

Helping hands

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 16 June 2011 13:32 -



Couple organizes clothing drive for tornado victims.

Kassy Wilson would rather face torture than have a garage

sale.

But that's how a project started that ended up helping thousands of tornado victims in Joplin, MO.

It ended with the daddy-of-all garage sales stuffed into cardboard boxes and trash bags and crammed into a 20-foot trailer bound for Joplin, MO.

How Kassy's husband, Craig Wilson, tells the story is that because of her aversion to having a garage sale, he intended to take unnecessary clothing, bedding and towels to the Goodwill store in North Platte.

Then the couple heard about the people of Joplin whose property, businesses and families were devastated after a twister ripped through their city on May 22.



"We decided to do a clothing drive and ship it all to Joplin by United Parcel Service," Craig explained.

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Kassy, a receptionist at Horizon Ag, contacted The Times newspaper which donated advertising and a news story and the next day the business was bombarded with donations.

The advertisement was also picked up and broadcast on KRVN radio which brought in even more items.

“They foyer here at work was filled,” Kassy said.

Because Craig is between jobs, he sorted the donations into categories for men, women and children.

Last Thursday morning, he’d put about 50 hours into the project with more left to do.

After checking into organizations that help disaster victims, the Wilsons found the Salvation Army in Joplin that would accept the donation from Gothenburg.

“They said they’d take everything they could get,” Craig said, noting that they were also told that the items needed to be in good shape. “Only about 5% of what we received, we couldn’t use.”

The Wilsons had to abort their plan to ship clothing, towels and bedding because of the outpouring of items received.

Kassy said the rent-free donation of a 16-foot trailer turned into a 20-foot trailer as contributions continued to mount.

Last Thursday, Craig speculated that about 1,800 families in Gothenburg and the surrounding

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area donated about 10-12 items per family.

However the Wilsons left Gothenburg with nearly 25,000 items that weighed 16,000 pounds.

With such a wonderful response to their request for donations, Kassy said they drained available boxes from businesses in town to store the times and had to collect more in North Platte.

Since he and Kassy experienced some medical issues during the past year, Craig said the experience opened their eyes to “realizing there are others out there who also need help.”

“We also thought about how that tornado could have hit us,” Kassy said.

In addition, she said the couple learned there’s a need for non-perishable food items in Joplin.

“Maybe someone else can step up to help with that,” she said.

The Wilsons said they were amazed by the generosity of people who donated clothing, not only from Gothenburg but from as far away as Callaway and Holdrege.

Kassy said she’d spearhead another drive if the need arose because this one has been so gratifying.

Craig said he felt satisfied because the items would be given to people who needed it.

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