

Helping Haiti families one bucket at a time—March 15 Deadline

By Barbara Denman
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University of North Florida student Joseph Lentz has been to Haiti five times, leading Bible schools, playing games with children and doling out peanut butter sandwiches and bags of rice.

"All day long, I was either scooping up children or scooping up rice," he said, a broad smile crossing his face.

As he filled a "Bucket of Hope" with rice, beans, flour and other food items, Lentz said he could picture the faces of the family that would receive his packed bucket and believes having served in Haiti made a difference in his efforts.

"You know where this will be going and can see their responses on their faces. I know how excited they will be to receive all this food. It's so much more than we ever were able to give them."

Lentz, along with the college and young married classes at Fruit Cove Baptist Church in Jacksonville donated \$1,500 toward purchasing food to fill up 48 "Buckets of Hope," a Southern Baptist Convention-wide effort to help hungry Haitian families.

In all, the church will fill 600 buckets destined for Port-Au-Prince for distribution by Baptist churches in Haiti to their earthquake ravaged communities.

From Pensacola to Key West and parts in between, "Buckets of Hope" have received overwhelming groundswell support from Florida Baptists.

After watching a video clip about Haiti, 24 first-through-sixth graders at First Baptist Church in Navarre packed 25 buckets with the guidance of Tracy Sheedy. The project director said the children prayed over each bucket, asking God's blessing on the recipient that they will come to know Christ as their savior.

Women participating in Dundee Baptist Church's "Ladies Night Out," packed 25 "Buckets of Hope."

Senior adults at Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola assembled 1,000 buckets, even after the church sent a large offering for the work in Haiti, said Charlotte Gafford, executive assistant to the minister of missions. Church members donated money to subsidize cost for the supplies.

Fifth Street Baptist Church in Key West embraced the hands-on project as a teaching moment, said Church Missions Director Suzette Gibson. "Children and youth who pack these buckets will get an idea of the real needs in Haiti and how hungry they are. There is no candy here, its just basic items, but ones which will make each family truly happy. That will make a difference in the lives of our children."

SBC organizers of the "Buckets of Hope" initiative for Haiti relief estimate that 150,000 food buckets will be shipped to Port-au-Prince.

Several Baptist state conventions announced a goal for the number of buckets their state's church members planned to contribute including Kentucky with 10,000 buckets; Tennessee with 7,000 buckets; the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia with 6,000 buckets; Louisiana,

Georgia and South Carolina with 5,000 buckets each; Arkansas with 4,000; and New Mexico with 2,100.

Retail stores also became involved in the process, including some local WalMarts which stacked the buckets and items together in one location in the store to help shoppers in their purchases.

After the buckets were dropped off at a collection site in an association, disaster relief volunteers trucked them to a Hialeah warehouse for shipping. Before leaving Florida each bucket was labeled with the gospel presentation in French Creole.