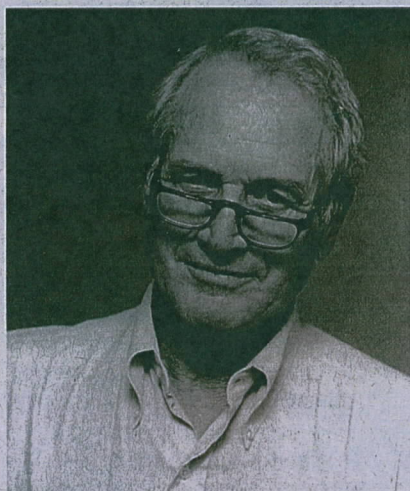


# 10 Making a Difference

With their creativity, problem-solving skills, and sheer determination, Americans are tackling serious challenges and changing the world

By Cathie Gandel

**P**erhaps nowhere does the American character shine so distinctively as in the way individuals take on seemingly intractable problems. Some of the most innovative service programs, including the 10 we highlight below, are particularly noteworthy because their creators refused to be daunted by the breadth of the challenge, the absence of any model to guide them, or even a lack of expertise. As our sampling shows, the efforts of everyday Americans are having an impact and millions are benefiting in the process.



**CLASS ACT.** The late actor Paul Newman helped found the Safe Water Network.

## 5 Safe Water Network

Providing purity while empowering villages

**A**lmost 1 billion people around the globe lack access to safe water, but now Rajitha Perumarla, a 30-year-old mother in the village of Nizampalli, India, is not one of them. Last April, a Westport, Conn.-based nonprofit organization called Safe Water Network inaugurated a safe water station in Perumarla's village. These stations serve as central water kiosks where purification technology has been installed. Perumarla and other community members pay 4 rupees (about 9 cents) per 20-liter (5-gallon) container, more than enough for a family of four's daily use.

Safe Water Network was founded in 2007 by the late actor and philanthropist Paul Newman and other civic and business leaders. (Actress Joanne Woodward recently took her husband Paul's place on the board.) The founders have combined technical, operating, and funding know-how to develop locally appropriate sustainable, scalable solutions, says the group's CEO, Kurt Soderlund.

To date, the organization has introduced safe water solutions into 63 villages in Ghana, India, and Kenya. The villagers themselves must share in the costs, undergo training, and take responsibility for the ongoing operation

and maintenance of the systems.

Divyang Waghela, associate program manager of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, a philanthropic institution that helps fund the initiative, has said the Safe Water Network provides a model that "addresses one of the biggest challenges in countries like India: expecting the community to bear some of the capital cost to ensure buy-in from the beginning."

The group has plans for projects in 40 to 50 additional villages by the end of 2011. ●