

ShelterBoxes offer emergency help for Haiti's homeless

Written by Greg Viergutz

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Rotarians across the United States and the world are bringing a little comfort and shelter to residents of earthquake-ravaged Haiti by partnering with ShelterBox USA.

The Gothenburg Rotary Club is joining the effort raising money to pay for at least one ShelterBox to be sent to Haiti.

Each ShelterBox costs \$1,000 and it offers enough emergency supplies for 10 people.

ShelterBox worldwide has shipped 2,000 of the boxes to Haiti as of Tuesday with another 2,000 on the way.

“What ShelterBox provides is unique and does not duplicate any other aid that is provided,” states Veronica Brandon Miller, executive director, ShelterBox USA. “We work with all relief organizations to enhance and complete the services and supplies that help survivors. In many cases, our boxes have made the difference between life and death.”

ShelterBox has established three separate operational centers in and around Haiti to help distribute assistance to the estimated one million people left homeless by the devastating 12 January earthquake.

The three-person ShelterBox Response Team in Haiti set up an operations base in the capital Port au Prince with the assistance of local Rotarians to coordinate the delivery of aid in the country. They are working with the French aid agency ACTED to determine the areas in most need of assistance and are training personnel to put up tents ahead of their arrival into the devastated country.

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SHELTERBOX CONTENTS

■ One 49 gallon box (The ShelterBox is initially the container for delivery of the materials listed below. Once delivered, it can be used as water tank, food store, cot, table, etc.)

■ One 19 percent tent including two fabric interior privacy partitions, outer fly-sheet and repair kit. These tents are considered "winter suitable" by international relief standards.

■ Vinyl insulated sleeping mats and lightweight thermal blankets. More compact than sleeping bags, these mats and blankets have multiple uses. The blanket can also be fashioned to catch water, as a tarp, etc. while the mat also serves as a ground "table" for meals, or tent rugs.

■ One pack of 160 water purification tablets or a water purification kit and one 5 gallon flat-pack water container. Each tablet will purify a full container of water providing 1,000 gallons of clean drinking water which should be sufficient for a family of 10 for up to three months).

■ Two 2.1 gallon, collapsible, plastic water carriers.

■ One collapsible trenching shovel

■ Rope, 166 foot

■ Repellent-treated mosquito netting

■ Ten PVC Ponchoes/ten HD plastic bags

■ Tool kit in canvas bag: hatchet, jack-knife, screwdriver, hammer, hoe head etc.

■ Multi-fueled cook stove

■ Eating utensils: enamel plates/cups

■ Children's activity kit-sim-ple school supplies, stickers and coloring book.

The contents are under continuous review. A small stock of wind-up radios (short-wave and FM) has been obtained to substitute a sleeping bag in every tenth box should such a requirement arise.

For shipping purposes, a large container (42 feet) can accommodate up to 240 ShelterBoxes, smaller containers would typically be half the size and quantities. The purpose of Shelter Box USA, Inc. is to provide victims of disaster with shelter, by supporting the efforts of the Shelter Box Trust.

YOU CAN HELP

Area residents can help purchase ShelterBox(es) for Haiti by making a tax-deductible donation through the Pony Express Center Foundation. Checks of any amount should be made out to the foundation. In the memo area, mention Rotary ShelterBox Project. Send them to: Pony Express Center Foundation, P.O. Box 268, Gothenburg, NE 69138, or drop a check off at the Community Development Office (inside the Post Office).

ShelterBox USA, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is not affiliated with any political party. All funds raised go to the relief of disaster victims.