

Giving Shelter

By Tom Waring

Times Staff Writer

Jim Ryal addresses the Frankford-Northeast Philadelphia Rotary Club on November 30. Ryal represents ShelterBox, an organization that donates boxes with tents, sleeping bags and pillows to people in Haiti.

Jim Ryal explained that the mandates for the ShelterBox international disaster relief charity are to work quickly and simply.

Ryal, the Pennsylvania representative for ShelterBox USA, recalled the response after an earthquake ravaged Haiti on January 12.

“The decision to deploy to Haiti was made twelve minutes after the earthquake struck,” he said.

Ryal was the guest speaker last week at the weekly Frankford-Northeast Philadelphia Rotary Club meeting.



JENNY SWIGODA / TIMES PHOTO
Frankford-Northeast Philadelphia Rotary Club president Thomas Finnegan shakes the hand of Jim Ryal after handing him a check for \$1,000 to go to the ShelterBox organization from the Rotary.

Afterward, club president Tom Finnegan presented him with a \$1,000 check for the charity.

ShelterBox originated in England in 2000 as a program developed by a Rotary club to mark the millennium. Its mission is to provide humanitarian aid worldwide in the form of shelter, warmth and comfort for people displaced by natural and other disasters.

Frankford-Northeast Philadelphia Rotary Club president Thomas Finnegan shakes the hand of Jim Ryal after handing him a check for \$1,000 to go to the ShelterBox organization from the Rotary.

The charity has provided aid to survivors of 140 disasters in more than 70 countries. Its green box has been said to stand out as a symbol of hope in a landscape of disarray.

Besides the Florida-based office, there are affiliates in Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the

Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland.

ShelterBox instantly responds to earthquakes, volcano eruptions, floods, hurricanes, cyclones, tsunamis and conflict. Its boxes, assembled in England, provide shelter for an extended family of up to 10. In the last decade, a total of 96,537 boxes have been distributed.

The boxes include water purification supplies, thermal blankets, insulated ground sheets, a multifuel stove, cooking utensils, tools, waterproof ponchos, a children’s activity pack and mosquito nets. The tents are strong enough to withstand 60-knot winds. The total weight is 110 pounds, and the value is \$1,000.

“We want a family of ten to be able to sustain themselves for six months,” said Ryal, a Realtor and member of a Haverford Township-based Rotary.

The non-profit group does not put a price on the dignity restored for families who have lost everything.

The year 2010 has been a busy one. In all, 38,329 boxes have been delivered around the globe.

Some 27,217 boxes have been sent to Haiti. The charity has also helped victims of the torrential rains in Columbia, flooding in Mexico and Pakistan and a tsunami in Indonesia.



JENNY SWIGODA / TIMES PHOTO

Jim Ryal addresses the Frankford-Northeast Philadelphia Rotary Club on Nov. 30.

Ryal represents Shelter Box, an organization that donates boxes with tents, sleeping bags and pillows to people in Haiti.

Reports out of Afghanistan have the tents lasting more than two years for some families.

“It’s theirs to keep,” Ryal said.

Before going to work, volunteers assess the situation on the ground and in the air.

In general, ShelterBox does not provide aid in the United States. That’s because the American government has the ability to airlift people out of danger, for instance during Hurricane Katrina.

“ShelterBox’s capabilities are more effective in parts of the world that are less developed,” Ryal said.

For more information, go to www.ShelterBoxUSA.org

In other news from the November 30th meeting:

■ The club will hold two more meetings this year, on December 14 and 21, from 12:15 to 1:30 p.m., at Cannstatter’s, at 9130 Academy Road.

The Archbishop Ryan choir will perform Christmas carols on December 21.

Some of the speakers scheduled to appear in 2011 include John Gazzola, the new CEO of the Independence Seaport Museum, and Dr. George Danielewski, who will discuss chelation therapy, which is an in-office treatment technique using intravenous solution to cleanse the body of heavy metals and cholesterol.

The public is invited to the luncheon meetings.

■ The club’s foundation is trying to reach its yearly goal of raising \$3,200. Checks can be made payable to Frankford-Northeast Philadelphia Rotary Club and sent c/o TD Bank, 3930 Woodhaven Road, Philadelphia, PA 19154.

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