



The saga of the Meshenani Borehole

By **PATRICIA E. LANG**

NEWARK POST CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It seemed as though all of Meshenani had come out to watch, pray and drink tea as workers began drilling for a new well on June 5.

The remote village at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro near the Amboseli National Park in Kenya, is nearly 12 miles from the nearest source of water and, in times of drought, children are pulled out of school to search out water from even more distant sources.

Former Newark resident Joyce Tannian saw firsthand how difficult the lack of available water could make life for the villagers during trips to Kenya in 2003 and 2005.

In 2007, she moved to Kenya permanently to become a relief worker and full-time fundraiser for a philanthropy called "Water Is Life," which helps provide clean water to struggling African communi-

The fifth part in an occasional series about Newark resident Joyce Tannian, who gave up her life in the United States to become a health relief worker in Kenya after first visiting the troubled African nation in 2003.

ties.

The well at Meshenani was to be the second major project undertaken by Tannian following the 2007 construction of a well in the village of Imisigiyo.

But, by the end of the first day of drilling in Meshenani, the workers had sliced through 160 meters of hard rock, but had not found any water.

The next day, they drilled 200 meters, to see if there was a change. There wasn't.

The community prayed, and the women gave Tannian cup after cup of tea.

"I knew it was a critical



moment," she said in a recent e-mail interview. "They were all watching me to see how I would react, what I would do."

Tannian said she turned to her cell phone.

"We arranged for the survey team to come do another survey and got a two days' grace from the drilling company to keep the machine on site," she said.

A geologist eventually arrived and after an intensive pow-wow, they decided to drill in another location.

On the way to the second site, the team passed an area rife with Tortillas Acacia

See **TANNIAN, 23** ►

A Newark woman's quest for water in Kenya

► TANNIAN, from 8

trees, where a dam had been built to take advantage of seasonal runoff.

It looked promising, so they stopped and did a survey before deciding to drill there instead.

The workers went through several layers – some moist and sandy, some fractured rocks – before hitting salty water at around 50 meters.

Then the rock particles began mixing with the moist soil, creating a sort of cement that clogged the drill bits and the drilling rods, which then had to be pulled out and cleaned.

At the end of the day, the yield was still small.

The following day, the crew was ready to give up after drilling 180 meters.

“How could I explain two dry boreholes?” Tannian lamented. “It’s not like buying a pair of shoes that don’t fit. A borehole is expensive, permanent, non-refundable, and

when dry, useless.”

After taking a break for lunch, Tannian returned to the site to discover the crew

had opted to work through the meal.

At 2:17 p.m. on June 11, the drill reached 184 meters

and water began gushing out of the hole, splashing everyone in proximity.

The men immediately started digging a trench to divert the water to the dam nearby so that the livestock could come and drink.

“This is the first stage, of course, but the vital one,”

Tannian said. “We know now we have something to work with.”

For further information about Tannian or her mission, please visit www.kenyawater-islife.com, or visit the Ministry of Caring’s Web site at www.ministryofcaring.org.

