

## Town focus **Vista**

# PRESERVING AFRICA

**Couple works to help save animals, native art forms**

**By Linda McIntosh**  
COMMUNITY NEWS WRITER

**V**ISTA — It's hard to tell where Corinne Waldenmayer is more at home, here or in Zambia. She spends several months of the year in Africa.

Even when Waldenmayer is here, her thoughts roam the plains of Africa with its beautiful animals and native cultures. She wants to preserve both.

So she founded the African Conservancy two years ago with her husband, Norbert Waldenmayer. Its mission is to preserve African wildlife and traditional cultures. For the Waldenmayers, it goes even deeper, to preserving the harmony between humans and nature.

"This is an opportunity to salvage a unique environment, and time is running short," Corinne Waldenmayer said. But she knows it's not simple. It's a matter of culture, economics and traditions all tied together.

She works out of two offices, the Conservancy's headquarters in Vista and a field office in Lusaka, Zambia, in southern Africa.

She is working with Zambian officials to stop poaching. She is marketing African coffee beans and selling the works of African artists.

She is working with a cooperative of 100 artists to bring their textiles to the marketplace. "But there are still a lot of hoops we have to go through," Waldenmayer said.

That will not deter her. "When Corinne sets her mind to something, she makes it happen," said Norbert Waldenmayer, who is chairman of the Conservancy.

The Waldenmayers have set up an online gallery to preserve African art forms and raise money for African artists. Profits go to the Conservancy's wildlife projects in Zambia.

The gallery's exhibit includes ebony statues, wooden sculptures, Ashanti dolls, elephant masks and brass lion head masks. There are also figurines said to be imbued with spiritual powers.

Many items are for sale, such as the embroidered fabric of the Kuba people, called Kuba cloth. The cloth preserves



Corinne Waldenmayer, founder of the African Conservancy, met Kenyatta, a black rhino, at the Nairobi Elephant Orphanage in Kenya. James Mtwana (right) said villagers rescued the baby after her mother had been killed by poachers. Norbert Waldenmayer photo.

**"How can you not admire someone determined to leave the planet a better place than she found it?"**

**JANICE EPHRON,**  
*a founding member of the African Conservancy, commenting on its founder, Corinne Waldenmayer*

the ancient African tradition of cloth weaving.

"This project is compelling because the people are neediest and yet they can do so much with so little," Waldenmayer said. "We can learn from them. They don't need to plug anything in to make something."

That's why Waldenmayer has made it part of her mission to bring people close to African culture and wildlife. She organizes several small safaris each year.

They paddle through the waters of Lake Tanganyika, see

falcons nesting along the Songwe Gorge and watch cheetahs, zebras and leopards dart across the plains. There's even storytelling around the campfire at night.

"People who come with me into the wilderness return more humane — more connected with nature," she said.

Waldenmayer's love of the African wilderness started early on. She was born in Algiers, Algeria, and raised in Madagas-

car, and traveled with her family through eastern Africa.

As a high-tech executive, Waldenmayer found herself far from her roots and realized the importance of preserving the beauty and spirituality she knew was part of the African culture and wilderness.

"How can you not admire someone determined to leave the planet a better place than she found it?" Janice Ephron, a

founding member of the Conservancy, said about Waldenmayer.

For information about the nonprofit African Conservancy, call (760) 945-7571 or visit [www.africanconservancy.org](http://www.africanconservancy.org).

Do you have a story idea for Vista? Contact Linda McIntosh at (760) 476-8214 or [linda.mcintosh@uniontrib.com](mailto:linda.mcintosh@uniontrib.com). For special events, please alert us at least four weeks in advance. We work ahead!