

One shelter at a time Young Rotarians help disaster victims

By Autumn MacDonald - Quesnel Cariboo Observer - March 05, 2008



Rakesh Dewan, top, Chad Findlay and Courtney Kirsh would rather change the world than sleep in.
Autumn McDonald photo

He wonders why one could stay in bed when they could make a difference instead.

Saturday morning, Four Corners was home to a 10-man tent, with all the fixings.

Manning the camp site were Correlieu Interact members (a youth division of Rotary).

And as they scurried, setting up their showcase, the community stopped, stared and eventually asked, “what’s this all about?”

This was their answer.

In times of disaster, thousands of people are often left homeless and without basic shelter and survival equipment.

ShelterBox Canada stands at the ready to provide aid to those in need anywhere in the world. Each shelter box provides a dry shelter, warm bed, light and heat, clean water, cooking aids and tools for 10 people.

The ShelterBox program is administered by Rotary Clubs throughout the world and relies heavily on donations.

And Saturday, Interact members, under the guidance of Quesnel Rotary Club member John Havens, showcased the kits and asked for help.

“This box is about making people self-sufficient,” Havens said.

ShelterBox goes by the concept the program is a planned response to unpredictable disasters.

When disaster occurs, there are four immediate needs: food, clothing, shelter and water.

A ShelterBox provides shelter, the means to have clean drinking water and equipment for cooking.

Following the Asian Tsunami disaster, ShelterBox was in Sri Lanka in 48 hours.

“Most times, these boxes are the first disaster relief sent,” Grade 12 student Rakesh Dewan said.

Each box is 60 centimetres wide by 84 cm long by 56.8 cm deep – giving a capacity of 185 litres.

Fully packed, a box weighs between 110 lbs and 130 lbs (50 to 60 kg).

Since the first 140 boxes were sent out to Gujarat in India following a devastating earthquake in January 2001 ShelterBox has sent out more than 30,000 boxes worldwide, providing emergency accommodation for close to 500,000 disaster victims.

“We wanted to do something worthwhile,” 17-year-old Courtney Kirsh said.

“It’s a really good cause.”

Interac will solicit donations and set up their disaster kit this Saturday at Wal-Mart 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. and Extra Foods 1 – 4 p.m. Sunday the group will be at Safeway 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Anyone interested in donating can pop by those venues or contact Havens, johnhavens@shelterbox.ca.

To donate an entire box costs \$1,200, but any donations are greatly appreciated.

“We could sleep in,” Grade 12

student Chad Findlay said, he lifts his eyes towards the massive tent.

“But why, when you could change the world.”

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