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Top Stories

To Georgia from Judsonia, with love

By Pat Hambrick
Wednesday, January 19, 2005 11:57 PM CST

Contributing writer

The Daily Citizen

White County is on the map as coordinator for humanitarian assistance to areas around the world.

John McCullough of Counterpart International was sent to Judsonia from Washington, D.C. this week to survey the items collected by John Kachelman, Jr., minister of Judsonia Church of Christ - with the help of his congregation and others - and to determine the number of 40-foot containers they would need to ship their items to the Republic of Georgia, a part of the former USSR.

Kachelman said Counterpart International is a private contractor for the State Department, funded through the United States budget, and they operate on behalf of the State Department to oversee shipments of humanitarian aid around the globe.

McCullough, a wiry man with a ready smile who goes by the nickname "Festus," said, "Counterpart is the largest non-profit in the United States that no one knows about. We don't have an advertising budget."

AROUND THE GLOBE

Counterpart International provides the transportation and costs to get aid to the people "on



Minister John Kachelman Jr. of the Judsonia Church of Christ checks the voltage for the power supply Wednesday of an incubator donated to help the people of the Georgia Republic. A State Department representative was in White County Wednesday to determine how many 40-foot containers would be required to ship to relief aid. Answer: four.

Did you make any New Year's resolutions this year?

Yes, I make them every year, and I'm usually pretty good at keeping them.

Yes, I make them every year, but I'm not very good at keeping them.

Yes, this is my first year to make resolutions.

Yes (other)

No, I don't make resolutions because I can't keep them.

No, I don't make resolutions because I don't believe in that sort of thing.

No, I didn't make any resolutions because I couldn't think of anything to resolve to do.

No (other)

the other end," and they oversee shipments to over 160 countries around the world.

"We also make sure the people receiving the shipments know how to use the supplies. When you do foreign aid for our government, someone has to sign for the shipment and do a two year follow-up," McCullough said.

McCullough determined that it would take four 40-foot containers to ship the current items in storage.

The first two containers will arrive in White County Feb. 4, to be loaded, and the first of these shipments will go to orphanages and children's hospitals in the Republic of Georgia. The first load will be primarily furniture.

The second two containers will arrive the following weekend, and each shipment has to be ready to be picked up by the following Monday.

Two semi-trailers of old dorm furniture donated by Harding University can be loaded directly into the cartons, along with whatever else will fit into the cartons.

'COME OUT AND HELP'

"Tell the men's clubs and student groups and everyone else to come out and help us get this shipment ready to go," said Harold Bridges, a member of the Judsonia congregation that has worked closely with Kachelman on other shipments.

Kachelman explained that the storage building retains moisture and some of the beds they have in storage have rust spots. Those need cleaning with a wire brush and then spray-painted. Many items, including furniture and medical equipment, need "wiping down" after weeks to months of storage.

"We want this stuff to look good," Kachelman said. "Lots of beds came out of nursing homes and were rusty when we got them."

McCullough said that Counterpart International has several responsibilities.

"We have to look at a load and make sure it's going to be what the country's Minister of Health will accept. Our primary responsibility is to be sure that the load gets through customs on the other end. We also have to do a final inventory. If we ship too much, they can say that it's contraband and confiscate the load. We don't want that to happen. Another purpose of a final inventory is to prevent theft on the other end."

State Department regulations have to be followed exactly.

"The State Department wants at least \$55,000 value in each container," McCullough explained. However, if the shipment is all going to one place, each container doesn't have to be loaded with that exact dollar value.

For example, since this shipment will all go to the Republic of Georgia, the four containers only need to be loaded so that the total value is \$220,000.

There are two programs with different requirements, McCullough explained.

This shipment will go out under CHAP (Counterparts Humanitarian Assistance Program). "We work through diplomatic channels to determine the requirements."

Another that Kachelman has worked with is Operation Provide Hope.

McCullough and Kachelman agreed that the primary reasons the Republic of Georgia and other places in the former USSR have so many orphans is because of the civil unrest and the number of refugees in these areas.

