



UKRAINE

Photo by Matt Bradley, © Heifer International



Kathy Smith: Photo by Bill Adams

Ark for families in one of the world's poorest countries?

Kathy Smith, 51, can't quite pinpoint the year that she began supporting Heifer International (www.heifer.org), a Little Rock, Ark., charity dedicated to eradicating world hunger and poverty through providing families with income-producing and life-sustaining farm animals. She knows she began giving small donations sometime between 1984 and 1991, when she taught Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade at Horizon's Edge School in Canterbury, N.H.

Yet Smith clearly recalls that, on October 21 of last year, she was having lunch and leafing through Heifer International's catalogue, when she flipped to the last page and read about the \$5,000 Gift Ark. "I don't know where it came from," she says, "but I thought, I can do this."

Currently a housecleaner, Smith knew she couldn't do it alone. After ruminating all afternoon, she decided that, if she donated one housecleaning for each of her clients, and asked each to make a matching contribution to Heifer International, she could raise \$1,000.

But that left Smith with \$4,000 to raise. Over the years, she has accumulated a number of friends—300 at last count—whom she acknowledges every year with birthday and Christmas cards. "Friends are my biggest treasure," she says. "My oldest friend is from sixth grade, and I keep in touch with high school friends. I grew up in Maryland, went to school in Colorado, was in the Peace Corps in Dominica, spent a summer in New Jersey, and have lived in California, Utah, and New Hampshire. I just like people."

So Smith carefully crafted a letter to include in her 300 Christmas cards, asking

The Butterfly Effect

Kathy Smith inspires others to think big



If the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can theoretically set off a tornado in Texas, what might the impact be when a

New Hampshire woman decides to raise \$5,000 to buy a Heifer International Gift

her friends to send money to help her buy the Gift Ark. “To sweeten the pot, I wrote that, for every \$10 they donated, I would give them a raffle ticket for a quilt I’d make,” she says. She mailed out the letters, but then, Smith says, “I had a meltdown. What was I thinking? I can’t ask my friends for money!”

But that evening, Smith had an inkling of what was to come. “Our neighbor, who is in my husband’s men’s group, sent over \$200,” she recalls. Within 12 days, Smith had received \$5,000 from just 40 people, one of whom had collected money from her own circle of friends. “I didn’t know what to do,” Smith says. “I asked a friend if I should let the others know that I had collected the money, and she said, ‘Absolutely not.’”

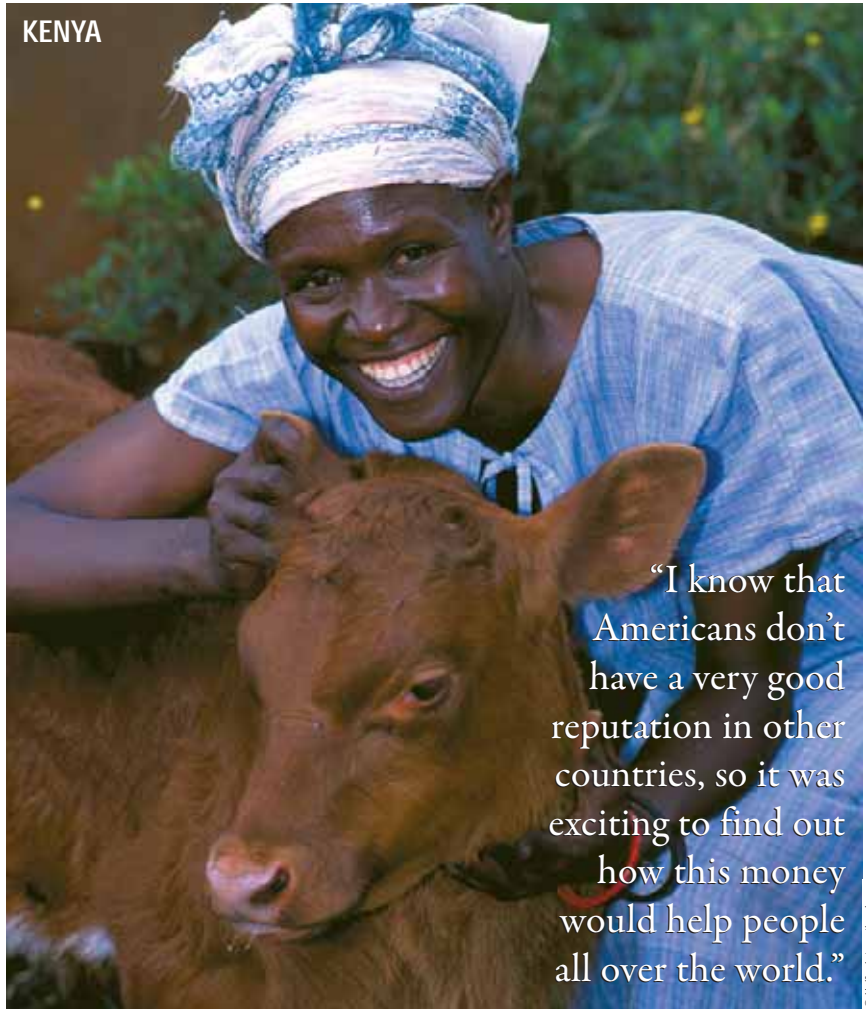
Twenty-five days later, 80 more friends had responded, and Smith had enough money for a second Gift Ark. “Two months after I had mailed the letter, 225 people had sent in over \$17,000.” By February of this year, Smith had forwarded over \$20,000 to Heifer International—enough for four Gift Arks—which left her stunned.

“People were so amazingly generous,” Smith says. “I know that Americans don’t have a very good reputation in other countries, so it was exciting to find out how this money would help people all over the world.”

Heifer International informed Smith that the first Gift Ark would provide each of 60 Kenyan families who had been stricken with AIDS with a dairy cow and a pair of oxen to help weakened family members raise crops. The second Gift Ark would give each of 30 teen and young adult orphans in Armenia access to 2-1/2 acres of land, a cow, ten sheep, ten chickens, and \$200 cash for seed and supplies. As they prove their value as farmers over a five-year period, they can earn title to the land.

Smith’s third Gift Ark would provide 200 young people in Nepal with training in beekeeping, poultry keeping, gardening, and forest management, along with chickens, beehives, and fruit trees. The fourth Gift Ark would benefit children in Ecuador, who would each receive two geese and one gander, as well as training in building and caring for ponds, and tree tomatoes and blackberries to plant around their ponds.

Smith’s husband Geoff—who is affectionately known as “Hubs”—supported Smith’s efforts from the beginning. She met Geoff, who is the owner of Hubs’ Home Care and is a volunteer EMT with Canterbury Fire and Rescue, in 1984, when she was a first year teacher and he was building classrooms. They married two



KENYA

“I know that Americans don’t have a very good reputation in other countries, so it was exciting to find out how this money would help people all over the world.”

© Heifer International

years later. Last year, “When his mom, brother, and sister wanted to know what to give us for Christmas, he told them to make a donation to Heifer.”

Smith calls the experience of collecting money life altering. “It was truly one of the peak experiences I’ve had. It really changed me,” she says. There were so many unforeseen gifts.”

Since February, Smith has received word that her friends had shared her letter with their friends, and groups of people were pooling their money to make large donations to their own favorite charities. While Smith’s journey was unfolding, she says she kept thinking, “If you really put your mind to it, you can make great things happen.” Who says The Butterfly Effect is just a theory? ★



ROMANIA

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