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CRW Delivers Supplies to Third World

By Vern Faulkner
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In a large, nondescript warehouse, Dell Wergeland struggles to make sense of the mountain of boxes, bags and buckets that dwarf her. Wergeland of the Compassionate Resource Warehouse (CRW), a group that collects vital and much-needed supplies for Third World nations around the globe. "We were asked to send a container to Tajikistan. They have listed specific requirements, and we have worked out an inventory we will send to them," explains Wergeland, who assures there is a method to the apparent madness. "They have already requested certain things, so that's what we try to fill - we don't send things just because we have them."

It is a late Friday afternoon, and factory and industrial workers in the neighbourhood are heading home. Wergeland, however, remains on her perch, labeling boxes and organizing.

Earlier in the morning, 30 seniors who happily call themselves the SHARPS-Sincerely Happy Association of Retired Persons-joined her for a spell. For three hours the women in the group folded coats and blankets while the men potted with mechanical objects in attempt to get them working again. Staring up at a heap of boxes, which each contain a detailed account of the contents within, Wergeland declares that the shipment is almost ready to go overseas. There are only a few items left to be gathered and with that aim in mind CRW will launch a collection campaign this weekend in the parking lots of the region's McDonald's restaurants.

"We need winter clothes, warm coats and sweaters," she begins, before listing off a litany of odds and ends that will stock up a small clinic and hospital in Tajikistan. Hospital beds that became obsolete when the Capital Health Region (CHR) has replaced with more modern devices are being collected for distribution around the world.

Wergeland said the CHR has been a great help in providing medical-related items. "We are receiving these goods, be they (hospital) beds or other supplies... linen, and other things. We take them, and ship them off," she says, adding that the Red Cross has also been a tremendous help, along with Bekins Moving and Storage - which has moved goods across the city, across the province and from as far away as Alberta. CRW was launched two years ago. The group is headquartered in a space donated by a kind landlord. The first year of its inception, the group distributed only one container of supplies. It took them 10 more months to send out a second.

Since then, due mostly to word-of-mouth, the CRW operation has seen massive growth. "We haven't really been high profile, although we probably need to do something about that," Wergeland muses. "We all came into this very new so we are learning things about it."

The Tajikistan-bound container, scheduled to ship just around Christmas, will be CRW's tenth shipment this year. "The supplies are really coming in right now," notes Wergeland. Another shipment is being readied for a January shipment to a hospice and disabled care hospital in Tonga. After that, a shipment of medical goods will be packaged for an orphanage and hospital in Liberia.

The group keeps in contact with those who receive the supplies. In fact, CRW makes a point of requesting photographs and written accounts of how the items improve the lives of the people they are delivered to so Greater Victorians know just how meaningful their contributions are. "This is just a wonderful way for people here in Canada and specifically Victoria to help someone overseas in a practical way," observes Wergeland. "Its a way of saying that what I have given will be used by someone else." A Web site is in the works and those who wish to make a monetary contribution can contact First Church of the Nazarene at 4277 Quadra St.