

# A Worthy Cause

Working through his church, Frank Lenik, a New Jersey surveyor, has spearheaded a campaign to have magnetic locators donated to developing countries for use in eliminating land mines.



↑ Photo credit Bonnie Weller/Philadelphia Inquirer

Kids like these in Tajikistan benefit from the elimination of land mines



By Craig Dylan

Frank Lenik, LS was the right man in the right place last March, when he spotted the Schonstedt Instrument Company booth at the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping conference in St. Louis, Missouri. A banner at the booth said, “Buy a locator, save a life,” and in the foreground, a demining team and African children were pictured. The banner portrayed the Schonstedt Humanitarian Demining Initiative, a partnership between Schonstedt Instrument and the United Nations Mine Action Service that sends Schonstedt equipment directly to parts of the world where poor communities cope with land mines and unexploded ordnance left over from wars.

A longtime surveyor, Lenik is licensed in several states and serves as the NSPS governor for the New Jersey Society of Professional Surveyors. Like most surveyors, he has experience with magnetic locators. What set him apart, though, was his background and faith. “I was in the Peace Corps in my youth, so the theme of the poster really struck me. I talked to Mike Head, Schonstedt’s president, about how to get involved. I’m a

surveyor of faith, I’ve been in Africa, I knew what needed to be done ... to me it was a no-brainer that someone could use this technology to find land mines.” Lenik didn’t know it then, but that conversation would start something big.

Land mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), collectively referred to as explosive remnants of war (ERW), are some of the most readily identifiable legacies of violence affecting the developing world. And not just poor countries are affected; France still removes up to 700 tons of ERW left from World Wars I and II annually. But third world countries in Asia, Africa, and South America are affected far more seriously, due to exponential increases in numbers of mines deployed since the World Wars, progressive “improvements” in mine technology, and huge amounts of unexploded ordnance resulting from bombing. Worldwide, 82 countries are trying to cope with ERW, and between 15,000 and 20,000 civilians are killed or maimed annually, 25 percent of them children under the age of 15.

The numbers can be staggering. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, mines contaminate about 888 square miles of land, and mines and UXO have killed nearly 5,000 people. Experts say a quarter of the region’s population lives in communities impacted by ERW. In Angola, where three decades of civil war and related conflict has created one of the world’s most serious ERW problems, nearly 50 percent of the country is affected by heavily mined areas. Some 80,000 Angolans are amputees due to delayed warfare. And land mines and UXO are not always the result of conventional war; in Columbia and Afghanistan, for example, coca, poppy, and marijuana growers use mines to protect crops.

### Costly to Remove

In an irony characteristic of the 20th century, the very countries affected most by ERW are the least able to cope financially with the problem. A land mine can cost as little as \$3.00 to produce and deploy, but *removing* land mines costs between \$300 and \$1,000... *each*. But humanitarian deminers are making progress. In Angola, between 1995 and

# Buy a Schonstedt, Save a life.

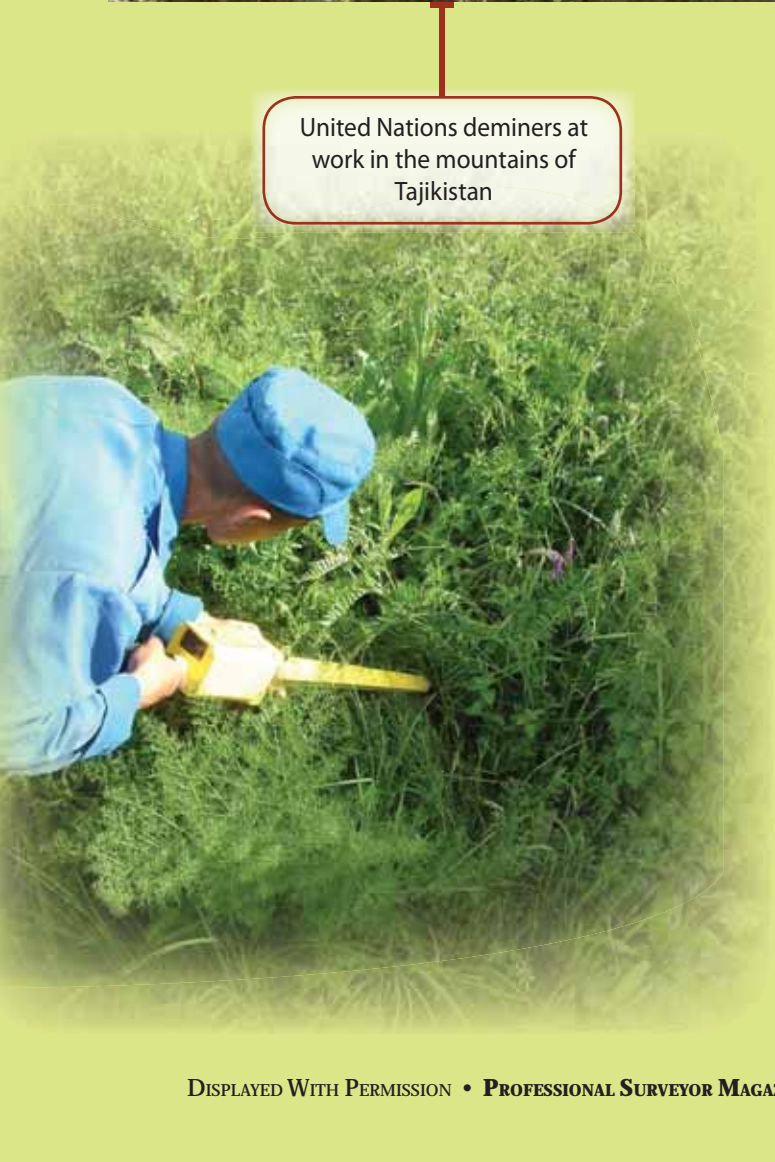
**Schonstedt  
Humanitarian  
Demining  
Initiative**



Frank Lenik saw a poster like this at the ACSM show, and it started him on his mission



United Nations deminers at work in the mountains of Tajikistan



2004, more than 319,000 land mines and 88,500 pieces of UXO were successfully removed. It's in this crucial area, finding and removing ERW, that Schonstedt's magnetic locators see the greatest need.

