

ARK & TENT



Uniting people & animals...through travel

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Each month, **ARK & TENT** profiles an organization we feel is deserving of recognition. We hope you find these organizations' goals worthy of your support, and that they might even inspire you to become involved on a deeper, more personal level.

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL
Giving the Gift of Animals

By Erin Caslavka

“With all the money donated to help fight famine around the world, with all the grandiose plans conceived to conquer poverty, sometimes all it takes to save a child is a goat.”
- 60 MInutes, CBS News Magazine Program



It seems fitting somehow that the city that gave us one of our most popular presidents is also home to one of America’s most popular charitable organizations. Headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas, Heifer International is a humanitarian organization “dedicated to ending world hunger and poverty, and caring for the earth.” And with over 100,000 people dying everyday from hunger-related diseases, that’s no easy task.

Based on the simple principle of “Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime,” Heifer has developed a set of guiding principles that underscore sustainable development and self-reliance. The recipient of multiple awards, including the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize, the 1990 Presidential End Hunger Award, and the 1986 President’s Award for Voluntary Action, Heifer has

been saving and improving lives since 1944.

The impetus for its inception came during the Spanish Civil War when an American relief worker named Dan West was handing out cups of reconstituted milk to refugees. Realizing that his well-intentioned efforts only provided temporary assistance, he was inspired by the notion of “not a cup, but a cow.” With that concept as his driving force, he began what is now Heifer International to help impoverished families help themselves.

The concept is an amazingly simple one: Working with families in developing nations, Heifer provides animals that are geographically relevant, as well as training for their proper care. Once armed with the animal(s) and training in environmentally-sound agriculture, the family can then benefit directly from whatever it is the animal can give back - be that eggs from a chicken, milk from a goat, wool from a sheep, or honey from bees. Once the animal that the family has been provided with has offspring, the family is obligated to share with others in their community by “passing on the gift” of one or more of the offspring, as well as the training that they themselves have received. In this way, an endless cycle of giving has been set in motion.



In the 60-plus years that Heifer International has been assisting others, they’ve partnered with families in more than 125 countries. They’ve also initiated programs such as: Agroecology, working to preserve natural resources and increase crop yields; Micro-enterprise, helping participants form savings groups; Urban Agriculture, supporting grassroots organizations dedicated to local food systems; and the Young People’s Initiative, engaging younger individuals interested in building socially, economically and environmentally just communities.

Although Heifer has a presence in many countries, some of their most inspiring achievements have been in the African continent. In Uganda, Heifer animals first appeared 27 years ago, and according to the organization, success stories here are “easy to come by.” By way of an example, a girl named Beatrice Biira earned enough money selling goat’s milk to attend school - going on to graduate from a college in the United States. Even though there are hundreds of inspiring tales about other Heifer recipients, the bottom line is the same: there’s still much to do.



Admirably, the organization’s goal is to enable 1 million more families towards self-reliance through the gift of animal donations, training and “passing on the gift.” If their record of assisting over 8 million families is any indication, Heifer International should be right on track to accomplish its goals.

To learn more about Heifer International, or to make a charitable donation, visit: www.heifer.org

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