Friends of Naivasha need your help!

Imagine a world where poverty is perilous, transportation is minimal and medical care is a luxury. Now imagine that you could do something to increase the infant mortality rate, improve healthcare and increase access to medical services. One former Ridges resident not only imagined and dreamed of helping, she made that dream a reality.

Cindy Berkland lived in Whispering Pines for 11 years. She always dreamed of helping others and she made a career out of doing so. As a registered nurse, she spent her profession assisting woman in labor and bringing babies into our world. She mentioned to her husband, Rich, an international salesman, that she would like to help others in need and he introduced her to Naivasha, Kenya, the second largest city in the country. Naivasha, Kenya is the rose capital of the world. With a climate hovering around 70-80 degrees during the day and one mile south of the equator, flower farms flourish. Many of the flower farm employees are woman of child bearing age, and while they carry insurance, medical care is less than adequate.

Cindy visited the area, focusing on the public hospital. She met the patients and staff. She found three women to one hospital bed and preterm babies lying side by side on wire cots. Isolates were not available and staff warmed the babies with a floor heater. Some babies would not live to see the next day and her heart broke. She needed to do something to improve the health conditions and she began talking with prominent residents. Together they put together a plan to build a new hospital and improve patient care.

As with any new venture, funds are imperative. Armed with crafts created by street kids, Cindy returned to her Omaha home and began to make her plan a reality. She recruited her neighbor, Pamela and together they began to put together “African Craft” Shows. One show at a time, they began to raise money for the new hospital. Word of mouth spread and ten people came together to create a board of directors. Soon they filed for a 501c3 and began fundraising in earnest.

As a grassroots venture, the women learned as they went. Medical equipment was donated by local hospitals; grants were given by local churches. The morning rotary club provided ongoing support to the group, and ultimately, the people in Kenya.

To date, the group has raised over $400,000. With the assistance of Valmont, Industries, they have sent ten 40 foot crates filled with medical equipment to Kenya. Phase one of completion, which is the opening of the hospital is set for January 2012. Phase two will follow, which will combine the outpatient clinics with the hospital.

Today, Cindy has made multiple visits to the area, where she has provided support and training. The staff has named an area after her…Cindy’s Garden is a beautiful area that surrounds the hospital and provides both staff and patients with a beautiful retreat. Pam has also visited the hospital and provided support to both patients and staff. They continue to raise funds for the project, although they no longer host home parties to sell crafts.

For more information on Friends of Naivasha, go to their website at: <http://www.nwhcc.info/> or find them on Facebook. To donate to the project, follow the links on their webpage. In October, Lakeside Hospital is hosting an African Boutiques, with funds going to the Friends of Naivasha.