Since the amount of ferrous metal in mines can be quite small, sensitive instruments are critical, and since most of the work is in undeveloped countries, equipment has to be sturdy as well. Schonstedt has sold magnetic locators to military UXO units since the 1990s, and these have proven effective in the field and popular with those whose lives literally depend on their proper functioning.

According to Mike Head, "The Humanitarian Demining Initiative is aimed at humanitarian and civilian workers engaged in the restoration of land impacted by land mines, unexploded ordnance, and other explosive remnants of war. As a company, we want to do our part to heal the wounds of war; we think our customers feel the same way."

So Head was happy to talk with Frank Lenik and eager to work with a surveyor, but there were details to work out. As originally conceived, the Demining Initiative was aimed at the relatively larger utility locating industry. For every new Schonstedt pipe and cable locator purchased, Schonstedt sent one magnetic locator directly to an area of need identified by the U.N. Mine Action Service. But as a surveyor, Lenik had no need for a pipe and cable locator, and, in fact, he didn't particularly need another magnetic locator. Of course, this didn't bother Head, and he proposed that Schonstedt offer Lenik a discounted price on two locators, and they'd kick in another, so a total of three locators would be sent overseas for less than the price of two.

Lenik belongs to the Woodstown Friends Meeting in Woodstown, New Jersey. Commonly known as Quakers, the Religious Society of Friends is non-hierarchical, meaning many decisions are made at the local level by consensus. Lenik brought the proposal to his church, and the response was positive. "We're one of the 'peace churches,'" says Lenik, "and we work to give money to worthy, needy causes like most churches. I was really happy this affected people enough that they were willing to make a contribution." In fact, Lenik and the Friends raised \$1,500 by June, and later that month, three locators were on their way to a village in Tajikistan. "I'd never heard of a church group doing this," said Richard Kollodge, a spokesman for the U.N. Mine Action Service. "Tajikistan has a tight budget and can't afford this equipment. This is a godsend." Lenik adds, "One thing that makes people happy about this program is the fact the equipment is sent directly by UPS to the places that need them. There are no middlemen and no bureaucracy to support."

### Keep the Ball Rolling

But the story didn't end with that summer's contribution of three locators; in fact, it was just beginning. Edward Colimore, a staff writer at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, heard about the donation and contacted Lenik about doing a story. Lenik agreed to this, and he also agreed—after discussion with the

Friends—to let his church's name and address be printed in the article. The story came out on December 8th, a Saturday, and by Monday, says Lenik, "we started to get donations, and they kept coming for weeks. We raised \$10,000 in a month, and the church put up more, so we bought 10 locators, and then we bought a couple more." In the meantime, Schonstedt had formalized its program for charitable donators and was now sending one free locator along with every locator purchased. So the Friends' 12 locators became a shipment of 24 locators, which were sent to Vietnam.

Letters accompanied many of the donations received from the donors. "The letters were just beautiful," says Lenik. "At our services, people speak as they are moved, and on Christmas, our treasurer stood up and read from several of them—it was very touching." The letters and contributions came from varied sources. One came from a Marine and Korean War veteran, who wrote, "Thank you for your vision and your ongoing work to help save lives and limbs." Another woman wrote, "It is amazing what the private citizen can do with a little cash." And one couple shared a sentiment common to many contributors when they wrote, "We need more Friends like you who translate their beliefs into tangible human benefits."

A modest man, Lenik deflects much of the attention that has come his way. He reports, "The Schonstedt people gave me a tour of the plant, I visited with the employees, and I saw the 24 locators all packaged up—this company is really proving themselves good global citizens." And Head adds, "Like many American firms, we've done very well on the international market, and that makes us concerned members of the world community. We're following the example of other firms in doing this work, and we hope we're setting an example as well."

As an experienced surveyor and man of faith, Lenik was just the person to connect good-hearted people with two organizations, Schonstedt Instrument and the United Nations, who were helping the disadvantaged in practical ways. Even the U.N. was a little surprised by the equipment donation. Justin Brady, a planning officer for the Mine Action Service, says, "We hadn't expected this to happen. But we do want to open this program up for more private people and organizations to contribute."

"I've sort of become a poster child for this," says Lenik, obviously a little bemused. "I'll speak to other Quaker groups about the program, and donations are still coming in. It helps that I know Mike Head and that I know the company and have been using its equipment." The story has appeared in Quaker newspapers and continues to generate letters.

Frank Lenik's interest in a convention booth banner may end up helping thousands of people around the planet live longer, happier lives. To him, it's not about any particular form of worship. "Every town has churches," he says, "And if every church participated in a program like this, we could save a lot of lives and show people around the world that Americans are people of faith and have good hearts." ♣

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Frank Lenik (left) presents a check to Mike Head of Schonstedt Instruments for 24 magnetic locators bound for Vietnam

The Woodstown Friends Meeting functions as a no-cost intermediary for contributions, which may be tax deductible, and it coordinates equipment donations directly with Schonstedt Instrument. Checks may be sent, with a notation that they are for the demining project, to:

Woodstown Friends Meeting  
Box 13  
Woodstown, NJ 08098

Alternatively, the demining tools may be purchased for donation directly from Schonstedt at [www.schonstedt.com](http://www.schonstedt.com).



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