

Crutches 4 Africa – A Combined Rotary Activity

It was a sunny & warm Fall Saturday morning (October 6th) when 31 volunteers (Rotarians, spouses, friends and children) were all headed to Biddeford, Maine to help load donated crutches and mobility devises onto a container headed to the Republic of Ghana, West Africa.

It was “Rotary At Work” at its finest as volunteer Rotarians from 9 different Rotary Clubs within District 7780 collectively matching pairs of crutches, sorting, packaging, packing and stuffing them into a 10ft x 10ft x 40ft shipping container.

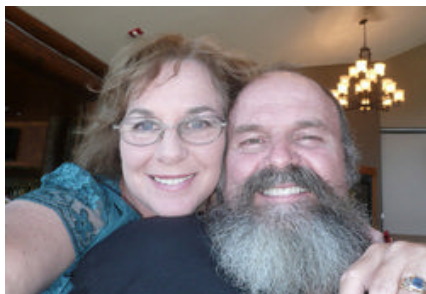


The represented Rotary Clubs were: **Maine:** So. Portland/Cape Elizabeth, Sebago, Yarmouth, Saco Bay Sunset, Saco Bay, Kittery

New Hampshire: Hampton, Portsmouth, Westbrook/Gorham

During the October 6th packaging & loading, there were a total of 3236 devices consisting of: 1456 pairs of crutches, 58 wheelchairs, 686 canes, 60 rollators, 103 braces, 1 prosthetic leg, 197 boots, 8 shoes, 5 back boards, 1 bicycle trailer, & 661 walkers.

According to Portsmouth Rotary Past President Bill Hurley, “This is the kind of project you bring your significant other, brother, sister or mature children too for a day out helping people (who) we will never meet but will be grateful to you for making their lives just a little bit easier. “



Crutches 4 Africa is the brainchild of David Talbot, a Polio survivor. Having survived the initial disease over 60 years ago, David went from wheelchair to braces on both legs with crutches, then just braces and on to just ugly shoes. Several surgeries during his growing years helped to stabilize his polio-affected left leg from injuries and controlled his growth so as to minimize his limp while walking and running.

Talbot recovered well enough that he was very active in sports through middle school, high school and college. Talbot spent a year traveling in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, a lot of the miles on a bicycle. Then in 2005, while working with a non-profit organization assisting widows and orphans, David saw a woman who's right leg was twisted up behind her back, her foot touching her shoulder. She was using a freshly-torn branch from a tree as a crutch. "That opened my eyes to see the people on the ground, trying to move about with great difficulty, in their environment" said Talbot. From there, inspiration took over and a soon rudimentary plan to collect surplus and no longer needed crutches here in the US, ship them to Africa, and distribute them there to people in desperate need, was born.

According to Talbot, "The missions of Crutches 4 Africa is to collect used and surplus mobility devices, ship them to developing countries, and distribute them "free" to people with physical challenges regardless of their race, gender, tribe, age, or religion."

David lives with his wife Candice just west of Denver near Evergreen. He is a member of the Rotary Club of Mountain Foothills in District 5450

While the mobility devices are all donated, there is a huge cost to ship these off to West Africa. In this case, \$6,000.00 was donated by the Portsmouth Rotary Club's William Cash Fund to pay for the ocean container.



For additional information on how YOU can donate unused mobility devices or make a financial contribution to this worthy cause, please click onto <http://www.crutches4africa.org/collection-sites.html>

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