

**THE DENAN PROJECT**  
**P.O. Box 543**  
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**[www.thedenanproject.com](http://www.thedenanproject.com)**

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### **Young people support The Denan Project on its Fifth Anniversary**

The Denan Project, the local volunteer group that built and maintains a free hospital in poverty-stricken eastern Ethiopia, has once again received support from area young people. A number of weeks ago, students at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury put on their annual spring “Battle of the Bands” concert, with proceeds going to help the people of Denan. That night at NHS, a number of student bands entertained an audience of nearly 300 students, parents, as well as local members of The Denan Project. The event raised more than \$1,000—money that will immediately go to help alleviate the escalating suffering and starvation brought on by severe drought conditions in the Denan area.

Started exactly five years ago in Woodbury, The Denan Project began by raising money locally to build and staff a small, free clinic to help people in the Denan area suffering from malnourishment and disease. Soon, with the help of many donors, that clinic became a 29-room hospital with a staff of 40 people. Since 2004, teachers, students, and administrators in NHS have pitched in to help Denan, raising money with concerts, penny drives, and auctions. The Project’s logo, which the grateful people of Denan see as a powerful symbol, was designed at NHS by a student, Rachel Tobin, in art class.

High-school student Renee Cayer, of Monroe, has also helped the people of Denan over the past few years. Five years ago, when she was 9, Renee asked friends coming to her birthday party to bring money instead of presents; she donated that money to The Denan Project. Since then, Renee has donated her birthday money to Denan.

All the money donated to the Project goes to help the people of the Denan area. The Project’s free hospital is the only one in the entire Ogaden, a region of some 350,000 square kilometers with a population of more than 4.5 million. It has so far treated some 65,000 people for illnesses and injuries, and saved many lives.

Donor funds have allowed The Denan Project to buy an ambulance to bring the most gravely ill people to a bigger hospital 75 kilometers away. Soon, the Denan

hospital will have a new operating theater to deal with all but the most difficult medical situations. The hospital has started a vaccination program, and has begun to treat people with TB. Its prenatal and well-baby clinic staffed by a nurse/midwife is thriving, as is the maternity ward with four midwives. The Project is also reaching out to treat women with fistulas, a horrifying problem that affects many poor African women who have delivered babies. And it is working with the elders of Denan to bring an end to the terrible, age-old practice of female genital mutilation.

Donations also help the Project allay the worst of the malnourishment for mothers and babies by giving them lifesaving supplemental meals especially formulated for African tastes and fortified with milk, minerals, and vitamins. With help from the Ethiopian government, the group also was able to widely distribute anti-malarial sleeping nets.

To address the ravages of the ongoing drought, The Denan Project is completing a pipeline to bring precious, potable water from a source 12 kilometers away to the people of Denan for the first time in their history—before, women and children walked all those miles to fill containers with water. One of the 13 watering stations along the pipeline was donated by Nonnewaug High School and features a plaque dedicated to NHS. Other watering stations were donated by the Tribury, Watertown, and Naugatuck Rotary Clubs. The Denan Project also raised money to buy a large water-tanker truck and fund the building of reservoirs to hold the water the tanker delivers periodically to the outlying villages that cannot be served by the pipeline.

The Project started the first farming cooperative in the history of the region. Using donated funds, it trained local farmers in new methods of raising drought-resistant crops, and bought the tractor that helps the people prepare the soil and plant the seeds the group supplies. The Project is also working with area residents to build cottage industries that will help them become self-sustaining: giving them a large solar oven that bakes 300 loaves of bread a day, to feed the patients in the hospital and to sell to the community (and all the loaves sell out every day). Helping the people of Denan become self-sufficient is a signal goal but will not be easy, despite their enthusiasm, said Dick Young, president of The Denan Project.

Young visits Denan numerous times a year, as do some other Project volunteers, including medical personnel. Young has just returned from there, to report on the progress of another project aim: to bring better education to the children. Denan's elementary school has no desks and no books, and its teachers, most of whom have not even reached the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, seldom show up. The Project plans to build a new school and to properly staff it; meanwhile, several donors have come forth with donations of \$600, which sends one child to school in a large neighboring town for one year.

According to Young, a documentary film-maker whose video on Denan launched the formation of The Denan Project and helped it raise funds, the elders of Denan say they have seen other humanitarian projects but The Denan Project

is the only one that has asked the local people what they need. Young says: "Though we are an all-volunteer project, we are determined, and we believe in the power of these people. The elders of Denan have told us, 'We have been living in the dark and you have brought us into the light.' One community reaching out to help another—we believe it's a model for improving the world."

To get up to date reports on the hospital, and on the progress of the pipeline and other efforts, go to [www.thedenanproject.org](http://www.thedenanproject.org). All donations, no matter how small, go directly to help Denan. Just \$100 buys medicines for the hospital for one day; \$250 supports six months of a well-baby clinic for one mother and child; \$500 supplies one meal a day for one month to inpatients at the hospital. Details are on the website, or obtainable from The Denan Project, P.O. Box 543, Woodbury CT 06798.

### **Caption for five people at sales table**

Denan Project volunteers sold Denan shirts, hats, books, and an information video at Nonnewaug High School's annual Battle of the Bands, whose proceeds went to help the people of Denan, Ethiopia. From left to right, the volunteers are: Dick Young, founder and president of the Project; Gennifer Dorgan, NHS student representative to the Project; Eileen Denver; and Sue and Walt Dierks.

### **Caption for four people and a check**

For several years, Monroe student Renee Cayer has raised money for The Denan Project by asking friends to give her money rather than presents for her birthday. Here, parents Gene and Celeste Cayer and Renee present a check to Kathy Owens, Denan Project volunteer.

### **Caption for young African girl**

This young girl is just one of the thousands of residents of poverty-stricken Denan, Ethiopia who have been treated and helped at The Denan Project's hospital. In the five years since the Project was founded by a group of Woodbury friends and neighbors, the hospital has treated 65,000 people—all for free.

