

Laguna's "goat lady" needs help to round out a herd for needy widows in Nepal

Thanks in large part to many generous Lagunans, Laguna resident Rosalind Russell continues to make headway in her one-woman crusade against abject poverty and the pitiable plight of women in rural Nepal. Russell's strategy of giving two goats to each of the women in selected villages has worked like a charm, and now she is more than halfway to providing goats to all of the 54 women in what is probably the neediest village she has yet come across.

The village in question is a high altitude village held by Maoists, and it is primarily comprised of widows, children and single women. The plight of these women's lives is far worse than in many of the other villages because these women have no support from men and they generally don't have income-producing jobs to help them survive. Many simply die along with their children unless they are taken by the Maoist's or trafficked.

Russell needs to buy 108 goats in order to give two to each woman in the "widow" village (as it is known), and she so far has enough money for 61 goats. But she needs help to pay for the remaining 47 goats, and she is hoping to wire the remaining funds to the 'goat' account she has set up in Nepal by the end of December.

Over the past two years, Russell has managed to provide goats for the women in three entire villages with unheard of success. Not only is everyone in the villages economically better off, but the women have gained a measure of control over their lives and the welfare of their families that has empowered them in many different ways.

It is particularly relevant to mention at this time of year that the women who receive goats do so under the stipulation that they will pay the gift forward. This is to say that each woman will, in turn, give two of the offspring of her goats to a woman in another poor village. Believe it or not, giving these women the ability to be generous to other women has empowered them almost as much as the original gift of the goats.

Russell met with the women of the widow village during her first goat-giving trip to Nepal in Dec. 2003/Jan. 2004, and again on her second goat-giving trip earlier this year. They implored her to bring help to them because of how hard their lives are - and especially the lives of their children - since they have no support from working men.

Even Russell, who has become somewhat accustomed to the poverty level of rural Nepalese villages, was appalled by the their horrid conditions of the widow village, but she did not have sufficient resources to help the women at the time. She could only promise to send the goats as soon as she raised enough money.

If there is any way you can help with the purchase price for part of a goat (\$125), a whole goat, or two or more goats, you will be directly improving the well-being of some women and children who live in truly desperate circumstances. Note that every dollar you donate will go directly toward the purchase of goats. You might also make a donation in the name of a friend or loved one to whom you would like to give the gift of giving this holiday season!

Send your tax deductible gifts to The R Star Foundation (a 501(c)(3) organization) at P.O. Box 4183, Laguna Beach, CA 92652, listing 'goat' on the subject line.

Please feel free to call Russell at 497-2545, and she will answer any questions you may have. You can even set up a time to have her make a DVD and/or PowerPoint presentation about her past trips to your club or interested group of individuals.