SAME SITUATIONS

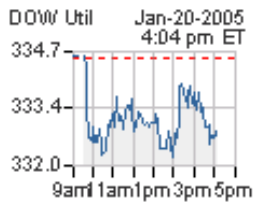
Kachelman has made many trips to the Ukraine and said that while he doesn't know first-

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Market Watch



Index	Last Trade	Change
NASDAQ	2045.88	-27.71 ↓
DOW	10471.47	-68.50 ↓
AMEX	1405.76	-9.66 ↓
Russ 2000	612.34	-5.57 ↓
SP 500	1175.41	-9.22 ↓
NYSE	7010.47	-48.80 ↓
DOW Util	332.81	-1.77 ↓

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hand why there are so many orphans in the Republic of Georgia, he assumes many of the same situations exist.

Poverty is another factor.

"In the Ukraine, some mothers just leave their babies in the hospital after delivery. They just don't have the money to care for the infant. It's kind of like the stories here of someone leaving a child in a basket on a doorstep. They hope someone will care for it."

The orphanages are grossly underfunded, and most orphans are not immunized.

"They use the same syringe 20 times on different people. They don't have the money for immunizations," he said.

Bridges said that it's hard for Americans to understand that they "just flat don't have it (money)."

Kachelman said that in the Ukraine "children born with Down's syndrome and other genetic problems are just pushed off into an orphanage in the middle of nowhere. They aren't helped like they are here."

They never learn to become self-sufficient or the best that they can be.

"Funding for these programs (shipments of humanitarian aid) is being drastically cut. People need to contact their senators to make sure these programs are funded," Kachelman said.

McCullough said the programs had experienced nearly 25 percent reductions in each of the last three years. "We've lost almost 70 percent of our funding in the last three or four years."

Kachelman said, "Six years ago I had no idea this is what my tax dollars were going for. I'm thrilled! I want to see it increase."

Bridges said, "Americans are notorious for buying things and then throwing them away."

Transportation costs to get the items to countries in need is the issue. Most of the items being shipped are donated.

According to McCullough, when we see dollar amounts that the United States is shipping in foreign aid, "The government writes those off as acquisition cost. A lot of the medical supplies we ship to foreign countries would go to a landfill otherwise."

Items such as the furniture donated by Harding University and medical equipment donated by hospitals around the state and nation are also reported in terms of acquisition costs.

He said that only about \$7,000 out of every \$100,000 is "real money," and that most of that is in transportation costs.

HARDING'S HELP

Kachelman works mainly with institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes and places like Harding University to get the items he needs to help suffering and needy people in other countries. Wal-Mart is another corporate donor.

However, individuals can help greatly by volunteering to help get shipments ready to go, he said.

The women of his congregation have handled over 14,000 pounds of donated sheets from institutions over the past year or so. They have had to clean, repair and fold them. They would appreciate help.

Bridges said they need more "grunt men" to help load the containers, and Kachelman again mentioned the need to wipe down and clean all the items before they are packed into

cartons.

Financial contributions can also be made to Judsonia Church of Christ, with the notation "relief aid."

He keeps a separate account for those donations and uses that for such things as medicines.

"It's often cheaper to buy medicines within the country, and some countries think that if we bring in medicines from the U.S. we are trying to poison them," Kachelman said. "Other countries won't allow shipments of medications. We can often get a year's supply of medicine (for an orphanage) for \$1000."

"Worm medications are a great need in many of these countries, as well as in the tsunami areas," McCullough added.

McCullough said that one of their relief aid partners, Skylink, gave \$30,000 to tsunami relief victims in Sri Lanka and Counterpart was able to turn that into 2.4 million dollars of medical supplies.

ENDLESS HOURS

Kachelman expressed his gratitude to corporate and medical donors, as well as others in White County.

"Doug Merritt and Ed Higginbotham have been very helpful in providing storage space."

He also expressed appreciation to Phillip Snodgrass, an E.R. physician/surgeon from Newport.

"He's finding medical supplies everywhere. He called one day and said, 'They are throwing away chairs up here. They are too good to be tossed. Come get them.'"

His congregation has put in endless hours over the past year, as well.

They continue to need large institutional donations of items such as used sheets, medical supplies, hospital equipment, and furniture.

McCullough, who travels the nation, apparently did some Internet research when being told he was coming to Judsonia, Ark.

He asked, "Do you know which state leads the nation in charitable contributions?"

Arkansas, of course.

Anyone wishing to offer physical or financial help to get the shipment ready for next weekend may contact Kachelman on his cell phone: (901) 626-4538.



