

Support grows for bra collection effort

Gift of Lift campaign will now also benefit local women in shelters



Shanahans Pub bartender Misty Winders has helped collect bras in an effort -- spearheaded by local plastic surgeon Dr. Allen Gabriel's office -- to collect the undergarments for women in Haiti. The campaign is expanding to include local women.

By **Marissa Harshman**, Columbian Health Reporter
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What started as a clothing drive to collect brassieres for women in Haiti has morphed into a community-wide effort benefitting women in Clark County and abroad.

Vancouver plastic surgeon Allen Gabriel and the Southwest Medical Group Plastic Surgery office launched the Gift of Lift campaign in November. The goal was to collect 500 new or lightly used bras.

Local businesses and community members latched on to the effort and held their own collection drives to contribute to Gabriel's cause. Within one month, he had collected more than 750 polka dot, zebra print and brightly colored bras.

So, he upped the goal to 1,000. As the bra pile grew and surpassed 1,000, Gabriel bumped the goal up to 2,000.

By the time Gabriel left for Haiti earlier this month, the community had donated more than 2,000 bras. And the donations keep coming in.

"We had no idea," Gabriel said. "We never expected this."

So Gabriel's office handed the campaign off to his nonprofit advocacy group, Pink Lemonade Project, which also offers educational retreats for women diagnosed with breast cancer. The nonprofit formed a committee tasked with expanding the campaign beyond Haiti.

The new objective of the campaign is to provide bras to local women through homeless shelters and clothes closets.

To get the ball rolling, Denise Chicks, chair of the committee and a teacher in Hockinson, enlisted the help of some of her students and other local high-

schoolers. The teens have been charged with inspecting, laundering and packaging all of the bras. They prepared 500 for Gabriel's mission trip to Haiti.

Each packaged bra includes a card reminding women to perform monthly breast exams and schedule regular mammograms. The card also includes information about where uninsured women can receive mammograms.

The committee also enlisted the help of Waste Connections, which earlier this year developed pink recycle bins as a fundraiser for the Pink Lemonade Project. The company produced a handful of mini recycle bins with the words "bra collection" etched in white lettering.

The bins will be distributed to various businesses serving as collection sites. Once the sites have been determined, they'll be listed on [the group's website](#).

In the meantime, bra donations can be dropped off at the Southwest Medical Group Plastic Surgery office, 505 N.E. 87th Ave. Suite 250, in Vancouver.

The nonprofit is also reaching out to various shelters and women's organizations and is accepting requests from groups that would like to provide women with bras. Requests can be submitted on the website.

Chicks hopes the gift of bras will help women in shelters feel more confident, especially as some of them search for jobs.

"Lots of people do clothes drives, but rarely in those do people think of the undergarments," Chicks said. "For a woman, even for her health, to have a good bra and that support is important."

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