

GATE NEWS

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Woman works for brighter future for Kenyan girls

by NANCY ESHELMAN, Of The Patriot-News

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DAN GLEITER, The Patriot-News

Hellen Nkuraiya, a member of a Maasai Tribe in Kenya, hands out bracelets made by children in her village to Aaron Jones, 5, and other preschool camp students.

In [Hellen Nkuraiya's](#) world, the village gates are closed at night to keep lions from attacking the cows. In southern Kenya, which Nkuraiya calls home, girls as young as 10 routinely face genital mutilation. Then, their families offer them in marriage in exchange for cows.

Her Maasai tribe practices polygamy. When a husband dies, his family often takes his cows and his children, leaving his widows with nothing. Nkuraiya is determined to craft brighter futures for girls and women through education. She relies on some traditional tools, such as selling beadwork and other souvenirs. But she's also turned to one nontraditional idea -- cell phones.

Maasai warriors depend on cell phones as they lead tourists on safaris. But the remote villages of the Maasai have no electricity, so the warriors are forced to travel routinely to distant cities to charge their cell phones.

Or that's what they did until Nkuraiya teamed with Hampden Twp.'s Carole Jones.

Thanks to Jones, Nkuraiya has a solar panel and cell phone chargers. The warriors pay Nkuraiya to charge their phones, providing her with money to buy food and supplies for the Village of Protection she started to shelter girls and widows.

And it's about to get better.

Nkuraiya has been visiting Jones for two weeks. When she returns to Kenya, with Jones in tow, they intend to set up a cybercafe with a laptop computer. Providing e-mail access to the outside world should increase Nkuraiya's profits and let her grow her mission.

Hellen Nkuraiya will be speaking at the International House, 320 Chestnut St., Harrisburg, at 6 p.m. Thursday. The event is free and open to the public.

Donations can be sent to Village of Protection, CURE International, 701 Bosler Ave., Lemoyne, PA 17043.

See more in [Columns: Nancy Eshelman, Harrisburg](#)