

STYLE

'Gift of Lift' helps women in need

When you walk into the office of plastic surgeon Allen Gabriel, one of the first things you notice is a big pink plastic recycling bin. But instead of paper it's filled with bras.

Author: KGW Staff
Published: 2:19 PM PDT June 8, 2012
Updated: 2:19 PM PDT June 8, 2012

When you walk into the office of plastic surgeon Allen Gabriel, one of the first things you notice is a big pink plastic recycling bin. But instead of paper it's filled with bras. Some are basic, others make more of a fashion statement but all offer women the same thing -- support. Only these bras offer a little more support than most.

They are all donated as part of the Gift of Lift campaign. It's an idea that started with Dr. Gabriel's staff as a way to help women in Haiti. Dr. Gabriel was heading back to Haiti on his fourth volunteer trip to perform reconstructive surgery and knew how much the women there needed undergarments. When his patients heard about the pink bins they couldn't wait to help.

We set a goal of 200. We reached that in a week, explained Dr. Gabriel. We set a goal of 500 and the next thing you know we had over 2,000 bras.

Nurse Rachel Sobota helped Dr. Gabriel deliver those bras to Haiti in May. She said the response was overwhelming. It's not like they can just go to a department store like we can and purchase a bra, they have nothing. Sobota added, They were dancing and holding them up. They were really, really excited.

But even after the trip, the bras just keep coming. So now the program is not only helping women around the world, but right here in our own backyard. Vancouver area students have stepped in to sort, package and label the bras. Included with each bra is a card offering advice about self breast exams and where to get a mammogram.

Then volunteers deliver hundreds of them to local women's shelters. It can be an emotional experience for everyone involved. Volunteer Stephanie Swindell put it this way. Sometimes you don't know how fortunate you are until you go and help others. It's just a humbling experience.

It's a simple program that is offering a lift to the women who get them and the women who give them.

You can find out more at www.thegiftoflift.org

