

Rotary brings relief to disaster locations worldwide

By Kathryn Reed

No home. No running water. Nowhere to sleep. Nothing to cook with. No clothes.

That's often the end result for people in disasters. They are left with nothing. ShelterBox has been providing interim help around the world since 2000. It's a stopgap program.



Ryder Evans
talks about
what is in a
ShelterBox.

Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Boxes weighing about 100 pounds are flown into whatever area needs it. Today volunteers are in five countries, though only limited in Pakistan because of safety issues.

"Part of our mission statement is to bring dignity to people," explained Ryder Evans. As a member of the Tahoe-Douglas Rotary, he has become a volunteer for ShelterBox.

ShelterBox was launched by Rotary in England and has since spread to its chapters around the world.

"ShelterBox is the only international aid organization that

provides shelter and life-saving equipment for survival in an easily transportable box," according to literature provided by Evans when he spoke to Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra last week.

In August, Evans was deployed to Brazil to help with the flooding that displaced more than 100,000 people. Logistics of getting the aid to the people is often the most cumbersome part of the process. Customs can be an issue.

The mud and water in Brazil were in such abundance that tents would not have been able to be erected. This meant coordinating heavy equipment to bring in graders and then loads of gravel to provide a stable surface.

Evans explained that response teams have a tremendous amount of latitude to do what is necessary to bring help to the people on the ground. With resources being different in each country and the nature of each disaster unique to itself, flexibility is the key.

With much of the work being done in Third World countries, the tents can be an improvement over what the refugees had before the disaster.

The tents aren't your ordinary family camping tents. They can sleep six to 10 people, are spacious, and allow people to standup and move around.

Most of the boxes contain the same basic items – the tent, blankets, ground sheets, stove, cooking utensils, tools, water purification equipment, ponchos, mosquito nets and children's activity pack. Depending on the location, items can be substituted – for instance, some places may need more blankets, others might not be able to use propane to cook with.

Boxes cost about \$1,000.

Although ShelterBox is a Rotary project, others may volunteer to be on a response team. Usually two to four people comprise a team.

More information is on the website or call (941) 907.6036.