

Relief Supplies Provide Real Help for People in Need



Volunteers ready a shipment of UMCOR school kits and health kits for shipment to Haiti. Photo: Ted Warnock

How can you help provide UMCOR relief supplies to communities in need?

*By Susan Kim**

Sept. 8, 2015—As he was taking a motorcycle trip across the U.S., Steve Matthews was injured, leaving him wondering how he would fill his time. “I’m retired and relatively young,” said Matthews, a vibrant man in his mid-50s, “but I started to get depressed.”

A member of Coburg United Methodist Church in Oregon (about seven miles from the city of Eugene), Matthews went on a mission trip to the UMCOR West depot in Salt Lake City, where he helped prepare relief supplies to ship to people in need.

Struck by the difference the kits make, Matthews decided to make relief supplies his personal ministry. Now, he gathers relief supply kits from churches in Oregon and drives them to UMCOR West. He’s made three trips this year, and hopes to expand his range to the entire west coast.

Matthews doesn’t just show up with kits. He works carefully with UMCOR West—one of two relief supply depots of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)—to determine a schedule based on the changing needs.

“People ask me, ‘Don’t you do a lot of driving?’” he said. “Yes, I do. But last Sunday, I was driving through Oregon, and I came upon a herd of wild horses. I took pictures and I will always have that memory. Besides, when God tells you to do something, you can’t really argue.”

Every person counts

Whether one person delivers relief supply kits, assembles kits, or raises money to purchase kits, that person’s efforts result in real help for people in need, pointed out Ted Warnock, interim executive director of UMCOR Relief Supplies.

UMCOR is in need of health kits and school kits, he added. Recently, two containers, each loaded with more than 10,000 health kits and 10,000 school kits, were shipped from UMCOR Sager Brown to Port au Prince, Haiti, where UMCOR and its partners in Haiti are working together to enroll 50,000 out-of-school children in school by 2018.

As the kits help meet the needs in Haiti, UMCOR needs to replace those relief supplies in order to be able to quickly respond to the next wave of need, wherever that may be.

Expanding the help

UMCOR is growing its relief supply network. In addition to its two supply depots—UMCOR Sager Brown in Baldwin, Louisiana, and UMCOR West, UMCOR also coordinates with a network of United Methodist relief supply depots across the United States. Most recently, the Missouri Conference designated one of its facilities as an UMCOR affiliate warehouse for relief supplies.

So far this year, UMCOR has shipped more than 107,000 health kits and nearly 43,000 school kits to destinations across the world.

Warnock urged people to make relief supplies their ministry in whatever way they can. “When you have the ability to see the value of that kit being placed into someone’s hands, it’s mind-boggling, the difference it makes. We need more relief supply kits before the next shipment goes out. It needs to happen. We need to get them.”

Become a part of UMCOR’s relief supplies ministry. Please give to UMCOR Material Resources, Advance #901440.