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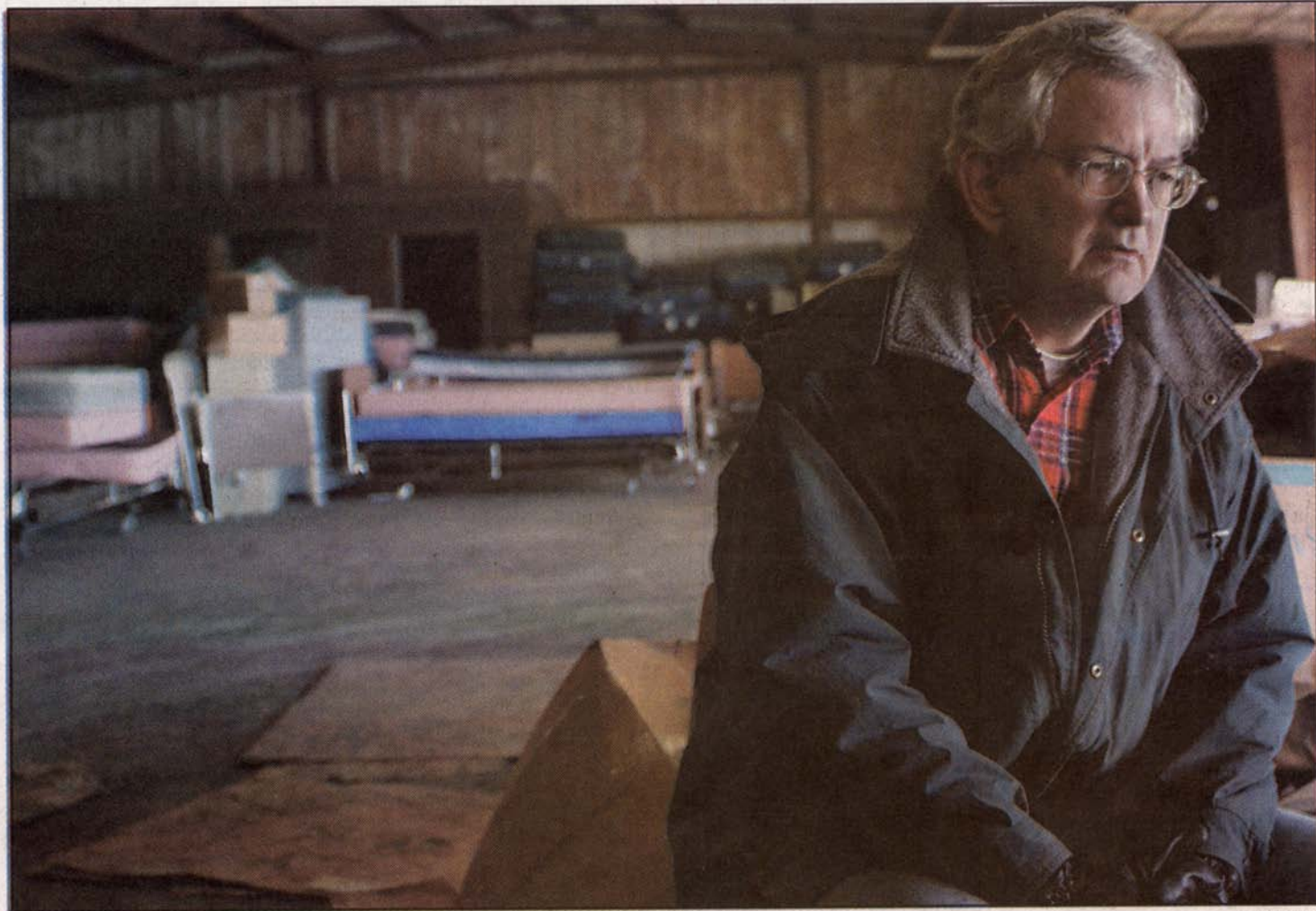
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United States State Department employee James McCullough, right, points out some donated inventory Wednesday to Minister John Kachelman Jr., center, and volunteer Harold Bridges, left, from the Judsonia Church of Christ on Wednesday.



Kachelman packs a compressor pump Wednesday for medical equipment donated to go to the Republic of Georgia.



Greg Benenati

John Kachelman Jr. takes a rest Wednesday from inventory of the stockpile of medical equipment and other goods collected in an undisclosed warehouse in White County. Authorities are trying to keep the location quiet to prevent robbery..