

Just like a river

Districts collect more supplies for Africa than ever before

By Rheta Murry

HOLSTON MEMBERS SHOWED THEIR SERVANT hearts when they collected 6,728 kits containing food, clothing, school, sewing, and health supplies for the Annual Conference “hands-on” mission project.

“It’s the most we’ve ever had,” said Bill Daugherty, missions coordinator. “It gets better every year. A lot of people like to buy things themselves and know who is going to receive it and how it benefits the children.”

Each of the 12 districts, representing 912 churches, collected a specific item for the project. For example, the Abingdon and Wytheville districts collected teacher kits for Liberia while the Chattanooga and Tazewell Districts brought in health kits for Zimbabwe. Other districts added school supply kits for both Liberia and Zimbabwe and children’s clothing and sewing kits for Zimbabwe.

Daugherty said the missionaries tell him what they need, and he decides which district will bring in what items. Though this project has served the same missionaries for the last few years – Maria and Bill Humbane in Zimbabwe and Mary and Herbert Zigbuo in Liberia – Daugherty said he tries to rotate what each district brings.

This year, every district surpassed the goals set for them. Knoxville District more than tripled its goal, collecting 1,501 school supply kits for Zimbabwe. Chattanooga District nearly tripled its goal, with 860 health kits for Zimbabwe.

Congregations dropped off items at a central location in each district. Later, the supplies were loaded onto vehicles and transported to Fairview United Methodist Church in Maryville District. Daugherty and volunteers unloaded those trucks at Fairview, packing the supplies into two carriers within six to seven hours. Normally, the offloading and reloading takes two days.

“We had a lot of folks at Fairview helping with the pick up, downloading, and reloading,” he said.

The trucks couldn’t have been loaded as effectively without volunteers who drove them to various sites, Daugherty said. Barbara Hall, Oak Ridge District administrative assistant, delivered a truckload to Maryville. Tazewell District Superintendent Don Nation borrowed a pickup truck and a 12-foot trailer, loaded his district’s provisions, and drove to Wytheville District for more.

“It just kept coming in, and I had a whole trailer loaded before I left Tazewell,” the Rev. Nation said. “We ended up having 400-some odd kits. I drove the truck to Pleasant Hill (in Wytheville District), and they had 300 to 400 more kits”

The extra kits posed an interesting, but good, problem. Nation got another vehicle and a four-by-eight foot trailer, filled it up, stashed kits in the back of the pickup truck, and drove on to Kingsport. He called the Abingdon District office to say he could not pick up their items as planned because he was overloaded. The Rev. Jim Goddard of Abingdon District stepped up to transport his district’s supplies to Kingsport.

“It made me feel good, quite proud (of Holston),” Nation said. He described the collection process as working like a river, with everything flowing together into a larger source.



Photo by Rheta Murry, The Call

Volunteers at Fairview UMC in Maryville District attempt to stuff more supplies into a carrier bound for Africa.



Photo courtesy of Cleveland District

Volunteers at First Cleveland UMC load up the district's sewing kits for Zimbabwe.

On Saturday morning, June 10, a few boxes of donated T-shirts and additional kits arrived at Fairview UMC. Maria and Bill Humbane and Fairview UMC Pastor Jerry Russell helped load these items on to two already overstuffed ocean carriers.

“We cannot express our gratitude,” Bill Humbane said after stuffing the shirts in spaces in the back of the carrier. “We are just overwhelmed.”

The loaded carriers received blessings June 12 at Annual Conference in Lake Junaluska, N.C., before heading to the coast. Appearing on the Stuart Auditorium stage, Maria Humbane found it difficult to contain her gratitude as she burst into tears.

“How can I thank you, Holston Conference? The answer is, I can’t thank you enough,” she said. “Jesus is watching you. Jesus said, whatever you did for these little brothers and sisters of mine, you also did for me.”

The supplies were shipped on June 15 from Charleston, S.C., bound for Africa. Daugherty said the carriers will take a month to get to Liberia, and six weeks to Zimbabwe. Because Zimbabwe is a land-locked country, the items



Photo courtesy of Kingsport District

Tazewell District Superintendent Don Nation arrives in Kingsport with health kits and teacher kits for Liberia.



Photo courtesy of Kingsport District

Volunteers at Mafair UMC pack up supplies from six districts before dispatching them to Maryville, Tenn.

will be unloaded from the carriers, sorted, and items bound for that country will arrive by train. Each missionary collects the merchandise at the port or station and distributes the kits as he or she sees fit.

“We rely on (them) totally and have total confidence and trust in them,” Daugherty said. “They are great stewards of what they do, and we don’t have to worry about it getting into the wrong hands.” ■

Rheta Murry is a member of Cokesbury UMC in Knoxville District.



Photo courtesy of Knoxville District

Volunteers at First Knoxville UMC pack up school supply kits for Zimbabwe. The district more than tripled its goal, collecting 1,501 kits.