Longcor and Carol Dormann, both of Rapid City, have created a mini-model of the much-better-known Heifer International charity.

Lantz bought her first goat in

More information

To see photographs of Karen Lantz's recent trip to Africa, go to www.helporphansandwidows.org/. Donations for the Helping Orphans and Widows ministry are welcome. Send to P.O. Box 9362, Rapid City, SD, 57709.

2006, during her first trip to Uganda to visit her Baptist missionary son and his family. Lawrence, his wife and their six children have been ministering in the AIDS-ravaged country since 2005.

Four more goats followed in 2007 and another 20 in 2008. This year, HOW purchased 40 goats, and Lantz continues to check up on the rapidly expanding goat herds she is responsible for starting, as well as checking in with the widows and the children who own them.

The first goat went to a widow

named Faith with five children. Her herd has grown in size so that this year she was able to trade one goat for a new bicycle and another for a goat with a more valuable bloodline.

Anglo-Nubian goats are native to the harsh climate of Africa and, unlike the European Toggenburg goats, have "a face that only a mother goat could love," joked Lantz.

But they make a great choice as a domestic farm animal in Uganda, because they give birth every eight months, instead of every 12, and they have a high incidence of twins and triplets when they do.

Bred for their milk, not their meat, they are small and easy for women and children to handle, and they browse for food on their own. Unlike cattle, they don't need to be driven to water daily and they don't draw the attention of bandits or arouse the jealousy of men, many of whom think it is beneath their dignity to handle goats, Lantz said.

See GOATS, Page C2



Lantz greets Faith, a Ugandan widow with five children, earlier this year. Faith received the first goat in Lantz's ministry, Helping Orphans and Widows. Faith's herd has grown in size so that this year she was able to trade one goat for a new bicycle and another for a goat with a more valuable bloodline.



"I had given Mary (above) a goat with newborn white triplets in 2008," Lantz said. "Eighteen months later, in November of 2009, she had a herd with another baby single, and another set of triplets." There are a total of seven baby goats. One of Lantz's herd papa goats is in the background.

GOATS: Ugandan women get practice in saying 'no.'

From Page C1

To date, HOW has distributed goats in a remote, primitive area of Uganda about five hours north of the capital city of Kampala. At first, Lantz's son, Lawrence, discouraged the goat-giving charity because he believed Ugandans wouldn't drink goat milk.

"I wanted to give babies milk," Lantz said simply of her initial motivation. Despite objections, she was convinced that the nutrient-dense goat milk would provide both food and a future for desperately poor and displaced women.

"Goats are the perfect way to ease the poverty of these widows and children," Lantz said.

Widows can quickly become displaced people in

their communities, given their second-class citizen status in African society, she said.

The women who receive goats are counseled not to sell them for fast cash, and Lantz empowers them with her "just say no" message. She tells them they have the right to refuse people who try to take their goats or buy them for a fraction of their value.

"We practice saying 'no' very loudly in their language," she said.

Anglo-Nubian goats cost about \$200 each, or nearly a year's subsistence income in Uganda.

The charity's costs also include ongoing veterinarian care for the goats and replacement of goats that are infertile or lost to illness, accidents or killer bees, which recently claimed two of the goats.

Lantz admits to being "scared to death" to visit

Africa for the first time. But she has always survived the heat, the mosquitoes and the terrible mountain roads and frightening traffic that are facts of life in Uganda.

"I'm in prayer a lot of the time over there," she said.

Safely back in Rapid City, she's back at her job at United Methodist Church's Credit Union and back to the constant task of raising funds for her Uganda goat project.

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