

Container bound for Iraq



Dell Marie Wergeland, director at Compassionate Resource Warehouse, and Graham Jackson of Youth With A Mission Victoria show off some of the supplies packed into the container behind them destined for Erbil in the Kurdish part of Iraq where they will aid refugees fleeing the fighting in Mosul.

— *Image Credit: Wolf Depner/News Staff*

by Wolf Depner - Saanich News February 8, 2017

A container is just a few days into its 40-day journey to Erbil in the Kurdish-part of Iraq after departing from a rural corner of Saanich, where volunteers worked all day Thursday to cram every nook and corner of it with items of every kind to help the civilian victims of war in that country.

More than 10,000 kilometres and multiple worlds separate Saanich and Erbil.

Located in the northwestern corner of Iraq, Erbil serves as a general reception area for refugees and other internally displaced people, who are fleeing the fighting in Mosul less than 100 kilometres northwest of Erbil.

Forces from various countries are currently trying to recapture Iraq's second-largest city from the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), a jihadist terror group that emerged out of the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the chaos of the Syrian civil war.

In short, the differences between the two communities could not be more contrasting.

Yet the container and its contents link them through an overwhelming spirit of generosity that has even surprised Dell Marie Wergeland, president of the Compassionate Resource Warehouse, who founded the organization in 1999 after travelling to Honduras to help the victims of Hurricane Mitch.

Operating under the organizational umbrella of the Church of the Nazarene, the organization has since shipped more than 415 containers with donated supplies to more than 60 countries in the every corner of the world, from Eastern Europe, to Africa, to Asia.

This said, the public response to the group's Iraq mission has been exceptional.

“It is truly amazing how many people have really wanted to help,” said Wergeland, standing on the platform where local volunteers with Youth With A Mission were loading the 40-foot long container donated by Big Steel Box.

Over 20 organizations such as local charities, doctor offices and businesses among others have provided various kinds of supplies that cover the whole range, Wergeland said. They include eight pallets of dried soup mix that would make 400,000 cups of soup, water filters, mountains of winter clothing and blankets protecting arriving refugees against the cold temperatures currently prevailing in northern Iraq, and medical equipment of every sort, ranging from wheelchairs to crutches to a full-fledged medical clinic including stretchers, bed and a portable operating room light. The container also contains a couple of looms and spinning wheels.

“I want to say thank you, because people have really responded,” she said.