

## Clothing drive to collect bras for Haiti finds support



Shanahan's Pub & Grill bartenders Andie Lovelady, left, and Misty Winders collect bras for the Gift of Lift fundraiser while working at the bar Wednesday night. The clothing drive, spearheaded by local plastic surgeon Dr. Allen Gabriel, benefits women in Haiti.

By **Marissa Harshman**, Columbian Health Reporter  
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Gift of Lift donations can be dropped off at the following locations:

- Southwest Medical Group Plastic Surgery office, 505 N.E. 87th Ave., Suite 250, Building A, during business hours. 360-514-1010.
- Southwest Medical Group Plastic Surgery office, 505 N.E. 87th Ave., Suite 250, Building A, during business hours. 360-514-1010.
- Shanahan's Pub & Grill, 209 W. McLoughlin Blvd. Wednesday evenings. New bras only. 360-735-1440.
- Garside Florist, 6610 E. Mill Plain Blvd., during business hours. 360-694-3331.

For more information, visit: <http://www.thegiftoflift.org>

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A unique clothing drive launched by a local plastic surgeon has garnered an unexpected amount of support from the community.

Bartenders at a downtown pub, a floral shop owner and dozens of the surgeon's patients have joined forces to help give women in Haiti a lift.

Or, more precisely, the Gift of Lift.

The Southwest Medical Group Plastic Surgery office unveiled last month its Gift of Lift campaign to collect new or lightly used bras for women in the third-world country.

The fundraiser is already shaping up to be a huge success. In four weeks, the community has rallied behind Dr. Allen Gabriel to collect more than 750 polka dot, zebra print and brightly colored bras.

"It definitely shocked us all," said Shelby Gialich, a medical assistant and plastic surgery clinic supervisor.

As word spread about the campaign, residents and business owners throughout the county lined up to help.

Andie Lovelady, a bartender at Shanahan's Pub & Grill in downtown Vancouver, was among the first to reach out to Gabriel.

"When I thought about what it would be like as a woman not to be able to afford to own a bra, or be able to provide one for a daughter, it broke my heart," Lovelady said.

Every Wednesday, Lovelady and her co-worker Misty Winders place a clear tub full of bras on the bar while they work. Throughout the evening, customers drop their donations into the bin. In three weeks, the pair has collected about 150 bras.

"It's such an easy thing that we can all give," Lovelady said.

In exchange for a new bra, the donor is entered into a raffle for a \$100 gift card to Victoria's Secret, purchased by Lovelady and Winders. The drawing will be held Dec. 14.

Men and women, young and old, have dropped off donations at Shanahan's. Some only have \$10 or \$15 to spare, but they use it to purchase a new undergarment for the Gift of Lift, Lovelady said.

"That customer base is just very generous and always want to help," she said. "It's pretty cool."

The owners of a Vancouver floral shop have also joined the campaign.

Kurt and Brenda Snyder own Garside Florist on East Mill Plain Boulevard. One of their employees was diagnosed with breast cancer a few years ago and underwent reconstructive surgery performed by Gabriel. When the Snyders learned of the Gift of Lift, they were eager to help in honor of their employee, Tammy Watson.

"I was just really inspired," Brenda Snyder said.

So Snyder set up a donation bin inside the floral shop and started soliciting bras on the sign outside of the business. Anyone who drops off a bra at Garside Florist through Dec. 16 will be entered in a drawing to win one dozen pink long-stem roses.

### Raising the bar

The shop just launched the raffle last week and has already collected a few donations. The efforts of the two businesses, coupled with the patients and community members who dropped off donations at the medical clinic, have brought the total number of bras to more than 750.

Initially, the medical office set its goal at 500 bras by Jan. 1. In response to the outpouring of support, the staff has raised the bar. The new goal: 1,000 bras.

The success of the event has also prompted the office to continue the drive beyond the new year. In addition, the office plans to partner with organizations and volunteers in order to spread the support to other countries besides just Haiti, Gialich said.

"I think it's one of those things we take for granted," she said. "And once it's brought to our attention, we want to pay it forward."

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