

[The Atlanta Journal-Constitution: 7/16/03]

Donor of wells finds gratitude in rural Kenya **Alpharetta man takes kin along**

By CATHERINE E. SHOICHET
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Singing, dancing and a road lined with banana leaves welcomed Walter Dean and his family to Kenya two weeks ago.

Dean, who lives in Alpharetta, took his family across the Atlantic to visit the villages of Lala and Udamai, where his personal donations recently funded new wells and sanitation systems.

When they arrived in Lala, they were greeted by villagers chanting their appreciation.

"We had to stop the convoy because they had blocked the entire road," Dean said. "It was overwhelming."

In dedication ceremonies for the new wells, the chiefs of the villages shared their thanks -- and a fresh glass of water, said Dean, who -- as a volunteer -- is vice president of the Atlanta Committee for CARE.

Many of the villagers were surprised to meet his wife, children, mother, father, sister and brother-in-law, Dean said.

"There were three generations of our family present at the same time, which is very uncommon there," he said. "The average lifespan is 53."

Dean first went to Kenya 20 years ago, when he taught for a year at the Ekambuli Secondary School. For Dean, the owner and president of Alpharetta-based Dean Machinery International Inc., the journey was a "political awakening" that sparked an interest in international development and philanthropy.

By visiting the sites of his donations, Dean said he hoped his family members would experience a similar revelation.

"I took my family with me to get them on board with CARE," he said. He had made his contributions through a CARE program.

Dean said he'll be heading back to Kenya next year to help dedicate another new well, funded this time by his family.

Those interested in donating through CARE can call 1-800-521-CARE or visit www.care.org.