

Kentucky Relief Effort

On December 19th, 2021, more than 30 tornadoes had been reported in at least six states,” and one massive tornado traveled more than 200 miles across multiple states, causing devastation in its path. The tornado threw debris 30,000 feet in the air, making it one of the most “intense” tornado on record.

As this news got out, Diane Ives heard of the tragedy and started thinking of what could be done. Not knowing anyone in Kentucky, she turned to District 6330 Governor-Elect Mike Chaffee for any efforts he may have heard about. She was directed to a video produced by Rotary District 6710 Governor Gail Story, where she spoke of the devastation and how District 6710 was going to help in the effort. Upon hearing this, Diane contacted DG Gail, and also D-6710 Assistant Governor Kaytlin Flowers to let them know help was coming.

It was decided Diane and Jim Ives would collect money for the relief effort as well as take a load of relief items to Kentucky on December 22nd. So, on December 15th, the word was spread to several Rotary Clubs in Districts 6330 and 6400, and friends in the St Clair and Troy communities. 4 donation collection sites were established at the Ives house and Coughlin Jewelers in St Clair, Rose Pest Solutions in Troy, and ReMax Realty in Dearborn. Items collected were clothing, toiletries, bedding, food, water, and children’s toys.

There was excitement in the community about being able to do some small part in easing the pain of the devastation. Diane contacted the St Clair Ecumenical Food Pantry, and was able to secure 1,200 lbs of food and personal items. In addition, Neiman’s Family market provided 2,200 lbs of bottled water, and 6 cases of toilet paper.

All week long, the Ives garage started to fill, and on Tuesday, December 21st, there was a steady stream of items being left for the delivery. Rose Pest Solutions in St. Clair donated a pick-up truck, a 14-foot trailer to haul the items, and fuel for the trip. On the 21st, 9 volunteers showed up at the Ives to load the trailer. In an hour and a half, the trailer was loaded, and filled front to back, side to side, and floor to ceiling.

With a full truck and trailer, the Ives left their home on the 22nd with the items from the 4 collection points, and proceeded on to Elizabethtown, KY. After a 9 ½ hour trip and an overnight stay, the items were delivered to the multiple storage units District 6710 had secured for relief items. 13 volunteers were there to assist with the unload of the trailer and truck. The unload took 1 ¼ hour, and it was a bit overwhelming as they tried to sort through items of clothes, toiletries, food, and toys. These are amazing Rotarians taking on a herculean task.

Elizabethtown was chosen as it was relatively close to the need, and their buildings were still standing, allowing opportunity to store the donated items. It was also explained to us that FEMA was not assisting all areas affected by the tornado, and District 6710 was focusing primarily on the areas not receiving FEMA assistance.

The Rotarians shared several stories saying that the tornado was erratic, and areas you thought would have been destroyed were saved by a sudden shift in direction. Stories of brick buildings disappearing, A Grandmother protecting her grandchildren with pillows and blankets in a bathtub, only to be killed, but the grandchildren surviving. The story of a couple together in a hallway. After the tornado, he was found elsewhere dead, and she survived. Families who have insurance to cover hotel expenses until February, but then what? The efforts of these Rotarians was selfless, and when that thought was expressed, one Rotarian said “We need to do this as we still have our homes”. These volunteers were thrust into this effort, and while a little overwhelmed, they really did an outstanding job.

This was a terrible tragedy, but was made better by the loving and caring hearts of those who gave generously to this relief effort. **One additional way to help is through financial donations to the Rotary District 6710 Relief Fund.** Donations made to this fund will be matched by The Chuck and Dee Howey Family Foundation up to December 31st. **Please send your check made out to the Rotary District 6710 Relief Fund to Diane Ives, 962 N Riverside Ave., St Clair, MI 48079.** Diane will forward the payments and process them for potential matching funds.



Loading of trailer in St Clair



Getting to final bags in trailer



Crew done loading 84 ea.—24ea. bottle cases of 17 oz. bottles of water. At Neiman's



Off to Kentucky



13 Rotarians and almost
Rotarians from Rotary D-
6710 in Kentucky unload
the truck and trailer



14 Ft. Trailer before unloading



Unloading 84 ea.—24ea. bottle cases of 17 oz.
bottles of water.



Hard at work unloading