

Beautiful Human Spirit

By Kim D. Bennett

An act of kindness and giving by the Sodus Point Volunteer Fire Department in upstate NY has blossomed into a spirit of human beauty that will impact thousands of people half a world away. Over the past year, the seeds of the Sodus Point Fire Department's generosity have sprouted and grown, and what they started with beautiful spirit of human compassion has resulted in a multi-state, multi-organization effort that will soon ship *one hundred seventy thousand dollars worth* of medical supplies to a teaching hospital in Basrah, Iraq.

In June 2007, I stopped in at the Sodus Point NY Volunteer Fire Department fund-raising barbeque and emergency response equipment sale, to support their good work. When they learned I had been in Iraq, they promptly loaded my SUV full with wheelchairs, crutches, walkers, a water rescue board, and a hospital gurney that had been retired from service, asking that I send the items to needy people in Iraq. Imagine the beauty- I was there to support their fundraiser- yet the spirit of these fine men was selfless giving. Imagine the beauty- what it is like for people who have had a leg shot off and can not walk- who have no crutches or access to them- to receive them.

After leaving the barbeque I sought a non-profit organization to act as an umbrella so I could draft grant requests to fund shipment costs. Everywhere, people were encouraged and excited by the generosity of the Sodus Point Fire Department, and offered more.

Seeds For Tomorrow, a new nonprofit organization in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, immediately jumped in to help. Founded by Will and Amy Mead, Seeds for Tomorrow is a group of concerned local business people from Doylestown, Newtown and surrounding areas who want to make a difference in the lives of American and Iraqi children who have been impacted by the Iraq War. Seeds for Tomorrow volunteers developed donations of 23 brand new hospital mattresses and cases of surgical gloves from Delco Medical Supply Company of Jamison, PA, and obtained donations of surplus from Doylestown Hospital, including IV tubes, surgical instruments and equipment, and cases of life-saving sutures. All over the world, people die of injuries and illnesses that could be cured with simple operations that they can never have, because the doctors do not have sutures! It is hard in our bounty to even contemplate that. But it is nowhere more true than in Iraq where 20 years of sanctions under Saddam Hussein have left hospitals, families and children without even the most basic of medical supplies.

MedShare International of Atlanta joined the effort, offering to add surplus medical supplies and equipment sufficient to fill a forty foot shipping container! MedShare collects surplus medical supplies that are new and usable, but that would otherwise go to into our landfills, and ships them to needy countries around the world- saving lives, and preserving our environment- a beautiful win-win. Still, the \$26K in costs associated with domestic transportation, collection, sorting, warehousing and international shipping remained to be raised.

Conscience International of Atlanta is an organization that serves as a link between needs and resources. It collects and ships medical surplus to the most needy and dangerous places in the

world, accomplishing peace-building dialogue with leaders in the context of delivery of direct humanitarian assistance, to make lasting strides to peaceful relations among nations. Over the past 20 years, Dr. James Jennings, founder of Conscience International, has delivered aid to desperate, impoverished people and refugees, and has met with leaders in numerous countries in places that most Americans would be afraid to go. A respected humanitarian who has been interviewed by *CNN*, *PBS*, *Reuters*, *BBC* and *USA Today*, and *Associated Press*, he believes that the only thing precedent to law is conscience.

Conscience International took the helm and committed \$10K cash to pay shipping costs. MedShare agreed to waive \$4K of costs. Others contributed too, including EnSig Corporation, shipment sponsor, which will pay for domestic shipping costs, and an Iraqi non-profit organization in Basrah, Friendship and Fraternity Association, that will transport delivery of equipment from the port in Um Qasr to the Basrah Teaching Hospital. The Volunteer Firefighters of the Sodus Point Fire Department started this with a beautiful spirit of generosity in the tranquil moments of a sunny Sunday fundraising barbeque. Seeds for Tomorrow of Bucks County, PA provided significant volunteer efforts to expand the good that will save and change thousands of lives a half world away.

Of \$26K originally needed to make the shipment happen, only \$7K now remains needed. All paperwork is in place with sign-off from the Basrah health office and the teaching hospital in Basrah. A 40 foot container full of lifesaving medical supplies and equipment valued at \$170K will ship as soon as donor(s) for the final \$7,000 that is needed is found.

If you would like to be a part of the team to take this effort through the homestretch, please send your donation to: Conscience International, 5388 Mt. Vernon Road, Atlanta GA, 30338, and note that it is for the Iraq shipment to the Basrah Teaching hospital. Conscience International is a 501©3 tax exempt non-profit organization. All donations are fully tax deductible. For more info, or to get involved, e-mail to: KBennett@ensig.com.



The Sodus Point Fire Department is a unique volunteer organization due to the location of its service area. It serves Sodus Point, including the waters of the Great Sodus Bay and Lake Ontario.



The Sodus Point Volunteer Fire Department kicked off a larger effort with donation of crutches, wheelchairs and walkers for shipment to Iraq.

Seeds for Tomorrow recruited employees at the Doylestown Hospital of Bucks County, PA to help. Here they are taking inventory of several thousand dollars worth of medical supplies





MedShare International loads a container with medical supplies that would otherwise go to a U.S. landfill. These supplies will save lives in countries where people often go without operations because the doctors there do not even have basics such as sutures.



MedShare International Warehouse supplies will be added to the donations raised by EnSig, Seeds for Tomorrow and the Sodus Point Fire Department to complete shipment of a forty foot container of life-saving medical supplies valued at \$170K!



Dr. Jennings and the Conscience International Team delivered medical supplies to Burundi in January. Over the next 18 months, they will ship and deliver medical aid to desperate hospitals in Iraq and Sudan. Next up- the shipment to Iraq!

