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SCOTTSBLUFF/GERING, NEBRASKA

PRI

Rotarians help bring clean water to Kenya villages

By BRANDON NELSON
Staff Reporter

Key partnerships are enabling a small group of Nebraskans to make a big difference in a region of Africa.

Joe and Sandy Schon of Scottsbluff, Mark and Karrie Gillam of Scottsbluff, Deb Glenn and members of the Trinity Methodist Church of Lincoln are working alongside local entities to bring clean water and more to the rural Meru region of Kenya, an area spanning about half the size of Nebraska.

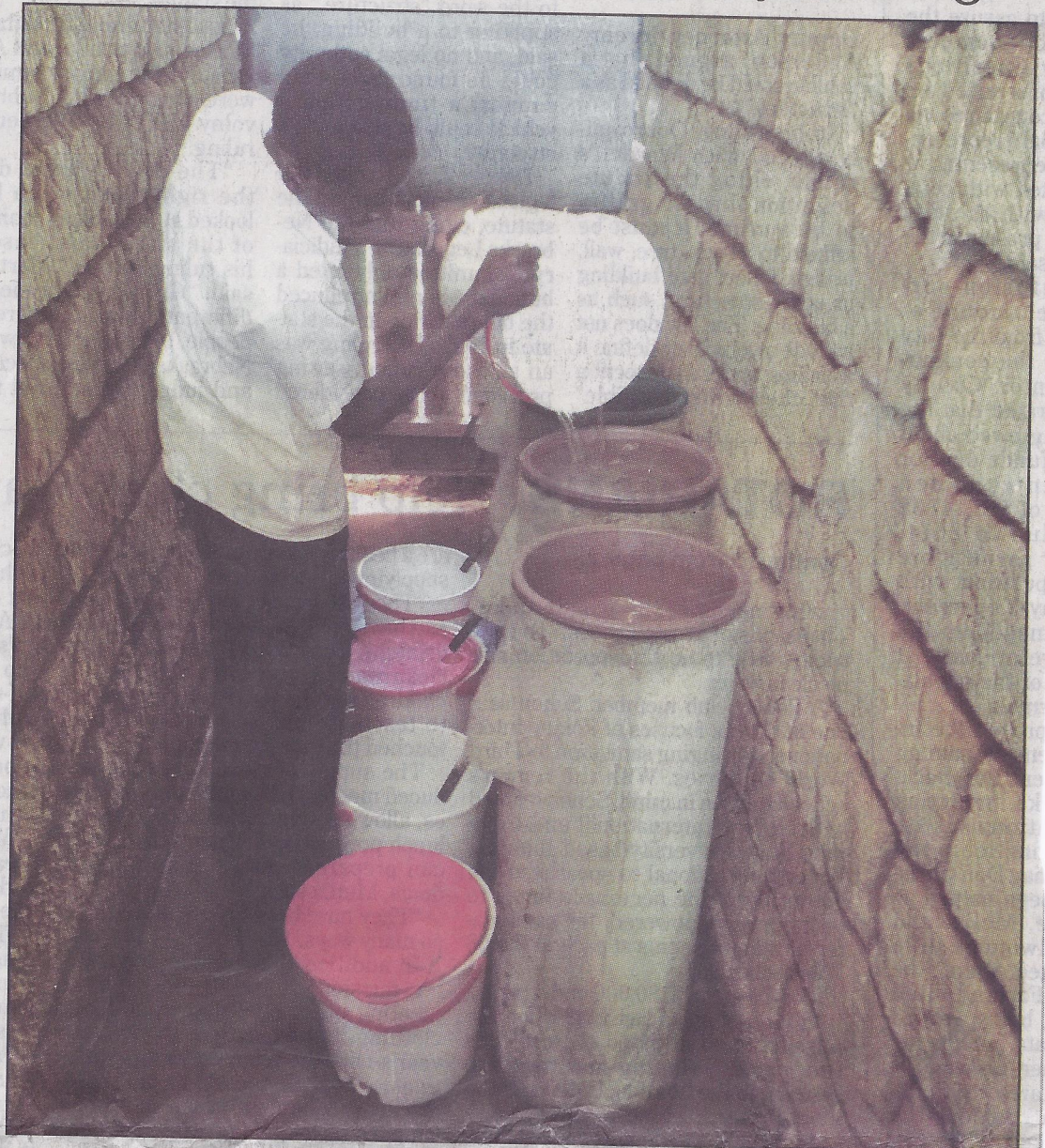
With the help of the United Methodist Kaaga Synod of Kenya, which is responsible for 172 Kenyan churches and more than 21,000 schoolchildren, the team traveled to the region last year to deliver hundreds of pounds of water-purifying, educational and health supplies to African families. They spent the next several weeks distributing materials, assessing the water needs of local schools, conducting medical clinics and providing doctors and pharmaceutical needs for children and adults.

Joe Schon, one of the project's coordinators, said the project's aim is to assist people as well as educate them.

"We don't just arrive at a school and say, 'We're here to give you clean water,'" he said, during a project update for the Scottsbluff-Gering Rotary Club on Tuesday. "We get everyone together and explain the importance of having clean water."

The Schons first visited the region in 2008 and saw the

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Courtesy photo

A student pours water into a gravity-powered, bio-sand water filtration system at a rural school in Kenya. Last year, through a series of national and international partnerships, a team of Nebraskans worked to install new, water-purifying systems in 24 schools in the Meru region of Kenya. Joe Schon, one of the project's coordinators, said there are 44 more schools in the region and the team will return to continue the project in July.