



Eyres' involvement with HPI spans 18 years

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Community

By Don Peasley

There is something special about Rich and Susan Eyre, and directors of the Heifer Project International wanted a first-hand look at this unique Woodstock couple's activities. The Eyres own Rich's Foxwillow Pines Nursery on McConnell Road, but they both have been closely involved with HPI for 18 years. Susan Eyre says that "HPI helps less fortunate people worldwide to help themselves out of poverty with gifts of income producing animals." The depth of the Eyres' involvement and dedication in the HPI projects intrigues their HPI compatriots. While in Chicago for a board meeting, HPI came to Foxwillow Pines in late August as guests of the Eyres.

Jim DeVries, international director of Heifer Project, describes the efforts of HPI as "an organization that works with local representatives to help individuals and families by providing them with food and income-producing animals."

The uniqueness is in the "sharing of the gift." Each person or family that receives an animal, for example, a cow, goat, camel, chicken, or rabbit, passes its offspring to another needy person or family.

"The success rate of 'passing on the gift' provides people with the ability and dignity to make something of their lives," DeVries says. "It is empowering for people and families to help themselves."

One of the newest developments for the HPI group is an experimental initiative started two years ago when the Urban Animal Agricultural Initiative was instituted. HPI has five urban projects: one in Milwaukee and four in Chicago. A field representative works with three adults and five youths (with 10-15 other youths learning with the primary caretakers), in the Chicago Robert Taylor Housing Project. They are raising and selling worms and breeding and raising Tilapia fish in tanks.

In another area of the city, Irish Dexter bull calves are being trained as plow oxen, and a small dairy operation will provide a way to make cheese.

"The animals and agriculture are vehicles for human and community development," explains DeVries, "so if people can learn a sustainable way of life."