

Picture this - A healthy Nepal
Woman makes small nation her mission
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Body Text

Linda "Jay" Jackson has been on a mission since making a trip to Nepal last year. To some she has even become known as the "Nepal Lady."

Anyone who talks with Jackson about her effort to route books and water buffalo to the needy would call her just plain inspired.

"I never had a place affect me like that," Jackson said recently. The people of the small country, sandwiched between Tibet and India, inspired her.

"By our standards, they have nothing material, and they are so happy and giving. It just makes you reassess what's important in life," she said.

Since her return, Jackson has collected medical equipment and professional journals, sponsored children, mailed thousands of pounds of books and promoted the Heifer Project International, which helps send goats, water buffalo, chickens and other animals to families in underdeveloped nations. Soon she plans to take the first regular shipment of medical supplies.

During her days of teaching photography to Bartlett High School students she got to know Ron Zamber, who is now an ophthalmologist. When Zamber planned to make a trip to Nepal to teach and do eye surgery, he asked Jackson to come and take pictures.

"There are things that one person can do," said Jackson, who now works as a special assistant to Anchorage Mayor George Wuerch. "Everybody has something to contribute, even if it's not obvious this second." With that belief, she has worked tirelessly to encourage volunteers and hunt down contributions. Recently she began working with local engineers to complete a water project to provide 20 more water spigots in the village of Tokha. She also hopes to collect donations of frequent-flier miles for plane tickets so more volunteers can go to Nepal.

Jackson plans to depart for Nepal on Thursday and pack along about 80 pounds of medical supplies, the first shipment of salvaged sponges, rubber gloves and other items that would normally be headed for the trash.

Jackson learned that after doctors perform surgeries, unused items are usually thrown away. Instead of tossing the items into the trash, Alaska Regional Hospital has agreed to save the supplies for Jackson. With the help of Movers Inc., United Airlines and Royal Nepal Airlines, she can send shipments every eight weeks or so.

During the past year, Jackson and others coordinated the supply shipment from Anchorage to the B.P. Koirala Lion's Center for Ophthalmological Studies and a teaching hospital in Katmandu.

"This is really a group effort," Jackson said. "All the little parts just fell into place. And it took a year for the parts to fall."

Jackson has been successful with her cause because of her enthusiasm, said Marge Carlson, director of surgery services for Alaska Regional Hospital. Nurses now regularly gather the materials and save them for Jackson to pick up.

“She really has a passion for what she is doing. And she has really instilled that in our staff,” Carlson said.
“Now I have staff who want to go to Nepal.”