Afghan assistance

Idaho Red Cross volunteer Jim Findley worked with service members to load a truck with much-needed supplies for Afghan evacuees.

Two lend a hand to evacuees who came to U.S. with little

Idaho Red Cross volunteer Cora Lee Findley never dreamed the gift of a single banana could leave such a lasting impression but that’s what happened on a recent deployment near Chaparral, N.M., to help Afghan evacuees.

In September, Cora Lee and her husband Jim spent two weeks at the Doña Ana Range Complex, a dusty, windy military training site not far from Fort Bliss. There a village of 100 tents housed about 10,000 Afghans who had evacuated from their country during the U.S. military withdrawal.

At the request of the Department of Defense, the American Red Cross helped provide temporary care for evacuees sheltered at military sites across the country. Many of the refugees are U.S. citizens or supported U.S. troops in Afghanistan and left their homes with little more than the clothes on their backs.

A lot of these people had been more than two weeks in the clothes they arrived in, so they were pretty desperate,” Jim said.

Cora Lee supervised the camp’s baby center, which distributed items like diapers, wipes and formula, and also oversaw the shoe resource center. Jim spent much of his time traveling through the camp via truck distributing clothing.

The majority of those items had been donated, and supply often could not keep up with demand.

People began lining up at the shoe resource center at 4 in the morning, even though it didn’t open until 9. Inside, the shoes were sorted in boxes by size, sometimes with only 20 pairs of the most popular sizes available.

“In the first hour the shoes would all go and then we would have to close,” Cora Lee said.

The refugees became so desperate they began to rush the door, and extra military personnel were brought in to control the crowds.

“This is for a pair of used shoes,” Cora Lee said. “This is how desperate these people are for something.”

As word got out about the tremendous need, more donations began to roll in. Volunteers called home asking their local churches

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Still donating, six decades later

Rich Paul was at boot camp at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio in the early 1960s when an instructor came in with an announcement. There was a girl at the military hospital who had cancer, and they needed blood donors.

“He said, ‘We’ll give you the rest of the day off if you give blood now. So I raised my hand right away,’ Rich said. “It sounded like a good deal to me.”

Six decades and 214 donations later, Rich is still raising his hand as a loyal Red Cross blood donor.

“I feel like I’m a good percentage of them say ‘Hi, Rich, I haven’t seen you in a couple months.’”

Rich’s daughter, Dawn Charron, said her dad certainly draws a crowd.

“He gets plenty of hugs and kisses on a give-blood day,” she said. “I’ll let him tell you about that.”

Sherry Sidell is the blood program leader in Lincoln and helps organize the community drives. She said Rich is always lending his time to others, whether it’s giving blood, climbing a ladder to help paint a house or using his incredible carpentry skills.

“He’s a very amazing man and good

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Volunteer: We help volunteers find the full listing, visit www.redcross.org/volunteer and search “volunteer”. Location: The comfort of your home. Required skills: Volunteers play a key role in disaster response. Volunteer: Services YMCA came in one day and said they had just received three pallets of milk product that didn’t miss Ketchup with anything. Cora Lee was blown away. This is for you. Please take this, it’s going to hurt my heart. It’s not his given name, Richard. “The reason he’s been rich all his life isn’t because he’s got money or it’s his name.” Dunn said. “It’s because of all the people, places and things he’s had in his life. That’s what makes him rich.”

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Afghan aid: Helping make people whole

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to organize shoes drive. A professional runner, Jim and Cora Lee’s daughter used the equipment allowance provided by her company to buy 32 pairs of new shoes for the camp. One man even drove all the way from Illinois with 1,200 pairs of shoes in the back of his pickup, sorted and ready to distribute. Early in her deployment, Cora Lee identified another pressing need and worked tirelessly to fill it. Parents of youngsters between the ages of 2 and 5 are asking for milk to help relax their youngsters before they go to bed. Cora Lee was blown away. This is for you. Please take this, it’s going to hurt my heart. It’s not his given name, Richard. “The reason he’s been rich all his life isn’t because he’s got money or it’s his name.” Dunn said. “It’s because of all the people, places and things he’s had in his life. That’s what makes him rich.”

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Are you aware of how many virtual positions are available? Below are some to consider. Also, volunteers are encouraged to perform any act of public service for Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In January, you may miss Ketchup with Friends on Dec. 14.

VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES. The Red Cross offers a variety of virtual volunteer opportunities. These include educational outreach, client support, and administrative support. Below are a few showcased options. For a full list of virtual opportunities to learn more.

1. Donation Lifesaving Blood. Be sure you can weather a crisis safely and comfortably alone. Turn in to 6 p.m. M.T. Be Red Cross Ready • Red Cross Ready. Donate lifesaving blood. Find a blood drive near you and schedule an appointment to donate.

HELP US WITH SOCIAL MEDIA. Share our posts and your stories from Facebook, and encourage friends and family to follow us. Thank you for your help.

FUN EVENT. All volunteers are invited to attend our event honoring and thanking volunteers. The event is Tuesday, Jan. 11, 7-8 p.m. (MST). An RSVP is requested.

To prepare, volunteers have two opportunities to practice attending the meeting and having IT support. The two practice events are:

• Tuesday, Jan. 4 at 5 p.m. (MST)
• Monday, Jan 10 at 5 p.m. (MST)

KETCHUP WITH FRIENDS, 2.0. Come continue our “family” event on Dec. 14 from 7:30-8 p.m. If you come, you can win a WARM Prize. November’s thanksgiving prizes went to lost and found brand Sherri Zelle. Click here to join the meeting.

East Oregon is launching the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. During the week of Jan. 17, we encourage everyone to take part in a volunteer activity or event that fits their interests and passions. Below are a few ideas.

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I volunteer because I get so much out of helping others, Jim said. "It’s the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done. I feel like I have a whole heart, and I’ve gained so much."