

## Local Efforts Can Have Far-Reaching Effects for AIDS Orphans

By MARK A. BROWN

An East Falmouth woman was drawn into the African struggle with AIDS, but not only by the countless victims afflicted with the disease or the HIV virus that causes it.

"There are more than 12 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa who have lost one or both parents to AIDS," said Sheryl Seyfert of Davisville Road. "The full impact of all these homeless children will really only be understood in 10 to 15 years."



Sheryl Seyfert

Tanzania, a nation the size of Texas and Oklahoma combined, is home to more than a million orphaned children, Ms. Seyfert said. "This is such a big crisis," she said. "I was just blown away by how little we understand about what's going on over there."

Since last summer, when she learned of the plight of Tanzanian children through a friend on Martha's Vineyard, Ms. Seyfert has been working to increase local awareness of the crisis. "My friend's children attended Greenwich County Day School in Connecticut, where they studied under a

science teacher named Jim Arden," Ms. Seyfert explained.

Following Mr. Arden's retirement, a group of former students, parents, and friends created the Jim Arden Foundation to honor his dedication to humanitarian causes in Tanzania and Botswana. Two of Ms. Seyfert's friend's children have since traveled to Tanzania as volunteers, she said.

Through the foundation, Ms. Seyfert got involved with the Tanzanian Community Development Alliance, or TACODA, a grassroots organization. The alliance established a home in Tanzania to care for 11 orphaned children between 5 and 9 years of age, providing them with food, shelter, and emotional and spiritual support.

TACODA has also established a support network for Tanzanian schools, contributed food to a larger Tanzanian orphanage, and organized sponsorships for two boys' soccer teams. Through donor support, the alliance recently purchased land where it plans to build a larger home.

Ms. Seyfert, an expressive arts therapist, artist, and writer, has sent numerous packages of donated clothing, games, and art supplies to Tanzanian children. She is also spearheading an effort to help Tanzanian artisans and craftspeople market their wares through global free trade.

Helping Tanzanians raise



Tanzanian children attend classes in a dark one-room schoolhouse with cement walls and a dirt floor. Many of them are orphans under the foster care of the Tanzanian Community Development Alliance.

their standard of living will help them become part of the solution, she said. "We can't just send money and expect them to solve the problem. It's got to be community-based."

Ms. Seyfert has also enlisted the help of other Falmouth residents for TACODA's cause.

Susan K. Beardsley of Southview Way, East Falmouth, an artist, and Barbara K. O'Neil, a co-owner of Headlines Salon and Day Spa on Main Street, have also donated art supplies for the children. "When Sheryl showed me pictures of some of these kids, my heart just melted," Ms. O'Neil said.

Internet consultant Michael G. Knowles of Naushon Circle, West Falmouth, and web designer John L. Moore of Journey's End Road, East Falmouth, donated a portion of their services to set up a new website for the alliance,

[www.tacodachildren.org](http://www.tacodachildren.org).

Former East Falmouth resident Jennifer Kiernan, now a school teacher in Virginia established pen pal correspondence between her students and their counterparts in Tanzania. This summer, Ms. Kiernan will spend two weeks in Tanzania teaching English to children and staff at a school there.

Richard S. Chandler of Harriette Road, Hatchville, a longtime soccer supporter in Falmouth is sponsoring one of the two TACODA soccer teams.

Dominick Albano, owner of Cuffy's of Cape Cod on Davis Straits, donated boxes of sweatshirts for orphaned children.

Ms. Seyfert said every small effort made at the local level can have a larger collective impact. "We often feel helpless about doing something on a large scale," she said. "It has to start with the simple things."